



**A Restatement of  
Preferred Futures for  
Public Education in NSW**

**NSW Secondary Principals Council  
November 2005**

***A RESTATEMENT OF  
PREFERRED FUTURES FOR  
PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES***

***NSW Secondary Principals' Council  
November 2005***

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## President's Message

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council brings together in one professional body more than 450 principals leading high schools, colleges, community and central schools and other state schools with secondary enrolments within the public education system in New South Wales.

The Council's purpose is to:

- enhance the effectiveness of principals through collegial support and development
- provide forums for discussion and debate on key educational issues
- participate in policy development and decision making at system level.

The most significant Council policy development over the last decade has been *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*, aimed at identifying and implementing a vision of a preferred future for secondary education in NSW.

The NSWSPC embarked on this original 'Futures Project' in 1997 following the hosting of the International Confederation of Principals Third World Convention in Sydney in 1995. This event coincided with a change of government in NSW, the inevitable restructure that followed and a generational shift in those taking up secondary principals' positions in NSW.

The principals who participated in the original Futures Project in 1997-1998 had been in promotional positions during the upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the 1990s progressed, however, they realised that while they had misgivings about the earlier changes, they were becoming even more concerned about the recentralised control of education and the often reactive and regressive policy making which seemed increasingly evident from 1995 onwards.

They realised that no one else was going to initiate new policy directions in secondary education which reflected the future needs and priorities of students and schools. In addition, no one else was creating agendas for change which filled secondary principals with confidence.

The result was *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* (1999) which took over two years to develop, using a model which combined the best available expertise and wide consultation with secondary principals across NSW.

The impact of *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* has been substantial. It was followed by similar or related projects by other stakeholder groups, with the DET in 2004 developing its own *Excellence and Innovation* future of public education consultation process.

The NSWSPC has also developed many submissions and position papers on a range of policy areas in public education. Many of these, especially in technology, leadership and pedagogy, evolved out of the 1999 Futures Project. In 2004 a significant project, *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools*, has taken the recommendations of the 1999 project much further and into more specific proposals impacting on the role of the principal. In 2005 another project, *Sustaining Quality Schools*, has been established to address the fundamental flaws in the wider educational landscape in NSW.

Over the years it became evident that, despite the Council's best efforts at the time of its development, the original futures document reflects contemporary issues in the late 1990s as well as informed projections about future scenarios. During 2004 it became increasingly evident that, as an umbrella statement about essential beliefs and priorities, *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* needed to be revised.

This document is a restatement of *Preferred Futures* in a way which reaffirms the essence of what we believe as secondary principals in the context of developments since the mid and late 1990s. These developments include:

- progress in the implementation of the priorities identified in 1999
- recurring restructures of education in NSW
- an accelerating shift of enrolments to publicly-funded private schools following changes in commonwealth funding
- changes in the political landscape in NSW.

The result is a document which now combines the inspiration gathered and articulated by this organisation at the end of one century with the challenges which have endured into the early years of another. I commend this document as another critical part of a journey for our students, our schools and for public education in New South Wales.

*Chris Bonnor*

President, NSW Secondary Principals' Council  
2001-2006

# SECTION 1

## CURRENT CONTEXTS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

### 1.1 Principals and public education

Secondary principals have a responsibility to play a leading role in shaping the future of public education for the benefit of students in NSW public schools.

Principals uniquely link the broader system and society with the effective ongoing delivery of quality learning for students. It is they, more than any others, who mediate between any call for change and the classroom response. It is principals who must lead the processes of improvement and innovation and who are primarily accountable for the outcomes of these processes. It is principals who understand the need for well thought out, valid and supported change.

Principals combine a micro view of their schools with a macro view of the contexts in which they operate, including their own school systems and the total educational landscape. There are few others who have this view.

Principals work in an increasingly diverse group of schools and contexts. They appreciate, celebrate and promote the gains their schools can deliver in the education of students. They also feel and live every day the issues and tensions created in the lives of young people as well as the changes in the delivery and structures of schooling.

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council is uniquely placed, through involvement and interaction with a wide range of key stakeholders in education, to develop influential statements on educational trends and issues and support the implementation of agreed improvements and innovations.

### 1.2 What we value

In a 2003-2004 Futures project *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools* secondary principals engaged in sustained professional conversations. These confirmed the need for principals to show continuing leadership in defining the future role of principals and other school leaders in NSW public secondary education.

They also confirmed a commitment by principals to a more interdependent relationship between bureaucrats, unionists, school leaders, teachers, students and the community in the development of public policy for secondary schools in NSW.

They also affirmed our collective belief in our role as **educational leaders** in NSW public schools, recognising and valuing:

- the paramount role that public education plays in building a cohesive democratic society



- government policy that ensures an educational provision for all NSW secondary students equivalent to the best offered in the OECD
- belonging to a state-wide system of public education that provides frameworks and shared values for the operation of schools, curriculum and assessment
- the diverse cultural and social contexts of public secondary school communities in NSW and high quality educational outcomes for all students
- the effectiveness of school-based decision making
- the meaningful use of information and communication technologies to inform and empower the lives and learning of principals, staff, students and their families
- working collaboratively with deputy principals and all other members of the school community
- the work of the NSWSPC in providing networks of support, opportunities to influence policy and leadership development.

The project also acknowledged the increasing complexity and ambiguity of educational leadership and the commitment of principals to providing flexible, sustainable, equitable, local solutions for the provision of public secondary education.

### **1.3 Our commitment to public education**

The public education system is the key institution beyond the family shaping the future for the majority of young Australians. Public secondary schools are transmitters of culture, values and beliefs. They are critical agents of socialisation. They have a civic function in shaping Australian society and preparing students for lifelong learning and participation in an emerging global society.

The Council believes that the future of the current public education system in New South Wales will be evaluated on:

- how well schools, regions and state office work together to achieve:
  - the pursuit of excellence, social justice and equity
  - regard for the welfare of others and the valuing of human relationships
  - ethical practice for the common good
  - an environment of honesty, integrity and trust.
- the system's commitment to build:
  - quality leadership able to develop a shared vision within a global context
  - innovation and change based on research and best practice
  - professional culture and critical reflection
  - strategic planning and an ethos of accountability
  - student-focussed learning, improving pedagogy and a capacity for lifelong learning
  - collaboration, co-operative practice and powerful learning partnerships
  - learner-driven flexibility and diversity within coherent statewide frameworks
  - guaranteed levels of resourcing to achieve equal outcomes.
- its success in developing students who:
  - can take responsibility for their own learning
  - acquire and apply knowledge and understanding
  - possess a well-developed emotional intelligence
  - are good problem solvers, decision makers and communicators
  - are able to work independently, with others and in groups

- have the skills and knowledge to navigate ongoing change and manage their own lifelong learning.

## 1.4 Changing contexts for public education

The original Futures document outlined a context for education in general, and public education in particular at the end of the last century. This context was characterised by profound alterations in the ways we live, work, entertain and inform ourselves, in the dynamics of the marketplace, the competition between companies and between countries, the process of wealth creation and even the role of government.

It pointed to other changes including:

- the increasing public scrutiny of the education system in general and schools and their students in particular
- the growing political influence on educational decision making in the day-to-day operations of public secondary schools
- the growth of information technology and the digital technology revolution.

In the almost ten years since the original Futures Project began other changes have created new and more critical contexts for public education in NSW and beyond.

### 1.4.1 Steps forwards and backwards

The decade 1995 to 2005 has seen tangible progress alongside setbacks for public education in NSW. The period has been characterised by a number of reviews and inquiries, some of which have achieved demonstrable change and improvement. This has been accompanied by recurring restructures, both accompanied and created by reduced real expenditure, especially on the physical infrastructure of schools.

Some of the improvements especially in more recent years can, at least in part, be attributed to the influence of stakeholder groups (including the NSW Secondary Principals' Council) and the intermittently productive relationship between these groups and the DET and government. In this context principals point with considerable satisfaction to improvements in technology, greater focus on school leadership, site-based professional learning and the development of a system-wide framework for quality teaching and learning.

The establishment of the (Vinson) *Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW* by the NSW Teachers' Federation and the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations also produced tangible results. These included areas such as online learning and professional development for teachers. A number of Vinson recommendations, as well as ideas from other groups, found their way into the ALP policy platform for the 2003 state election. Another recommendation was to establish a Public Education Council which existed for a short time until it was abolished in 2005, not before releasing a seminal report on options for public education in NSW.

Other progress was achieved by a Public Education Alliance of teacher, principal and parent groups. The most significant achievement of this group was the adoption of a program to reduce class sizes in the early years of schooling. Representations from a number of groups resulted in the Review of Non-Government Schools (the 'Grimshaw Review') which

produced two reports. Many recommendations from the first report emerged in new legislation on the accountability of ‘private’ schools. The second report on the funding of these schools was never released. Other reviews in this period, including the Aboriginal Education Review, were characterised by implementation only of low-cost and low risk recommendations.

The same period, especially from 2000 onwards, saw four Education Ministers in almost as many years and yet another restructure, this time drawing ‘savings’ out of a portfolio which was serving a reduced percentage of the student population. The leadership of DET shifted from control by educators to managers. In this period the government launched its *Excellence and Innovation* consultation process on the future of public education in NSW. This succeeded in attracting a large number of submissions and once again raising expectations of a visionary response.

The middle of the first decade of the new century saw a state government under siege, with a new Premier and yet another Education Minister, facing substantial problems in the education sector and seemingly without any long term solutions to both chronic and accelerating problems.

#### 1.4.2 Tradition, accountability and performance

The educational landscape is shaped by forces well beyond the school. Years ago Michael Apple referred to a new power bloc, including those:

“committed to neo-liberal marketised solutions to educational problems, neo-conservative intellectuals who want a ‘return’ to higher standards and a ‘common culture’, authoritarian populist religious fundamentalists who are deeply worried about secularity and the preservation of their own traditions, and particular fractions of the professionally oriented new middle class who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement and ‘management’.”

Apple, Michael “Rhetorical reforms: Markets, standards and Inequality” in *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Volume 1, Number 2, April 1999

There are many ways in which this new alliance has impacted on education. The coupling of markets with the demand for publication of student performance indicators fuels demands for the publication of ‘league tables’. Schools which are able to do so actively seek ways to attract families with higher achieving students.

New accountability regimes produce increased mandatory testing, more elaborate reporting of both student and school progress and supervision of schools which is centrally driven for accountability reasons rather than locally driven for development of either students or teachers.

Schools and principals are forced to demonstrate increased performance, while exercising little control over the curriculum against which much of the performance is measured, or over the resources needed to create improvement.

The imposed competitive agenda usually conflicts with the changes which principals and teachers believe are needed to engage their students in a love of learning and meaningful pedagogy. They see recurrent and mandatory testing as doing nothing for engagement. They see the curriculum crowded by political impositions. They resent the loss of values and connectedness in families and communities and the expectation that schools can and should make up the shortfall.

A consequence has been an almost new dualism in the culture and operation of schools. On the one hand principals and teachers have become far more familiar with proven frameworks for effective learning and teaching as evidenced by *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools*. On the other hand they are driven by a testing, accountability and reporting regime which at best sits uncomfortably with and at worst undermines effective and proven pedagogy.

Many observers, including principals, are increasingly seeing the agenda to constantly improve schools, against all other odds, as masking fundamental social and community realities which are harder to change and which are creating long term damage to Australia's social capital.

“...the effort to improve education outcomes has usually focused on finding levers and incentives to improve the effectiveness of schools themselves. This is a worthwhile goal. But it has tended to screen out a set of factors which are far more influential on education outcomes, perhaps because of an implicit assumption that they cannot be controlled. They include private/public mix, social geography, social class and mobility, income and wealth differentials, culture and community involvement.”

Abentley, Tom et al., “A fair go: public value and diversity in education” Demos Report, May 2004.

### 1.4.3 Education as a private and positional good

Along with other public education stakeholders principals continue to see education and public education as a ‘common good’ which contributes towards a broad ‘common wealth’ of the community and nation. In the lives and experience of principals this has been accompanied by the critical social bridging which links and knits together often very different families and communities.

This view is increasingly not shared by those who see education, not as a common good for the whole community, but as a private or ‘positional good’ which can and should be purchased. Parents increasingly see that schools which are referred to as ‘private’ are best able to provide the educational advantage they seek for their children. In the process they expect, and are provided, public financial support for what amounts to a private choice.

Consequently the number of what are falsely referred to as ‘non-government’ schools has risen since 1996 and certainly since the NSWSPC developed *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*.

In explaining these developments, social researchers point to broader family concerns about well-being, personal security and the future. Parents can increasingly afford to cocoon their smaller number of children. In an age where people believe that paying for something brings a guarantee it is hardly surprising that this extends to education. Busy working parents want to secure their family future by ‘purchasing’ a set of values, beliefs and even a peer group for their children. Rather than being committed to bridging across the social divides parents increasingly seek what they see as greater protection and assurance in bonding ‘like with like’.

Such developments pose a challenge to public education stakeholders. Principals are aware of the serious long term community and national consequences of these developments and have seen with increasing dismay the school and community impact of tensions over such issues as refugees and terrorism. As a consequence principals take a leading role in being advocates for the role of public education in community and nation building.

The challenge for principals is to continue to lead parental and community understanding of these issues while providing the level of assurance about quality, opportunity and wellbeing that many parents seek from private providers. The challenge for the government is to ensure that principals and schools increasingly have the capacity and discretion to make a difference in the areas valued by parents.

#### 1.4.4 Broad political and bureaucratic contexts

Education has increasingly become a high profile political issue. At various times this has worked both for and against the interests of students and schools. Schools in the public education system are especially vulnerable because they are a service arm of government and become ‘collateral damage’ whenever the educational policies of government are attacked. Despite levels of government funding, ‘private’ schools are able to be several steps removed from recurring ‘crises’ in education.

At both state and federal levels, public policy in education has become reactive and populist and characterised by short-term thinking and a culture in which the interests of students, schools and proven sound practice seem to rank below those of governments. In common with many public policy areas, education is dominated by four year political cycles which reduce the motivation for, and effectiveness of, any long term planning.

The Council believes that required improvements in public education rely on the willingness of political leaders to:

- promote the levels of resourcing and taxation necessary to continue to meet public expectations and needs
- change the framework within which public education operates in NSW. This includes the conditions under which publicly-funded private schools are allowed to establish, the basis on which they are funded and the rules under which they operate
- recreate a quality and independent public service, rather than one which is characterised by a combination of chronic political interference combined with an avoidance of ministerial responsibility.

#### 1.4.5 The changing demographic context

In common with many other frameworks, plans and even legislation the original Futures Project was developed at a time of growth in student numbers across NSW and Australia. That time is now a matter of history, with the NSW Public Education Council suggesting an anticipated fall in the secondary school age cohort of up to 40 000 by 2020. Based on enrolment trends in the last decade it is clear that this will impact most on public and Catholic systemic schools.

While the impact of this will be uneven across NSW it is clear that a substantial number of schools will have to be reconfigured or closed. Under the NSW Education Reform Act “the principal responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education”. While the existing provision of schooling was not considered when new private schools were established from 1996, it must be considered if and when schools are to close. If the state is to continue meeting its obligations under the Act, just as public schools must be the first to open in any community, they must also be the last to close.

The coming decline in student numbers will simply underscore the fact that public education in NSW does not operate in a vacuum. What amounts to a looming crisis of oversupply of schools in NSW needs to be addressed as part of an overall strategy to reconsider the future nature and provision of schools and schooling.

#### 1.4.6 The obligations and operation of schools

Despite recent changes in NSW, the manner in which publicly-funded private schools are permitted to operate has created a total landscape of schools in which substantial advantages accrue to these schools and disadvantages accrue to government schools.

There has been little attempt in Australia to investigate the extent to which the provision of public funds carries an obligation to fulfil a public obligation or charter. The situation is arguably the reverse: Australia is at odds with other OECD countries in the extent to which publicly-funded private schools are able to combine private resources (and a different set of rules) with government funding to cater for private choice and achieve a competitive advantage over the public system.

This advantage is particularly evident in the operation of public and ‘private’ schools. It is the difference in the operation of schools, as much as funding inequities, which is impacting on public schools. Such differences, particularly in student welfare and staffing, are mentioned in focus group research of parents who make a choice of private schooling. These include:

- enrolment of students
- suspension of students
- expulsion of students
- discrimination on basis of sexuality, disability, gender or age
- appointment of staff
- dismissal of staff
- school uniforms
- fees and contributions
- properties and maintenance.

The provision of public funds to schools of all types is not accompanied by comparable rules of establishment and operation. Publicly-funded private schools, by default or by design, can avoid catering for students from low income families, Indigenous Australians, students with disabilities, students from one-parent families and students whose families may not profess a religious faith. The consequence has been to create a public school system which disproportionately caters for these groups and increasingly has to shoulder the burden of supporting young people and communities which are in danger of being marginalised.

Twenty-five per cent of expenditure on public education in NSW flows automatically on to private providers. There cannot be any other industry or endeavour in which a private provider receives such substantial public funding, yet is able to choose its market and essentially its rules of operation and engagement in its competition with the public provider. In any other field of endeavour, such arrangements would surely be regarded as being totally unacceptable.

Finally, the funding of publicly-funded private schools by state and commonwealth governments was originally designed to raise sub-standard private school facilities to match

those in public schools. Funding regimes since then have created unsustainable inequities on a scale never envisaged four decades ago.

## 1.5 Principles

The following **principles** provide the basis of addressing the problems in the current context of public education:

1. The NSWSPC is committed to the essential primacy, in a democratic society, of schools which are accessible to all, inclusive and secular. In providing educational opportunities for students the first responsibility of government is to provide and fund such schools to the highest possible standards.
2. Any school receiving public funds must accept that its values, curriculum and operation both reflect and implement standards that the community holds in such high regard that they are defined in law or regulation and which underpin the operation of existing public schools.
3. The operation of a school embraces the frameworks, rules and procedures which govern the day-to-day functioning of schools, including curriculum implementation, management practice, enrolment of students, student welfare, discipline and presentation, employment of staff, and compliance with all legislation and regulations.
4. New private schools should not be established or any private schools publicly funded unless:
  - there is a proven demand for such schools
  - they employ qualified teaching staff
  - they meet the same obligations and accountability standards as public schools.
5. Existing NSW and Commonwealth funding of private schools should be redirected to those schools which implement the requirements of 2, 3 and 4 above.

## **SECTION 2**

# **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

The traditional concept of a school is being challenged by the rapidly changing nature of technology, society, work and learning. Any vision for the future will require changes in practice and the culture of schools which must keep pace with changes in society. Significant levers for change will be the quality of leadership at all levels and the nature and expectations of learners.

### **2.1 Our vision**

The NSWSPC believes that the future will need to see:

**A fairer landscape for all students in NSW** characterised by:

- the primacy of schools which are accessible to all
- a far greater alignment of values, curriculum and operation of schools which are publicly funded
- policy frameworks within which public schools can develop flexible responses to the needs of their students
- support services to which all public schools have equity of access and which enhance the functioning of these schools.

**Leaders** who will:

- create and foster dynamic learning communities
- build sustainable leadership in schools and other learning environments
- focus on educational leadership and learning as the heart of their role
- master and apply knowledge systems and emerging technologies
- work in networks
- have greater autonomy with respect to staffing, budgets and other resources
- have increased responsibility for performance management and the quality of learning outcomes.

**Learning environments** which will operate:

- in reconfigured and reshaped ways so as to be more anticipatory and responsive to rapid change
- to allow the curriculum, organisation, timing, entry, progression and exit points to be determined to suit the needs of learners
- as multi-dimensional learning communities where quality personal interactions and relationships give individual learners a sense of connection
- in a culture of mutual support and care where risk taking and the development of skills for life-long learning will be the driving force
- as part of a network where a broad range of educators, community and support personnel will interact to meet academic, welfare, cultural, social and vocational learning needs.



**Learners** who will:

- take initiative in constructing their learning pathways
- use personalised programs to learn how to learn and develop the skills to acquire and apply knowledge and understanding
- use holistic, co-operative and collegial approaches to learning, thinking and doing
- participate in authentic assessment processes and procedures which articulate locally, nationally and internationally.
- access computers regularly for learning tasks.

**Teachers** who will:

- expand their range of learning tools and support materials to match the needs of students and the requirements of assessment and learning
- work in reshaped learning environments, using quality teaching practices and the latest technologies
- shape, negotiate, monitor and guide learning programs for individuals and groups
- work collaboratively in teams for a variety of purposes
- facilitate virtual classrooms where the teacher can be available on-line for on-time, any-time, anywhere learning.

**Curriculum and credentialling** which will provide:

- a broad range of learning opportunities for academic, vocational and personal growth
- plans for individual learners using networks of providers and on-line services
- standards frameworks which specify levels of knowledge, skills and understandings expected of the student
- a variety of modes of assessment and reporting of student achievement against standards frameworks
- students with the means to easily update their credentials and articulate them into future pathways.

**Technology** which will be used to:

- enhance learning outcomes and opportunities, the quality of learning and attitudes to learning
- develop higher order skills to build knowledge, solve problems and interact with a wide array of information sources and people
- provide a more sophisticated and global understanding of complex international, national and local issues
- expand curriculum choice through the cyber classroom
- systematically track and record specific data and information on and for learners and their learning.

**Partnerships** which will:

- promote, support and maintain collaborative networks and practices
- create and support a climate and culture of dialogue and negotiation
- allow needs based experiment involving entire learning communities in locally agreed and strategically developed projects.

## 2.2 Our Goals

The NSWSPC has set the following goals in order to achieve this vision:

- 1. To develop, empower and support leaders for the future.*
- 2. To ensure schools of the future are optimum learning environments.*
- 3. To design learning pathways which encourage success and enable individuals to become lifelong learners.*
- 4. To assist teachers in both predicting possible futures and meeting the learning needs of students in and for the future.*
- 5. To ensure all students are guaranteed an essential core of learning and access to opportunities to fulfil their needs, aspirations and interests.*
- 6. To ensure that technology effectively supports quality learning and teaching.*
- 7. To develop and sustain collaborative, productive partnerships between learning environments, systems, governments and other stakeholders in order to appropriately shape the future of secondary education.*

## SECTION 3

# PREFERRED FUTURES FOR SCHOOLS

“Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be to learning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as the microchip is to the valve.”

Lepani, Barbara, *Future and Change*, 1993

There will need to be a re-thinking and a re-ordering of the assumptions within which schools have been both familiar and comfortable in the past.

### 3.1 Leadership

The changing nature and culture of educational environments dictate that leaders in the future will need to understand the educational and political culture in which they operate. They will need to master and apply new knowledge systems and technologies, work in networks and be highly focused on educational leadership. They will have greater autonomy in relation to staffing, budgets and resources and will have greater responsibility for performance management and the quality of learning outcomes. This form of leadership demands a clear and collaborative approach to shaping the future.

Educating students is the core business of schools and educational leadership is at the heart of the role of leaders within all educational environments. The primary purpose of educational leadership is to improve academic and social outcomes for students, enhance the professional learning of staff and develop quality relationships with parents and the community.

***GOAL 1: To develop, empower and support leaders for the future.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for leadership:

- Educational leaders value and promote the role of public education in building a cohesive, democratic society.
- Leaders recognise and value the diverse cultural and social contexts of learning communities in NSW and are committed to providing high quality educational outcomes for all students.
- Leaders must have the freedom and a degree of autonomy to work flexibly.
- Leaders build leadership capacity within the learning community and set in place succession policies and practices to facilitate and enable the development of educational leaders and leadership teams.
- Leaders must take risks and be open, honest and ethical in all that they do.
- Leaders work collaboratively with learning communities to identify and address areas for improvement.
- Educational leaders need to be futures-oriented and aware of alternate learning structures in order to develop and manage the most appropriate educational structure for learners in their care.
- Leaders value networks of professional learning and support.
- Leaders take opportunities to influence policy and leadership development at a variety of levels.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.1.1 ensure that policies and procedures are flexible enough to enable leaders to provide effective and collaborative leadership
- 3.1.2 provide appropriate professional support for leaders to allow them to focus more on proactive educational leadership and continue to develop their leadership capability
- 3.1.3 continue to negotiate greater responsibilities for leaders in the recruitment, selection, induction, ongoing professional learning and performance management of staff
- 3.1.4 develop structured and inclusive strategies to foster leadership teams which respond to the needs of learning communities
- 3.1.5 foster the growth of student leadership through a range of programs designed to develop leadership capacity
- 3.1.6 promote and enable the development of new models for learning which use new configurations of learning environments.

### **3.2 Learning environments**

Education will increasingly occur within flexible learning environments where the curriculum, organisation, timing, entry, progression and exit points are determined to suit the needs of the learners and where student welfare and support are of prime importance.

Unifying features of these multi-dimensional learning communities will be personal interactions and relationships, giving individual learners a sense of connection, security and self-determination with their knowledge acquisition. There will be a broad range of educators and support personnel who meet academic, welfare, cultural, social and vocational needs. A culture of mutual support and care will exist where risk taking and the development of skills for life-long learning will be the driving force.

#### ***GOAL 2: To ensure schools of the future are optimum learning environments.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for learning environments:

- Learning is intensely personal and is enhanced through quality interactions with others.
- Schools in an inclusive public system promote effective learning for the full range of students, including those with special needs or those who are alienated.
- Safe, stimulating and well-resourced environments best facilitate learning.
- Schools operate in a culturally diverse and changing society. They are committed to principles of inclusivity, equity, social justice, ethical practice and excellence.
- Secondary public schools are dedicated to the teaching of the values of integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy.
- Schools are places where learners interact socially, meet people from other backgrounds and ages, take risks in developing their social skills and are treated fairly and with dignity.
- School welfare structures promote the emotional, social, physical and moral well being of all members of the school community.
- Flexible learning environments allow for the incorporation of emerging technologies and changing approaches to pedagogy.

- Successful learning communities inspire and challenge all members to engage in and enjoy learning.
- Schools provide for their learners access to a unique mix of resources, facilities and opportunities that may not be available in the home or community.
- Critical reflection and evaluation of change creates an optimum learning environment.
- Continuous improvement is integral to a creative and dynamic learning environment.
- Accredited learning will increasingly occur in a variety of settings.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.2.1 reconceptualise the learner, the learning environment and how life-long learning can be promoted
- 3.2.2 establish action research projects to reconfigure, refocus and reshape secondary education, using more flexible structures and resource agreements
- 3.2.3 establish projects to redevelop existing school sites as learning environments which reflect pedagogical and technological changes and meet the welfare and learning needs of all students
- 3.2.4 provide leadership and support for principals and teachers to develop more open relationships and co-operative learning structures within and between a range of learning environments
- 3.2.5 encourage and support flexibility in the operation and management of learning environments
- 3.2.6 develop more inclusive forms and measures of accountability which recognise and contribute to social capital and learning outcomes
- 3.2.7 collect valid data concerning learning communities analyse and respond to this information in order to create a culture of continuous improvement
- 3.2.8 develop and resource multi-faceted welfare programs with the support of families, community and other agencies that impact on emotional, social, physical and moral problems
- 3.2.9 develop a range of different programs, learning environments and learning institutions to cater for students in danger of disengagement from the learning process.

### **3.3 Learning**

Learners will take more initiative in designing their own learning pathways. Personalised learning programs will enable all learners to learn how to learn and to develop the skills to be self-managing and engaged learners. These programs will develop in learners the ability to acquire and apply deep knowledge and understanding.

Holistic, cooperative and collegial approaches to learning, thinking and doing will occur in flexible learning environments. These approaches to learning will open up more flexible pathways and expand the range of learning tools and resources to match student needs and assessment requirements.

Recognition of learning by a variety of providers and sources will occur and this will articulate into local, national and international accreditation frameworks.

***GOAL 3: To design learning pathways which encourage success and enable individuals to become life-long learners***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for learning:

- Learning is a lifelong process.
- All learners have a right to learn.
- All learners are able to learn and improve their knowledge, skills and application. They learn in diverse ways and at different rates.
- Learning is an interactive process in which learners actively construct meaning from a complex and ever-expanding body of information.
- Learners bring a wide range of knowledge and skills to the learning process and are able to make a significant contribution to decisions about their learning.
- Learners have the right of access to a curriculum which meets their needs.
- Learners are more likely to achieve quality outcomes when they are challenged by high and understood expectations.
- Learners have a right to be competent in the critical literacies.
- Assessment of student achievement must reflect what learners have accessed during the learning process. Assessment is most effective when it contributes to the learning process.
- Environmental factors impact on learning both positively and negatively.
- Students must have a wide range of skills that enable them to be critical and allow them to sift, analyse and synthesise information so that they can make order out of the chaos of the information-rich world.
- Young adults learn most effectively when:
  - the learning environment is conducive to learning and the learner feels they can succeed
  - teachers actively involve themselves in the lesson and learners are motivated, interested and active
  - they can see the purpose and relevance in the lesson, they understand and succeed
  - they are encouraged and not threatened by content or fear of failure
  - they feel secure and therefore are willing to take risks and apply what they have discovered
  - discussion and questioning takes place and they feel opinions are valued
  - individual difference is recognised and catered for
  - there is constant practice, there is praise, attainable standards and variety
  - they can engage and interact with their peers in a sharing non judgemental environment and there is meaningful interaction with the teacher
  - they are stretched and challenged
  - the learning is flexible and they are given time and opportunity to progress at their own pace
  - there is mutual respect between teacher and student
  - achievement is rewarded
  - they are provided with positive, constructive feedback
  - their learning takes on an holistic approach.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.3.1 provide information on research into innovative practice in teaching and learning and provide resources to set up projects to model ways this research can be applied across schools and in particular learning areas
- 3.3.2 develop learning networks and provide resources to bring school communities together to improve learning environments and student outcomes
- 3.3.3 enable schools to develop strategies which will allow learners more flexible access to learning while preserving the vital need for learners to personally interact with teachers and other learners
- 3.3.4 develop a learning community in which learners, teachers and parents have an understanding of learning and agree on appropriate strategies which will optimise student learning outcomes
- 3.3.5 support schools in providing learners with detailed, appropriate, personalised learning plans
- 3.3.6 ensure that there will be a variety of ways for learners to achieve credentials and recognition of learning
- 3.3.7 develop authentic assessment processes that more accurately reflect student achievement
- 3.3.8 implement holistic approaches to learning and teaching which help learners apply their learning to a variety of situations
- 3.3.9 provide a specific, negotiated and appropriate age and skill-relevant learning program for each student which includes a mix of face-to-face on-site teaching with other off-site learning experiences.

### **3.4 Teaching**

Teachers in the future will be recognised and valued as professional facilitators of learning and significant contributors to the social and cultural development of adolescent learners. They will continue to educate and inspire learners.

Teachers working in reshaped learning environments, using sound best practice pedagogy and the latest technologies will:

- confer with students to negotiate and guide their personalised learning programs
- work in collaborative partnerships with learners
- design self-paced modules for learners to access through technology, at any site within a flexible timeframe
- lead critical discussion in a variety of group situations
- facilitate virtual classrooms for students within and across educational sites
- provide specialist skills across a number of educational sites and be available online for student contact
- design assessment tools and co-ordinate onsite and offsite learning and assessment
- provide support, expertise and wisdom when students engage in learning.

***GOAL 4: To assist teachers in both predicting possible futures and meeting the learning needs of students in and for the future.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for teaching:

- Teachers can and do make a difference.
- Teachers are also learners and have a strong commitment to ongoing professional growth.
- Teachers are facilitators of learning, with an understanding of students, the nature of learning and a commitment to the best learning outcomes for their students.
- Authentic learning partnerships occur when students, parents and teachers take joint responsibility for the learning.
- Teachers have a strong commitment to students and hold high expectations for performance.
- Teachers have an understanding of, and commitment to, the values that underpin public secondary education.
- Teachers enjoy teaching, model lifelong learning and are leaders in their learning communities.
- Teachers have a deep knowledge and understanding of, and the skills to apply, the learning tools of the future.
- Quality teaching is dependent on positive relationships between members of both the school-specific and wider learning communities.
- Teachers teach best when they work in an environment characterised by effective communication and positive school culture and they:
  - are valued and supported
  - have mastery of both pedagogy and content
  - are able to manage student learning in a variety of classrooms and other teaching contexts
  - have a clear understanding of the changing nature of the social, cultural and political contexts in which they teach
  - have the professional freedom to explore innovative ways of developing student learning.
- Teachers and teaching benefit from the articulation of explicit professional teaching standards.
- Teachers should be supported by the Government and the Department of Education and Training in bringing about change for the future.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.4.1 redefine the role of the teacher in terms of the present and future needs of students including the need for greater flexibility in ways teachers and students interact
- 3.4.2 ensure maintenance of professional teaching standards required of teachers now and for the future
- 3.4.3 ensure the maintenance and improvement of ongoing teacher professional learning at both an individual and system level
- 3.4.4 collaborate with teacher education providers and governments to ensure there are sufficient graduates educated and trained to meet future learning and teaching needs
- 3.4.5 recognise the individual contexts of schools and acknowledge quality teaching
- 3.4.6 give schools increased responsibility, authority and resources to negotiate change in school organisation and staffing to better suit the changing needs of teachers and learners
- 3.4.7 encourage learning communities to explore alternative organisational and learning structures, curriculum delivery and pedagogy and resource them to provide for the implementation, evaluation and publicity of these alternatives



- 3.4.8 continue to gain greater autonomy for schools in deciding their staffing needs, including the use of support staff
- 3.4.9 continue to ensure resources are provided to support professional growth and development of teachers
- 3.4.10 establish frameworks to enable universities, the Department of Education and Training and other providers to support ongoing teacher education and development.

### **3.5 Curriculum and credentialling**

Learners will be guaranteed an essential core of learning and opportunities to develop their abilities, interests and aspirations. Personalised learning plans for students will be designed using networks of providers both within the local area and online. Continuity of learning opportunities will occur through articulation with primary schools and post-compulsory providers.

The curriculum in public schools will provide both equity of opportunity and equity of outcomes for students in an increasingly diverse world. To facilitate this, an extension of the curriculum frameworks concept will enable schools to customise learning for their students while retaining the benefits of a centralised credential.

Technology will allow for online assessment of student achievement against established standards so that credentials can be updated as needed. This will enable students to articulate a wide variety of learning into purposeful academic, vocational and general pathways.

***GOAL 5: To ensure all students are guaranteed an essential core of learning and access to opportunities to fulfil their needs, aspirations and interests.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for curriculum and credentialling:

- Students are entitled to a broad, balanced, challenging and relevant curriculum that reflects their needs, interests and aspirations.
- Students in all public schools should have access to a full range of curriculum offerings, whether these be delivered locally, online or both.
- Within a framework of state-wide curriculum, decisions about the appropriate mix of curriculum offered at the local level should reflect close consultation within that learning community.
- There is a core of knowledge, understandings, skills and values that should be included in the curriculum studied by all students in secondary schools, in order to prepare them to be productive, participating members of our society.
- The curriculum should be dynamic and responsive to changes in the knowledge, skills, understandings and values which students will need to meet the challenges of the future.
- Curriculum development should be informed by research on ways students think and learn.
- Curriculum should be implemented using pedagogy that reflects quality teaching practices.
- Students should be involved in decisions related to not only what they learn but how they learn it and how they are assessed.
- Students are entitled to have their learning outcomes validly and reliably accredited against established standards by recognised authorities.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.5.1 develop as the basis of lifelong learning for all students a core curriculum which promotes personal growth and includes the knowledge, skills and values which prepare them to be productive members of society
- 3.5.2 provide a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum that is relevant to the needs of students and based on research about the way students think, learn and understand
- 3.5.3 establish locally-based networks involving parents, students, industry bodies and other education providers to support curriculum offerings and delivery
- 3.5.4 continue to develop and endorse courses of study that are both appropriate to the changing needs, interests and aspirations of students in NSW and which lead to credentialling within a standards framework
- 3.5.5 support assessment practice and credentialling which reaffirms and does not undermine quality teaching
- 3.5.6 maximise the use of technology by providing schools with the ability to link course content, outcomes and standards frameworks, track student learning and report on student performance
- 3.5.7 provide adequate resourcing in terms of physical facilities, technology, teaching resources, teacher professional learning and web-based support to ensure access to the curriculum for all students.

### **3.6 Technology in learning**

New technologies will impact on education to create new, innovative teaching and learning experiences. Technological literacy will continue to foster new learning modes, styles of cognition, networks of relationships and methods of communication as the role of teachers and students change. Learners will develop higher order skills while using technology to build knowledge, solve problems and interact with a wide array of information sources and people. Teachers will increasingly apply and use technology for teaching, learning and productivity.

Access to appropriate technology will continue to enable students to actively participate in the ever evolving technology-centred world of work. The technologically connected world will be the classroom and the library of the future. Remote course delivery in the cyber classroom will provide expanded curriculum choice for all learners.

### ***GOAL 6: To ensure that technology effectively supports quality learning and teaching.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for technology in learning:

- The use of technology is essential in the teaching and learning process because it significantly extends and personalises learning opportunities within a learning community and facilitates flexible approaches to curriculum delivery.
- Consistent with research on effective learning design and delivery technology should be used in combination with other learning tools and resources.

- An inclusive public secondary education system should provide equitable access for all students to appropriate technologies and equip students with essential knowledge and skills that allow them to most effectively use technology in their learning.
- Appropriate and effective use of technology enhances student learning outcomes and opportunities and improves students' ability to become effective life-long learners.
- The nature of schools and schooling will radically change as students use technology to access curriculum from a variety of sources across Australia and overseas.
- Technology influences pedagogy. It changes the ways in which teachers and students engage in learning within a physical or a virtual classroom.
- All teachers must be competent users of technology for both learning and administration. Training in the use of technology in teaching, learning and administration must be an integral part in the professional learning of all staff.
- All teachers should have access to appropriate technology at both their workplace and home, including access to appropriate network services.
- All students should also have access to network services.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

- 3.6.1 support comprehensive policy and planning, driven by the needs of technology and learning and the school community
- 3.6.2 continue to promote to teachers and the community the benefits of technology as a tool to enhance teaching and learning
- 3.6.3 support the implementation of technology competency levels and training for all teachers
- 3.6.4 ensure that all students acquire technological literacy skills through appropriate curriculum provision, pedagogy and access to technology for learning and the Department's own learning network services
- 3.6.5 disseminate and promote information about new approaches which use ICT in learning and teaching
- 3.6.6 advocate for the supply to all teachers of state-of-the-art laptop computers, supported by around the clock remote access to the Department's network and web services, training packages and other professional learning materials
- 3.6.7 support the training and placement of technology systems administrators in all schools
- 3.6.9 encourage innovative uses of technology and imaginative pedagogy as key elements in reconceptualising the curriculum and assessment
- 3.6.10 ensure all school leaders continue to develop the high levels of management and technological skills required to effectively implement the preferred future.

### **3.7 Partnerships**

Students live and work in communities where global views and expectations influence much of what happens. This will be increasingly so in the future. Their need for more complex skills to take part in this community will continue.

Community expectations of secondary education will include:

- the need to be flexible and responsive to the demands of rapid changes in society
- provision of a sense of stability, continuity and belonging

- building social cohesion through a focus on an agreed set of social values.

Secondary education will continue to be responsible for the education of all adolescents and for developing their skills for employability and lifelong learning.

The increasing complexity of demands on secondary education will lead to an increasingly complex set of relationships with government, the Department of Education and Training and other stakeholders. In this community and educational context, co-operative quality partnerships are crucial to the relevance, purpose and continual improvement of secondary education.

***GOAL 7: To develop and sustain collaborative, productive partnerships between learning environments, systems, governments and other stakeholders in order to appropriately shape the future of secondary education.***

The following beliefs underpin the goal for partnerships:

- The education system is publicly accountable. It is delivered within a legislative framework that requires systemic provision, a common but flexible curriculum, educational standards and equity.
- Government priorities are reflected in the planning, policies and practices of public secondary education.
- The community has high and diverse expectations of the public education system. As a result, the system and learning environments are subject to both public and media scrutiny.
- Students and their parents have a right to participate in planning the future of education at both local and system levels.
- Public secondary education is inclusive, committed to equity and responsible for catering effectively for the diverse needs of all students.
- Public secondary schools are responsible for educating adolescents for intellectual, physical and personal growth, for life-long learning in a multicultural, democratic, knowledge society and for employability in a changing world of work.
- Public education must be well-resourced to address the diverse needs of students, learning environments and communities.
- Public secondary schools operate most effectively within communities where there are high expectations and strong support from students and parents.
- Many public secondary schools provide leadership in the development and renewal of their local communities.
- Principals and teachers have a critical responsibility to engage in educational debate to create an education system that positively influences the lives of young people and the community and is relevant to the time in which it exists.

To achieve this goal the NSW Secondary Principals' Council will act in partnership with others to:

3.7.1 strengthen its role in the development of education policy by:

- ensuring the structures of the public education system are aligned with the needs of students in changing educational, technological and social environments
- advocating on behalf of students
- delivering ongoing Futures strategies and options for public secondary education
- ensuring that schools commit to rigorous self-evaluation, planning and development to meet changing needs

- 3.7.2 create a climate of dialogue and negotiation with the Department of Education and Training, the NSW Teachers' Federation, the Government and other stakeholders to:
- design systems, procedures and structures to ensure that all partners in the delivery of public secondary education are able to anticipate and respond to change
  - predict and promote the changing role of secondary education
  - lobby for the resources necessary to support quality public education
- 3.7.3 strengthen relationships between it and:
- TAFE, universities, employers and other education providers to increase options and pathways for students in public secondary schools
  - NSW Teachers Federation
  - parent bodies and community agencies
  - State student councils
  - professional leaders associations, particularly those representing Deputy Principals
  - political representatives and parties
- 3.7.4 develop a media strategy at local and state levels to:
- engender support for public secondary education
  - comment on issues affecting schools and their students
  - encourage principals and other key personnel, including students, to influence media opinion.

# **APPENDIX: A HISTORY OF THE PREFERRED FUTURES PROJECT 1995-2005**

## **Origins of the Preferred Futures Project**

Although the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) had started to play an increasing role in advising and influencing the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) in the early 1990s<sup>1</sup>, the origins of the Preferred Futures Project essentially lie in two significant events that occurred in 1995.

The first was the 1995 Third World Convention of the International Confederation of Principals (ICP), held at Darling Harbour, Sydney in September of that year. The conference was organised by the NSWSPC on behalf of the Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA).

The ICP Conference had as its major sponsor the Dusseldorp Foundation. The Foundation, however, had only agreed to this sponsorship provided that ASPA and the NSWSPC use the conference both as a springboard for the ongoing development of principals and as a means of developing a proactive policy stance on major issues in secondary education.

The second significant event was the 1995 restructure of the Department of Education and Training which also occurred that September. The ten existing school administrative regions were abolished and replaced by forty school districts across the state managed by District Superintendents.

The result of this restructure was that it was no longer possible for Council to operate on the basis of a small State Executive that included one representative from each of the old regions. As a result, the Council was forced to develop a new structure for itself in 1996 comprising 40 District Councils, a State Assembly of District Representatives, an expanded State Executive and a comprehensive system of Reference Groups to represent Council in its consultations with DET<sup>2</sup>.

These two events, in combination, provided a strong incentive for Council to take significant steps in the direction of proactive policy formulation. It strongly supported the Dusseldorp Foundation's vision and challenge for the NSWSPC and it also definitely wanted to strengthen its own position as an important educational stakeholder and increase its impact on policy making. In addition, the Council's new organisational structure of districts and reference groups was operating within a context where it frequently had no major policy statements on major educational issues. It was essential that the Council have formulated policies if it was to speak with one strong united voice.

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<sup>1</sup> President of the NSWSPC from June 1992 to June 1995 was Ron Hurley, who increasingly promoted and demonstrated the idea that the NSWSPC, as an autonomous professional organisation, could play a very significant and influential role in providing advice to DET on a range of key issues of interest to Principals and schools.

<sup>2</sup> President of the NSWSPC from June 1995 to June 1998 was Jim Harkin. Jim led the Council through its 1996 reorganisation into district councils and reference groups, the development of the first set of executive stimulus papers, the early strategic planning for the Futures Project and negotiations with the Director-General about the Futures Project.

In late 1996 the State Executive held a weekend planning workshop to discuss these important issues. The result was general agreement by the State Executive that Council should commit itself to a major project looking at secondary education from a proactive point of view, beyond the short term goals set by government. Each member of the executive volunteered to write a stimulus paper on a major issue or topic. The half dozen papers that emerged from this process became the fore-runners of the Preferred Futures Project.

By late 1997, however, it had become obvious that the development of a range of stimulus papers alone was not going to offer a long term solution to Council's desire for increased influence over future directions in education. The need for a comprehensive, forward-thinking strategic plan or policy statement to revitalise secondary education was required.<sup>3</sup>

At the Executive meeting in February 1998 the Preferred Futures Project was adopted as the major Council priority for 1998-2000, with a recognition that Council would need to commit significant funds to support the project's implementation.

### **Development of the Preferred Futures Policy Statement**

Work on the project during early 1998 focused on the establishment of a broad project plan and project framework, discussions with the Director-General<sup>4</sup> about funding and proposed action, and the identification of secondary principals across the state who had a special interest in a range of important topic areas. The result of this work was that in mid-1998 DET agreed to jointly fund the project with the NSWSPC (initially providing \$50,000 over three years) and a secondary principal was appointed as the NSWSPC 'Futures' Project Director<sup>5</sup>.

In June 1998 a special meeting was held at the NSWSPC Annual Conference<sup>6</sup> to commence the project in earnest. At this meeting a number of principals were invited to form and lead special project teams<sup>7</sup> to develop material around the underlying beliefs, goals and strategies for each of the key sections of the Futures document.

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<sup>3</sup> This point of view was further reinforced during a visit to the New York Education Department by a group of NSW principals in 1997, who found that the head of the Department and the Educational Board had adopted a strategy of actively leading the educational debate in that state, rather than passively accepting successive government policies. The success of this strategy provided the NSW principals with even greater resolve to go ahead with actively influencing policy development in NSW.

<sup>4</sup> The Director-General at that time was Dr Ken Boston, who was very keen about the potential of the project to initiate change in NSW public education. Dr Boston remained a very strong supporter of the Futures project for his whole term as D-G, as did Jan McClelland, who replaced him as D-G during 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Brunning was appointed as Project Director and served in that role until January 2000 when he took up the role of the first 'Futures Principal' – a deployed principal position in state office with responsibility for the project's implementation.

<sup>6</sup> Annual Conference in June 1998 saw a change in the senior executive of Council. Jim Harkin stepped down and Larissa Treskin became President, with Chris Bonnor as Deputy President. Larissa was President until August 2001, after which Chris became Acting President until June 2002, and then President. Both of these principals were heavily involved in the Futures Project right from the start. They played critical roles in maintaining the momentum and direction of the Futures Project.

<sup>7</sup> The principals who worked as project team leaders during the development of the Futures document included Christine Cawsey (Political/educational interface), Ros Davis (Teachers and teaching), Edward Gavin (Planning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century), Deanna Hoermann (Managing change), Ann King and Rae Mitchell (Schools as learning environments), Ann Newman and Robyn Hunt (Students as learners), Fiona Prentice (Schools in the 90s), Brian Ralph (Principles and ethics), Bernie Shepherd (Curriculum and credentialing), Bruce Stavert and Lyn Wendtman (Technology in learning) and Suzette Young (Leadership).

During late 1998 and early 1999 a large number of workshops, conferences and state-wide consultations occurred<sup>8</sup>. In August a two day Futures Conference was organised to explore the whole issue of education futures, based on a futures methodology called 'Futurescan' that used matrices of ideas to narrow down possible and preferred educational futures<sup>9</sup>. The State meeting in October involved a Futures keynote speaker and discussion groups led by the project team leaders. A meeting of all the project teams in November evaluated a range of educational futures scenarios which were then used to develop a realistic framework within which the material being developed by each of the project teams could be evaluated. Discussions at State Assembly in November resulted in a number of additional recommendations being made about the project.

The start of 1999 saw a continuation of the many Futures meetings and consultations. By mid February a draft Green Paper had been developed and released for discussion at district meetings. In early March the project teams met again to report on progress and further refine their material. In late April there was a major two day conference where much of the project team material was finalised and a range of strategic options for action were explored.

There was extensive practitioner input during this time of development with almost half of the secondary principals in the state eventually involved. The project was also enhanced by input from a number of outside speakers at the various workshops and conferences<sup>10</sup>. Many of the project teams also included DET state office personnel and some also had academics in their team. The project also involved the participation of the Minister's Office, DET senior officers<sup>11</sup>, the NSW Teachers' Federation and the NSW Federation of P&C Associations.

A draft White Paper<sup>12</sup> was eventually issued to all principals just prior to the NSWSPC Annual Conference in June, with extensive discussion sessions and workshop sessions being held during the conference. This draft paper was subsequently refined and then underwent critical appraisal and further significant rewriting after Annual Conference<sup>13</sup>. The final White Paper was eventually adopted unanimously as Council policy at the NSWSPC State Assembly in August 1999. It was subsequently published and distributed to all members of the NSWSPC and all relevant stakeholder groups during early 2000 under its present title, *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Much of the work of organising these workshops and meetings, developing workshop materials, collating responses and supporting the team leaders in a wide range of issues during this very busy time fell on the experienced shoulders of Col Cooksey (Professional Officer) and Ron Simpson (Executive Support), with Bill Kennedy (Executive Officer) in support.

<sup>9</sup> The 'Futurescan' methodology was provided by Dr Rick Slaughter. He was crucial in providing a theoretical framework for action.

<sup>10</sup> Key 'Futures' speakers included Dr Rick Slaughter, Dr Richard Neville, Eva Cox, Dr Marc Bowles and John Findlay.

<sup>11</sup> With particular support from Assistant Director-General Steve Buckley.

<sup>12</sup> The Green Paper and draft White Paper were the result of extensive collating and editing by the editorial team of Col Cooksey, Ron Simpson, Robyn Furness and Lyn Wendtman, with Maurice Brunning and Chris Bonnor in support.

<sup>13</sup> The main writer and editor of the White Paper after Annual Conference was Col Cooksey, greatly assisted by Robyn Furness and Lyn Wendtman. The critical appraisal was performed by Dr Marc Bowles, Dr Christine Deer and Professor Geoff Scott.

<sup>14</sup> *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* is available on the NSWSPC website ([www.nswspc.org.au](http://www.nswspc.org.au)).



## **Establishment of structures to support Futures implementation**

The public release of the White Paper in August 1999 led to significant discussions between the Council and Director-General about the recommendations contained in the document and how they might be achieved. There was particular support from the Director-General, with additional immediate funding of \$50,000 to Council plus the 12 month deployment of a secondary principal to State Office in 2000 (a 'Futures Principal', paid for by DET) to work with secondary principals and DET officers on the recommendations identified in the document. This 'Futures Principal' position officially continued for four years until the end of 2003, providing Council with a deployed principal each year working full-time on 'Futures' initiatives. These principals played critical roles in the implementation of the Futures Project.<sup>15</sup>

In November 1999 the NSWSPC also established a 'Futures Keyteam' from the core of enthusiastic, expert principals who had worked on the project to date. Its role was to drive the implementation of the Preferred Futures Project within Council and DET and support the work of the Futures Principal, who acted as its team leader. Renamed the 'Futures Project Team' in July 2002, it played a critical role between 1999 and 2004 in setting broad directions for the implementation of the project, identifying priorities, developing strategies, making recommendations to the Executive and coordinating, supporting and monitoring project implementation.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, in support of the newly-established Futures Keyteam and Futures Principal, NSWSPC reference groups began developing action plans and timelines specifically targeting those recommendations of direct relevance to their group<sup>17</sup>. This ensured not only a unified approach across the Council but also total coverage of all the areas of action required. These action plans were then combined into one plan for the Council as a whole. Each reference group then took up their own particular Futures issues with their respective DET Director, consistently returning to them and raising them at every opportunity over the next few years.

## **The impact of the Preferred Futures Policy Statement, 2000-2001**

The Preferred Futures document approved for release in August 1999 identified a number of important areas for action, with each having various recommendations attached to it. The seven areas for action were:

- Needs-based solutions for educational provision at the local level
- A culture of new ideas and innovative approaches for effective change
- Leadership training for effective management
- Action research projects to encourage the development of more flexible learning

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<sup>15</sup> The four 'Futures Principals' deployed into state office and funded by DET to work on the project's implementation were Maurice Brunning (2000), Chris Bonnor (2001), Bruce Stavert (2002) and Brian Ralph (2003).

<sup>16</sup> Between Nov 1999 and June 2002 the members of the Futures Keyteam included Chris Bonnor, Maurice Brunning, Christine Cawsey, John Craig, Ros Davis, Greg Dickinson, Bob Healy, Deanna Hoermann, Pamela Hunt, Rae Mitchell, Ann Newman, Sharon Parkes, Bruce Stavert, Larissa Treskin and Lyn Wendtman, with Bill Kennedy and then Ron Simpson in an executive support role. From July 2002 to mid 2004, the renamed 'Futures Project Team' comprised Chris Bonnor, Christine Cawsey, Ros Davis, Greg Dickinson, Anne-Marie Furney, Phil Halpin, Rae Mitchell, Ann Newman, Brian Ralph, Bernie Shepherd, Bruce Stavert and Suzette Young, with Bill Kennedy and then June Richards in the executive support role.

<sup>17</sup> This process was begun through a special Futures conference for reference groups in November 1999.

- Flexible curriculum frameworks providing individual learning programs to meet outcomes standards
- Provision of resources to schools to meet the outcomes standards required by government and the community
- A proactive, consolidated and sustained commitment by the NSWSPC to lead and foster the changes needed for the future.

In addition, each of the sections within the Futures document – the political/education interface, leading change, preferred futures within schools – contained not only a statement of the beliefs that principals held in relation to each of these, but also a list of strategic options that needed to be pursued.

During Term 1 2000 these areas for action, recommendations and strategic options were further refined by District meetings, reference groups and the Executive into five priority strategic options to which specific projects and actions could be attached and implemented over the next two years or so. The five priorities were:

- Pilot projects focused on innovative teaching/learning research and practice
- Pilot projects to redevelop schools as learning environments reflecting contemporary pedagogical and technological change
- Redefining of teachers' and students' roles in the learning process, resulting in changes in pedagogy and student participation in learning
- Exploration of alternative school organisational structures for the future
- Projects to investigate the use of technology in curriculum delivery, including tracking and reporting of student progress.

During 2000 and 2001 the Futures Keyteam and the two deployed Futures Principals<sup>18</sup> working in State Office during this period focused their efforts on the following projects and activities:

- Provision of advice to DET and to the NSWSPC – The existence and availability of a senior NSWSPC secondary principal in State Office provided many opportunities for the establishment of NSWSPC consultations and the provision of extensive NSWSPC advice and information on secondary school issues to many DET officers and working groups. In particular, the Futures Keyteam and Futures Principal worked closely with the NSWSPC Executive and a number of Council reference groups to enhance consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- Secondary Education Taskforce – This was established by the D-G in early 2000 as a direct result of the Council's Futures work, with terms of reference to develop and oversight the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to revitalise public secondary education and boost public confidence in secondary schools. It comprised the D-G, DD-Gs AD-Gs and various DET Directors, plus the SPC President, Deputy President and three members of the Futures Keyteam. The taskforce lasted for about 18 months before other priorities overtook it. It led to the establishment of the Schools Frontline Project and a DET inquiry into online learning and related technology issues.
- School's Frontline Project – A total of 16 schools were provided with up to \$15,000 each by DET in early 2001 to work with DET and several external partners on a variety of school image projects such as school promotion and marketing, improved school-community relationships, school-community links through technology and

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<sup>18</sup> Maurice Brunning (2000) and Chris Bonnor (2001).

various improvements in the visual/aesthetic appearance of schools. The principals involved in this project subsequently provided significant input into the NSWSPC response to the Grimshaw review of non-government schools.

- Showcasing Schools Project – A number of schools presented workshops at Annual Conference in 2001 that showcased innovative learning and teaching practices and the systems in schools that supported these.
- The *Virtual Boss* CD-ROM – This was a CD-ROM developed by the Council that had hot-links to many websites on pedagogy and technology change at the school level, plus other technical information including the operation of e-boards, online learning and NSWSPC Futures work. It was issued to all secondary principals at Annual Conference in June 2000.<sup>19</sup>
- NSWSPC ‘HOT’ Conferences – During 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 the NSWSPC conducted a two day ‘Hands On Technology’ Conference in November of each year at the Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh. These conferences were devised with a view to providing principals with the latest information about technology innovations in teaching and learning, and included keynote speakers, technical talks and hands-on workshops with the latest computers and learning programs. Approximately 100 principals attended each of the four conferences, initially with deliberate targeting of two principals from every district per year to spread technology knowledge across the state. The first three conferences were significantly supported by DET funding. The conferences were consistently highly evaluated by all principals who attended.<sup>20</sup>
- SPC/UTS Online Learning Project – Teachers in seven schools across NSW used the online learning platform *Blackboard* to develop and deliver online units of study in economics, business studies and legal studies which were then trialed by students. The online modules were based on very successful online student learning guides developed by the University of Technology Sydney. The trial also involved the students communicating with their peers and with UTS academics. One result of the Online Learning Project was that it particularly contributed to the priorities in technology and online learning identified within the DET’s own ICT Strategic Plan published in late 2001. Another result of the trial was that the obvious immediate need for significant increased bandwidth in schools for effective teaching and learning became a major focus in Council’s dealings with the Minister and DET. Bandwidth for schools was subsequently significantly expanded during 2003-2004.
- SPC/UOW Online Learning Project – This project involved five schools, with support from the University of Wollongong and funding from DET. Three of the schools participated in the development of a number of online learning modules to support the PD/H/PE 25 hour *CrossRoads* course, one school focused on gifted and talented student modules and one school on more general mainstream online student support and pedagogical change. This initiative was taken over by DET, in partnership with the University of Wollongong, which then resulted in much of the *CrossRoads* course being put online.
- Terasys/Macquarie Bank Partnership – This involved technology training of school staff and students, delivered by Terasys and funded by the Macquarie Bank. Its purpose was to demonstrate that there were a variety of ways to deliver technology training for schools.

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<sup>19</sup> Particular thanks go to Greg Dickinson and Bruce Stavert for their work on the *Virtual Boss* CD ROM. The Project was also supported by DET which provided about \$5000 in funds for production and distribution.

<sup>20</sup> Particular thanks go to Greg Dickinson and a small core of enthusiastic supporters from within the Futures Keyteam/Project Team each year for the organisation of these HOT conferences.

- NSWSPC technology visit to Victoria – A visit by the Technology Reference Group to schools in Victoria at the forefront of technology in learning and teaching, to support the Council’s developing ideas on learning technology innovation.
- Alignment of NSWSPC training and development priorities – The extensive work undertaken on Futures priorities during these two years saw the emergence of a policy to specifically align all NSWSPC training and development activities, including annual conference, to the Futures priorities for that year. This alignment became standard operational procedure for all professional learning activities conducted by the Council from 2002 onwards.
- NSWSPC responses to major reviews – Coordination by the Keyteam, in association with the State Executive, of a number of Council submissions and responses to major education reviews, including the Grimshaw Review of non-government schools, the Ramsay Review of teacher education, the Vinson Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW and the Board of Studies Review of junior secondary curriculum.
- SPC website upgrade – Significant changes were made to the SPC website during 2001 to make it more interactive and easy to update, so that it could be used by principals each day to find information, communicate with others and make their work more effective.

### **The Futures Project Evaluation, 2001-2002**

By mid-2001 it had become obvious that two important priorities identified in the original Preferred Futures document had not yet been significantly addressed. These were:

- developing and supporting students to become self-directed life-long learners, including an emphasis on the approaches, structures and processes that best support learning.
- developing, empowering and supporting school leaders, including an emphasis on leadership development and increased flexibility at the school level.

There was also an increasing awareness of the need to obtain a consensus for future directions in the work of Council and to ensure ownership of the Futures document by the rapidly growing number of new principals who had been appointed since the release of the original document and therefore did not have any ownership stake in it.

With this in mind, it was decided that there should be an evaluation of the implementation of the Preferred Futures Project to date, plus a comprehensive program of district meetings, state meetings, state training days and annual conference presentations targeting pedagogy and learning as the priority for 2002.

The Futures Evaluation was conducted between September and December 2001 using an online survey tool developed in conjunction with the University of Technology, Sydney<sup>21</sup>. The focus of the evaluation centred on the key purposes of the original project, the key projects undertaken to date and the change management strategies used to support the implementation of the project so far.

Approximately 35% of secondary principals responded to the survey. The results were subsequently collated, analysed and a series of recommendations were developed during

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<sup>21</sup> With special thanks to Professor Geoff Scott, UTS.

Term 1 2002<sup>22</sup>, with detailed discussion of the recommendations and proposed actions at Annual Conference in June 2002.

The results of the evaluation, where every item in the survey scored between 4.14 and 4.66 on an ‘importance scale’ of 1-5, indicated that there was continuing strong support amongst secondary principals for all aspects of the project. However, there was also a general implication that some of the more critical strategic purposes, action areas and change strategies had not been as effectively achieved as some of the others.

In summary, the evaluation provided the following recommendations for future action:

- Keep the central focus of the project primarily on teaching, learning and the support that is required for these to be most effective
- Work on a smaller number of evidence-based, high leverage priorities that are desirable, feasible and relevant
- Put in place a more targeted communication and involvement strategy for all NSWSPC members
- Adopt an approach to professional development that provides a sustained focus on a small number of critical areas or issues for school and system change
- Insist that all school change is supported by appropriate change in administrative and support systems, infrastructure and resources
- Apply best practice action research in the implementation of projects
- Systematically gather and publish quantitative and qualitative data on projects to track progress and prove their value and effectiveness
- Look both within and beyond DET for relevant ideas, solutions and partnerships for action
- Determine how to best work with such a large, frequently politically-driven but fragmented bureaucracy to attain our goals, when some NSWSPC members regard contact and networking with DET as “joining the dark side”
- Develop collaborative, reciprocal networks with key partners and stakeholder groups to enhance and gain support for Council priorities for action
- Institute professional development for principals on effective networking, change management and action research
- Review the leadership and organisational structures, roles and relationships within the NSWSPC to ensure coordinated, focused and cohesive action across the organisation
- Develop a media and publicity/promotion strategy to both ensure support for Futures projects and influence government opinion.

The three top-ranking areas for further action related to:

- increasing the strategic effectiveness of the NSWSPC in its advocacy and policy influence role (a priority subsequently taken forward by the NSWSPC Executive)
- maintaining a strong, practical-oriented focus on improved teaching and learning (the agreed Futures focus for 2002, already in the full implementation phase by the time the evaluation was published)
- improving Council communication and organisational structures (subsequently taken forward by the Executive).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Critical in this process was a small editorial team comprising Christine Cawsey, Deanna Hoermann, John Craig and Bruce Stavert.

<sup>23</sup> For more detailed information on all the results and recommendations, please refer to *Evaluation of the implementation of the NSW Secondary Principals’ Council “Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW” Project*, NSWSPC, May 2002. This is available on the NSWSPC website ([www.nswspc.org.au](http://www.nswspc.org.au)).

## Futures achievements, 2002

In the first half of 2002 the main focus of the Futures Keyteam and the new Futures Principal<sup>24</sup> was on classroom pedagogy and learning. This was supported, however, by a growing need in the second half of the year for increased action in the area of leadership as the DET's own leadership development strategy began to take shape.

Among the projects and activities conducted during 2002 were:

- Provision of advice to DET and the NSWSPC, and the maintenance of close consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- Completion of the Futures evaluation document – Collation and analysis of the results of the online survey conducted in December 2001, development of the recommendations, writing up of the published document, dissemination of results.
- Preferred Futures Workshops – These were held at Annual Conference in June and at the Central Schools Conference in August. One deliberate aim was to involve all of the new principals who had been appointed since the original Futures document in 1999 in the establishment of the Council's priorities for the next 12-18 months. The workshops provided Council with a clear mandate to continue its Futures' focus on pedagogy and technology into 2003, but with leadership development also now added as a key priority. The workshops also identified key issues that needed to be taken up by reference groups with DET.
- NSWSPC Learning Forum – This activity dominated Futures' efforts during the first half of 2002. It involved an extensive, ongoing professional learning program that provided principals with a sustained focus on the critical area of classroom pedagogy and learning, including an overview of the recently-released Queensland research on 'Productive Pedagogies'. It included pedagogy and learning workshops during Term 1 District meetings, the State Meeting on 22 March, the State Training Day on 23 March, Term 2 District meetings, keynote addresses and workshops on pedagogy and learning at Annual Conference in June, Term 3 District meetings and finally, the State Meeting on 13 September.
- NSWSPC *Effective Pedagogy* Paper – The NSWSPC Learning Forum in early 2002 presented an ideal opportunity for the Council to develop a position paper on classroom pedagogy for NSW secondary schools. Information from Term 1 workshops at District meetings, the State Meeting and the State Training Day were combined to produce a draft position paper for consideration by Term 2 District meetings, which was then refined at Term 3 District meetings and finally presented for endorsement at the Term 4 State Assembly.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, however, there was increasing pressure also being put on DET by the NSWSPC to come out with a system-wide policy statement on pedagogy. In May 2002 DET announced the formation of a DET reference group with significant representation from the NSWSPC to oversee not only the implementation of the new 7-10 curriculum changes in 2003-2004, but also the development of a DET pedagogy paper to support the new curriculum. At the time of this announcement, DET openly acknowledged that the NSWSPC focus on pedagogy for 2002, plus the NSWSPC Learning Forum activities conducted on 22-23 March, had triggered this action. The DET discussion paper *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools* was developed over the second half of

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<sup>24</sup> The Futures Principal for 2002 was Bruce Stavert, for the first time now with a role statement negotiated between the NSWSPC and DET, as DET sought to increasingly utilise the Futures Principal in more of its own project work.

<sup>25</sup> Much of this work was undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Reference Group led by Ann Newman.

2002 and eventually released to all schools in June 2003. With the development and promised release of the Quality Teaching discussion paper at system level, the NSWSPC State Assembly in Term 4 2002 opted to endorse the principles underpinning the NSWSPC *Effective Pedagogy* paper, rather than adopt it as official Council policy, for two reasons – firstly to avoid confusion between the two papers that had many similarities<sup>26</sup>, and secondly because the Council had engaged in its own pedagogy paper essentially because of the lack of direction and leadership being provided by DET. Now that DET had produced a system-wide paper that was to be supported by a Quality Teaching Unit, 10 regional consultants and extensive professional support materials and training, we had essentially done our job!

- NSWSPC Leadership Forum – Results of the Futures workshops at Annual Conference and the Central Schools Conference clearly established the need for leadership as a major item on the Futures agenda for 2003. This priority was also considerably reinforced by two external events – the establishment of a DET review of its current leadership development strategy in April, and negotiations between national principals’ associations and the Federal Government for a proposed national leadership centre for principals<sup>27</sup>. As a result of these three factors, the State Training Day in Term 3 was devoted to leadership and coaching, and planning commenced in earnest for a ‘Leadership Forum’ that would provide a sustained professional development program on leadership development for 2003, just like the Learning Forum was doing for pedagogy and learning in 2002. State Assembly in Term 4 subsequently endorsed the Leadership Forum as the major Futures activity for 2003.
- DET Leadership Development Strategy – In March 2002 the DET established a School Leadership Development Reference Group (SLDRG) to review existing DET school leadership development programs and provide input into a proposed new strategy for 2003. The NSWSPC reps on this committee subsequently worked very closely with the School Leadership Development Unit (SLDU) and NSWPPA during Terms 3 and 4 as the various elements of the new strategy were planned in detail.<sup>28</sup>
- DET ISP/Web Services Project – The DET decision in 2002 to develop and implement a package of online services and products in schools by early 2004 resulted in significant input from the NSWSPC into the project specifications relating to technology for learning, plus advice on implementing the trials in schools, based on our extensive online learning experience gained during the 2000-2001 Futures’ technology projects.
- Hot Conference 3 – A third very successful HOT Conference was conducted in November.

### **Futures achievements, 2003**

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<sup>26</sup> The reason for the similarity in papers was, of course, because the NSWSPC principals working on the Council’s own pedagogy paper had already engaged extensively with the Productive Pedagogies material coming out of Queensland and in particular with one of its authors, Jim Ladwig from the University of Newcastle, who also ended up as one of the two authors of the DET Quality Teaching discussion paper.

<sup>27</sup> This came to fruition in July 2003 when the Federal Government announced the establishment of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL), now called Teaching Australia.

<sup>28</sup> The role of the NSWSPC and NSWPPA on the SLDRG during 2002-2003 was particularly important to the development of the current School Leadership Development Strategy. This was because only the NSWSPC and NSWPPA reps remain unchanged during this period when all the other members of the SLDRG constantly changed, with the result that it was the NSWSPC and NSWPPA that drove the direction of the strategy’s implementation.

With the Futures' focus in early 2003 squarely on leadership for enhanced learning and teaching, the Futures Project Team and Futures Principal<sup>29</sup> commenced the year with a number of key projects and activities in mind. However, as the year progressed there began to occur a change in the role of the Futures Principal to incorporate more DET priorities and projects.<sup>30</sup> In addition a new, quite urgent priority emerged as a result of the increasing emphasis and focus by DET senior officers during the second half of 2003 on principals as managers rather than educational leaders. This led to the development of the NSWSPC Role of the Principal Project (ROPP), which subsequently dominated Futures' work in Term 4 2003, through all of 2004, and then on into 2005.<sup>31</sup>

The work of the Futures Project Team and Futures Principal during 2003 included the following projects and activities:

- Provision of advice to DET and the NSWSPC, and the maintenance of close consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- NSWSPC Leadership Forum – The focus on leadership as a Futures' priority for 2003 began with a two day 'Leadership for Learning Forum' on 26-27 March. This was followed up by leadership presentations and workshops at the State Training Day on 14 June.<sup>32</sup>
- NSWSPC leadership position papers – The Leadership for Learning Forum in March provided the perfect opportunity for the development of Council policy in this area. A wide range of comments on various leadership issues were collated from the forum by the Leadership Reference Group and these led to a leadership survey that was discussed at Term 2 district meetings. The responses to this survey were then used to develop two draft NSWSPC position papers – one on leadership development and one on the establishment of a Leadership Centre in NSW. These drafts were refined at Term 3 district meetings and the two final papers became official policy at the Term 3 State Assembly in August.
- DET School Leadership Development Strategy – Apart from the provision of continuing extensive advice into the development of the strategy itself prior to its approval for implementation in early 2003, NSWSPC reps also provided direct input and support for many activities, e.g. a significant contribution in shaping the Scott capability research findings into the School Leadership Capability Framework that is

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<sup>29</sup> The Futures Principal for 2003 was Brian Ralph, with the Keyteam now renamed the 'Futures Project Team'.

<sup>30</sup> Unknown to the NSWSPC, 2003 was to be the last year that DET was to fund the deployed Futures Principal position in State Office. This was probably a result of the removal in January 2004 of D-G Jan McClelland who had strongly supported the Futures Project just like her predecessor Ken Boston, plus the significant cost cutting occurring right across DET at the end of that year as it sought to fund the State Government's promises made during the March 2003 state election. In addition, the role of the deployed principal became increasingly linked to DET projects from May 2003 onwards as a result of the DET's need to implement these election promises. From mid-2003 the Futures Principal's role became split between Futures work on one side for the NSWSPC, and government election commitments on the other for DET.

<sup>31</sup> Despite the cancellation of the Futures Principal position in state office at the end of 2003, the thrust of Futures continued strongly during 2004 and then into 2005. There were three key reasons for this - firstly, the fact that Futures had become so integrated into NSWSPC thinking, planning and structures that the process naturally continued even without a full-time deployed principal in support, secondly the energy of the small team of principals brought together to manage the Role of the Principal Project during 2003 drove this key flagship project strongly through 2004 and into 2005, and thirdly the deployment of the 2003 Futures Principal into the Secondary Education Directorate in 2004-2005 to work on DET priorities, but then being given great flexibility by Trevor Wootten, Director of Secondary Education, to work on priorities and projects way beyond the scope of the official role statement.

<sup>32</sup> With particular thanks to Ros Davis as leader of the Leadership Reference Group, for her work as the coordinator of these three professional learning days, ably supported by members of the Leadership Reference Group and Futures Project Team.



now being used as a basis for all leadership development programs and planning in DET, significant input into the design of the Targeted Principal Preparation Program including training of the principal mentors in the program, direct assistance in developing the structure and content of the school leadership website, direct help with the revised principal induction program.

- NSWSPC Role of the Principal Project – See separate section below.
- DET Quality Teaching discussion paper – June saw the release of the DET discussion paper on quality teaching. This was supported by continuing NSWSPC representation on the DET 7-10 Curriculum Implementation Reference Group, plus a number of quality teaching presentations around the state during the year.
- DET Professional Learning Policy – Following on from the State Government’s election announcement in March of significant funding over the next four years for professional development in schools, the NSWSPC Training and Development Reference Group and members of the Futures Project Team joined together to develop a revised NSWSPC position paper on Professional Learning and Development that was eventually approved as Council policy at Term 3 State Assembly. This position paper had a significant influence on the DET’s own Professional Learning Policy subsequently released in November, with Council helping to write the DET policy document and providing extensive input into the support documents.
- NSW Institute of Teachers – In April the NSWSPC organised a consultation forum involving district representatives, the State Executive and Futures Project Team. This forum subsequently led to a series of focus questions being developed for Term 2 district meetings, as a basis for an official NSWSPC response in June to many of the issues relating to the proposed establishment of the Institute.
- HOT Conference – A fourth (and final) Hands On Technology Conference was very successfully conducted over two days in November at the Australian Technology Park.
- DET ISP/Web Services Project – The establishment by DET of an advisory group for this initiative at the start of 2003 allowed the NSWSPC to provide extensive advice on many issues associated with this project through both 2003 and 2004.<sup>33</sup>
- NSWSPC website redesign – By early 2003 it had become obvious that the NSWSPC website needed a complete redesign and rewrite of all the materials to make it more relevant and user-friendly for principals. This occurred during 2003-2004 with an official launch of the new site at the NSWSPC Annual Conference in June 2004.<sup>34</sup>

## **Role of the Principal Project 2003-2005**

Although there had been considerable discussion within the NSWSPC over many years about the DET-prescribed mandatory roles that secondary principals were expected to perform, this situation was brought into stark focus at the NSWSPC Annual General Meeting in June 2003 when, in his report and address to members, the President<sup>35</sup> challenged those present to not only consider their current roles but debate new roles they would need in order to meet the changing needs of schools and school communities both now and in the future. There was a significant emphasis on the need to rethink how principals want to see public education managed in NSW, and what role they want to play in any new model.

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<sup>33</sup> The DET ISP/Web Services Implementation Reference Group continued meeting until October 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Particular thanks go to Bill Kennedy for his continuing management of the website.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Bonnor

The result was the establishment in July 2003 of the Role of the Principal Project (ROPP) and the appointment of a project coordinator<sup>36</sup>, with the brief of exploring the current roles of secondary principals, considering future roles and designing and specifying the management framework within which these roles could be best performed.<sup>37</sup>

In July an initial discussion paper was developed and in August a two day 'Think Tank' of 30 principals from across the state, including the Futures Project Team, considered in some detail the current roles of secondary principals not only in NSW but elsewhere in Australia and overseas. A series of principles and propositions about the role of the principal in NSW public secondary education were developed which were then discussed in detail at Term 4 district meetings. A second 'Think Tank' meeting in December clarified these ideas and a small team, the 'ROPP Management Team'<sup>38</sup>, was then formed to move the project forward, supported by contact persons in every district.

During Term 1 teams of principals visited other Australian states and New Zealand and developed detailed reports based upon their observations<sup>39</sup>. One of these reports was presented at the Term 1 State Meeting. In Term 1 an academic partner also joined the project<sup>40</sup> and additional interviews were conducted with 19 NSW principals and also a number of overseas principals<sup>41</sup>.

Annual Conference in Term 2 saw the presentation of a Green Paper providing a draft statement on the preferred role of the secondary principal, keynote presentations on the findings of the various interstate and overseas visits and several workshops that targeted principals' perceptions of their role. The Green Paper was subsequently discussed in detail at District meetings early in Term 3 and District contacts then met in Sydney to share their responses. The final 'White Paper' was presented and approved as official Council policy at the State Assembly in August.

The White Paper identified five key dimensions of the role of the principal as an educational leader.<sup>42</sup> It also indicated the responsibilities within those five areas and, more importantly, the responsibilities that DET State Office, Regions and the NSWSPC also would need to address in order for a secondary principal to effectively perform that role.

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<sup>36</sup> Christine Cawsey

<sup>37</sup> The establishment of the project was in fact quite timely – there had been a DET restructure announced in late June which eventually took until November to complete, Director General Jan McClelland was subsequently removed in January 2004, and a new attitude of principals as managers, not educational leaders, began to pervade the thinking and conversations of senior DET officers in the second half of 2003 and early 2004.

<sup>38</sup> The ROPP Management Team comprised Christine Cawsey (team leader), Stephen Brewer, Lila Mularczyk, Ted Noon, Geoff Pellizzer, Chris Presland, Brian Ralph and Bernie Shepherd, with June Richards as executive support.

<sup>39</sup> Four of these visits were funded through DET Leadership Fellowships. The 12 principals involved in the fellowships received a total of \$20,000 to conduct the team visits to New Zealand, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

<sup>40</sup> Dr Debra Hayes, from the University of Technology Sydney, acted as both an academic partner and critical friend to the project.

<sup>41</sup> The 19 NSW principals interviewed by Christine Cawsey provided a wealth of information about current issues in the principalship. These later became significant influences in the NSWSPC's final ROPP paper, and were also the basis for several key recommendations put forward by the NSWSPC in its submission to the *Excellence and Innovation* Futures Project conducted by DET in 2004-2005. The 19 principals were also invited to a consultation within the *Excellence and Innovation* project, where they helped establish some of the parameters for the secondary education section of the consultation document.

<sup>42</sup> Please refer to *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools – Interim Position Paper*, NSWSPC, August 2004. This is available on the NSWSPC website ([www.nswspc.org.au](http://www.nswspc.org.au)).

At the State Meeting in September 2004 principals examined draft recommendations and some of the major issues that had emerged from the project. These recommendations were subsequently refined and ratified by the Term 4 State Assembly. In mid-November reference group leaders came together to develop action plans based on the ROPP recommendations, for implementation during 2005.

During 2005, reference groups implemented their plans through communication with DET senior officers and directorates and work within their own reference groups, including the development and refinement of position papers in a number of important policy areas.

At the state level, the Council developed a detailed response to the DET *Excellence and Innovation* consultation document which encompassed the recommendations from ROPP and provided a clear statement of the preferred future direction of public secondary education in NSW. This response was extremely powerful in influencing the development of the DET's own Futures' recommendations<sup>43</sup>, subsequently released in December 2005.

### **Futures implementation 2004-2005**

Even though the Role of the Principal Project dominated Futures work during late 2003 and all of 2004, a number of other initiatives were also implemented as part of the Future's agenda during 2004 and into 2005. These included:

- NSWSPC 2004 Pedagogy Conference – This was a two day conference held during March 2004 where keynote speakers and individual schools presented sessions based around the DET Quality Teaching discussion paper.<sup>44</sup>
- NSWSPC 2005 Leadership for Learning Conference – This two day conference was held in March 2005 to continue the Council's focus on pedagogy and leadership. It again involved workshop presentations from a large number of schools across the state involved in action research funded by the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program.<sup>45</sup>
- DET Leadership Centre – The concept of a Leadership Centre being established in NSW to drive school leadership development had been talked about since late 2001, coinciding with early moves in the establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers and the emergence of moves at a national level to establish a national leadership centre.<sup>46</sup> This resulted in the development of a NSWSPC position paper on this topic in mid-2003 and subsequently became the focus of much discussion driven by the NSWSPC during 2004 in the DET School Leadership Development Reference Group (SLDRG). In late 2004 a paper proposing the establishment of a DET Leadership

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<sup>43</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training (2005) *One size doesn't fit all- Report of the consultation on future directions for public education and training*

<sup>44</sup> With particular thanks to Suzette Young for her work as the executive member for Learning and Teaching and coordinator of this conference, ably supported by members of the Learning and Teaching Reference Group and June Richards in support.

<sup>45</sup> With particular thanks to Andrew Newman and Murray Paterson for their organisation of this conference, ably supported by Bill Kennedy and Warwick Chipman.

<sup>46</sup> A key figure in the ongoing promotion of the concept of a Leadership Centre for NSW was Bernie Shepherd who, as a member of the NSWSPC Executive, also represented the Council at national level on the Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA) Executive, including holding the position of Deputy President of ASPA, from mid 2000 to late 2004. ASPA was a key player in the development of NIQTSL ('Teaching Australia').

Centre was developed by the SLDRG for submission to the Director-General, but was subsequently sidetracked by DET decisions to pursue leadership development through a partnership with Michael Fullan.

- SPC coaching and mentoring trials – Three important trials occurred during 2004 as a result of the Leadership Reference Group continuing to pursue the concept of mentoring and coaching as valuable strategies for principals, despite these not being significantly incorporated into the DET School Leadership Development Strategy announced in early 2003. In May 2004 12 principals participated in a peer coaching workshop, from August to October six principals were involved in one-on-one coaching and in December 20 principals completed a mentoring workshop. Each of these trials has allowed the NSWSPC to propose the implementation of mentoring and coaching workshops across the state during 2005-2006.<sup>47</sup>

### **NSWSPC Futures Review 2004-2005**

By the start of 2004, the original Preferred Futures document developed during 1998-1999 had obviously triggered off a significant range of proactive initiatives and policies both within the NSWSPC and DET. However, as the years progressed it became increasingly evident that this original document needed to be revisited to take account of the Futures achievements since 1999, plus the significant changes in the educational and political landscape that had occurred since that time.

Discussion during late 2003 and early 2004 within the Futures Project Team led to the establishment of a small team to review the 1999 document and update it in light of ROPP and Futures' achievements<sup>48</sup>. During Term 2 and Term 3 2004 the review team sought input from district meetings which, when combined with input from the Executive and reference groups, enabled the development of a draft revised document that was put to district meetings in Term 3 and Term 4 2005.

In November 2005 the draft document was ratified by the NSWSPC State Assembly as Council policy, replacing the original Preferred Futures document. This revised document, *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*, provides a clear statement about the Council's essential beliefs and priorities and reflects the Council's determination to continue to push for significant innovation in education for the benefit of our students, our schools and for public education in NSW.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> With particular thanks to Greg Dickinson for his work in this area.

<sup>48</sup> This writing team comprised Ann Newman (team leader), Doug Blake, Rae Mitchell, Chris Bonnor and Brian Ralph.

<sup>49</sup> This Futures History, written by Brian Ralph, is up to date as at December 2005.