



**youth** affairs network qld

Submission Response

from

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ)

**The Next Decade**  
The future of Queensland State Schools

Discussion Paper

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## ABOUT THE YOUTH AFFAIRS NETWORK OF QUEENSLAND

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) Inc. is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland. Representing approximately 400 individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector, we promote the interests and well being of young people across the state. YANQ advocates for and with young people especially disadvantaged young people, to government and the community. Further, YANQ encourages and participates in the development of policies, programs, projects, and research that are responsive to the needs of young people.

YANQ also supports and promotes cultural diversity in Queensland. As such, YANQ in partnership and collaboration with the Non-English Speaking Background Youth Issues Network (NESBYN), has continued to sustain the NESB Policy and Network Officer position for the last four years.

### About NESBYN

The NESB Policy and Network Officer in collaboration with NESBYN and YANQ, seeks to facilitate and encourage effective responses to issues as they relate to NESB young people in Queensland. NESBYN is an issues based Network comprising of approximately 130 individual and organisational members across Queensland. Members of NESBYN communicate with YANQ through the NESB Policy and Network Officer via participation in Working Parties, consultation processes, and exchange of ideas on identified issues requiring a peak body response.

## INTRODUCTION

YANQ welcomes the opportunity to input into Education Queensland's discussion paper, *The Next Decade - A Discussion About The Future of Queensland State Schools* (herein referred to as the Discussion Paper).

Preparation of this submission response included YANQ providing an opportunity for members to participate in a consultation on Thursday 24th June 1999 at the YANQ premises to contribute their views.

YANQ would like to acknowledge our membership, in particular the Young Parents Program, Southside Education Centre and members of the Youth Support Coordinators program. Both Policy Officers at YANQ spoke to other service providers across the state to assist the development of this response.

A response page was also prepared on the YANQ website enabling others to have their say as well as providing an opportunity to access copies of the Discussion Paper.

## OUR RESPONSE

YANQ believes that all young people have the right to free, appropriate primary and secondary education, and access to higher education. Education systems in both structure and curriculum should reflect Australia's cultural diversity.

YANQ has chosen a number of key statements from the Discussion Paper by which to construct our response, as well as responding to the issues identified in the paper.

As noted by the Director General, Education Queensland (p. 1) *the experience of school is a powerful one, that will shape the futures of young people and the future of the society in which they will live*. It is therefore paramount that this experience is **safe positive and challenging**, affording young people a multitude of experiences and opportunities through which they may explore their world and their capabilities.

Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and in so doing made a commitment to implement the Articles contained therein. Of particular relevance to the issue of access to appropriate education for **all** young people are Articles 23,28, 29,30 and 31.

Article 23 refers to children with disabilities and their right to special care, **education** and training to assist enjoyment of a full and decent life enabling the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration possible.

Article 28 refers to a child's right to education and the State's duty to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity.

Article 29 states the aims of education, which are noted as being to develop the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for his or her own cultural identity, language and values and for the cultural background and values of others.

Article 30 refers to children of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin, stating that they shall have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.

Article 31 refers to the child's right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

The above Articles all have relevance for our State Education system and further thought needs to be given as to how we are truly going to see them enforced in the nature and purpose of education, as well as the structure and curriculum offered in our State Schools. Appropriate, accessible education for Queensland young people is a human rights issue. It is therefore critical that the mechanics to the rhetoric of social justice, access, equity and participation are critically analysed, given meaning and actioned.

YANQ seeks to advocate on behalf of all young people, particularly young people who are marginalised in society and disadvantaged by socio-economic and mono-cultural structures and systems that seek to disenfranchise them. It is from this premise that YANQ responds.

This document does not seek to address issues specifically related to young people with disabilities suffice to say they are still not adequately provided for in the Education system, both in attitude, structure and curriculum. This challenge needs to be addressed and those who live with a disability and work in the area comprehensively consulted.

The response from the Non English Speaking Background Youth Issues Network attached to this document, addresses further the nature of change required in state schools to address the needs and rights of young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

YANQ is currently represented on the reference group to examine Educational Provision in Alternative Education Settings of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (MACATSIE) This group is engaged in collating data in relation to suspensions, exclusions and truancy of Indigenous young people, and researching alternative models of education. Evidence from the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) suggests that in certain remote parts of the country, some Aboriginal students are absent from school for up to six months of the year. Further the report states "The learning outcomes and school experience of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are clearly profoundly affected by the issue of attendance, security, behaviour and racism."

Issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia need to be addressed in all levels of school curricula and staff professional development. These concepts can be supported under the umbrella of social justice. If attitudes such as those of racism, sexism, and homophobia are not named and addressed in the school system then it is that system that enables and supports bullying and other negative behaviours, which in turn affects retention rates.

The YRC, 1994 report on Young Women and Girls at Risk outlines some of the issues for young women in our state schools and states that, "*our schools need to ensure that the curriculum, in its widest sense, provides for all girls and young women.....Without this attention, some groups of young women will continue to be at risk of becoming marginalised in the process of establishing themselves as adults*".

Gender is still an equity issue to be dealt with. One of the critical issues to be addressed for young women in schools is the development of a policy supporting pregnant and parenting young women to complete their education in the school of their choice.

## ENROLMENT SHARE

State schools are an attractive option to students and parents as they present an opportunity to extend and build on community and relationships that make up community.

*The central aspect of education - the point at which learning takes place - is undoubtedly the relationship between teachers and their students. (p. 1)*

In response to this statement made in the discussion paper YANQ would like to add that we see the relationship between teacher and student as critical but seek to extend this notion to encompass **'peers and community'**. Education does not take place in a vacuum. The power of peer relationships cannot be underestimated hence opportunities should be seized to work with this aspect of student learning relationships rather than setting this up as an obstacle. Peer support, peer advocacy and peer education are concepts that need to be better understood within the context of our education system and used more extensively. Students and schools exist in communities. Schools need to reflect the diversity of their communities and engage with them. Further, student representation in all it's forms must represent this diversity

School and class sizes are too large, with many schools akin to mini-cities. Perhaps there would not be such concern regarding large schools if structures were put in place that created supportive school cultures. Concrete expressions of supportive school cultures have been documented in the multitudes of literature researching alienation and 'at risk' students. (See YRC Report for Alienation Project, ACSA 1996)

Irrespective of some of the recipes for success in the larger schools, the majority of respondents from YANQ's research have resoundingly agreed that school sizes are too large and that there is the potential for young people to feel 'invisible' and their needs to remain unacknowledged and unaddressed.

## RETENTION

Retention rates relate to many of the other issues flagged in the discussion paper including social outcomes, the social roles for schools, teachers work, teaching and learning, community partnerships, the purpose of education - basically if these issues are addressed many young people will remain in education.

Given the large numbers of young people living in poverty state schools need to address this issue if they are to succeed at increasing retention rates.

Recent changes to income support arrangements for young people, that is the Common Youth Allowance, will result in increasing numbers of 16 -18 year olds returning to education and training. Many under 16's will have no choice but to remain in school if their families are to receive benefits on their behalf. State schools will need to become more creative and innovative if they are to address the needs of many of these 'involuntary' students. This is not to say that many of these young people do not value or

want an education, however, for the majority their educational experiences have not been positive given the lack of understanding and appropriate responses to issues faced by many of these young people - poverty, family conflict, substance abuse, sexual violence, homelessness etc.

Further, the implementation of the Common Youth Allowance has resulted in decreased access to income benefits for many young people and their families resulting in financial stress. Research shows that financial stress in families is one of the major causes of family conflict. Families in conflict are less likely to be able to support their young people, which has the potential to decrease retention rates.

Main stream schooling does not suit all young people. Some would put the figure at approximately 50%. It is essential that more alternative and alternate schooling options are available to young people. Examples of creative alternatives exist currently in Queensland, however, many exist on a shoe string budget working with an army of volunteers. The critical factors in these alternative schools are the small numbers of students, valuing of relationships, valuing of the whole young person, integration with community and partnerships with community services.

Examples of alternative programs include the Southside Education Centre, which caters for approximately 30 young women, many of whom are indigenous.

A further example is the Albert Park Flexi School, which was initiated by the Brisbane City Council in 1989 and operates from the amphitheatre in Albert Park, inner city Brisbane. An average of 24 young people per day attends, participating in schooling through the distance education program.

Centre Education Program is another example of a successful alternative program. 'The Centre is about individuals facing their own lives, making their own decisions, having choices and different opportunities, and taking responsibility' (The Centre, 1996)

The Education (General Provision) Act 1989 sections 24 and 25 outline the legislative provisions for the suspension and exclusion of 'disruptive' students. This forms the basis of Education Queensland's Behaviour Management program. Feedback from members and young people has included information that the exclusion process is convoluted and difficult to understand. "It is generally agreed that young people are not aware that they have a right to education and that they have formal processes of appeal in the exclusion procedure." (YANQ, 1995).

Traditional forms of schooling have focused on ensuring students conform to particular patterns of behaviour whereby strict adherence to a set system is essential to the normal running of the school. In order for this type of system to function effectively, the school adopts an authoritarian approach and students are seen as objects of control. As one young person stated to YANQ, "*Schools think they own young people*". This system contradicts the social world outside school in which young people live. It discourages the necessary skills and attributes (decision-making, independence, understanding and use of democratic processes for participation and citizenship) which young people need to survive outside of the school system.

Our state education system needs to encourage and enshrine the principles of participation and respect both in education policy and in the classroom. “*The key seems to lie in the area of student powerlessness and the lack of avenues for participation. Participation is one of the vital factors in effective learning.*”(Witham, 1984). Of particular importance is “*showing respect for children (young people) as persons and enhancing (their) legal and political socialising through participation in decision making*” (Wood, 1992).

YANQ supports the recommendation by the National Children's and Youth Law Centre that in-service and pre-service teacher training is extended to include education on the rights of children and young people. This should also include the collective rights to participation and decision making for young people in accordance with Articles 12 and 14 of UN Convention on the Rights Of the Child.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

It is critical that all schools take on an approach where they view themselves as part of the community and interact meaningfully with their community. Community partnerships will enable the needs and rights of all young people to be more appropriately responded to if school communities are aware of the range of services available to support students and staff, which exist in the broader community.

An example of community partnerships:

- The Youth Support Coordinator Initiative was established in July 1997 as a pilot community based program in response to a growing body of evidence, which indicated the need for collaboration between schools and community services in addressing issues of student homelessness and early school leaving

The evaluation of the Initiative has recently been completed and ‘... concluded, quite clearly, that the Initiative has been successful and should be maintained as a key program for the prevention of, and early intervention in, early school leaving and student homelessness.’ (Youth Program, DFYCC 1999, p.1).

Of note in the Evaluation Report of the Youth Support Coordinator Initiative are the following key findings:

- The process for developing formal protocols between schools and government and community agencies was also viewed as problematic with many YSC's citing the absence of formal protocol between the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and Education Queensland as creating a policy vacuum within which they struggled to establish the legitimacy of other relevant protocols.
- The majority of services believed there was a critical need for a formal memorandum of understanding between the two departments.
- **The model of partnership between school and community based agencies which forms the basis of the Initiative has been a key success factor.** YSC's are able to utilise the benefits of being part of the 'first to know' position of schools as well as capitalise on their position within the network of community resources/responses.

- The marked success of this Initiative needs to be considered in the context of the short time that it has been in operation and it's relatively small size and limited resources. This means that the Youth Support Coordinator Initiative has a largely untapped potential to more fully address the major problems of student homelessness and early school leaving across the state.

Another successful community based program:

The Youth and Community Combined Action (YACCA) Program, funded by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is a primary crime prevention program. YACCA workers, 21 in total across the State, in carrying out developmental work have instigated partnerships with schools as part of their work to identify issues for young people in their communities. One of the many issues responded to by program workers has been that of truancy.

Programs such as YSC and YACCA are examples of the need for a cross-departmental/community partnership response to the education of our young people.

This is particularly critical in rural and remote areas where young people are often proffered a second rate standard of education related to fewer options and scarce resources and services.

*Students in regional Queensland have less chance of completing 12 years than their counterparts in the metropolitan area. In rural and remote areas, retention rates are even lower. (p. 3, Discussion Paper))*

Variety in curriculum is limited. Social and cultural opportunities are few if any and the opportunity to build relationships is thwarted by teachers rarely staying on past country postings, those resources being lost to the schools, as well as families and friends of young people moving on. Creative options need to be looked at for schools in the regions. Mobile units for a range of curriculum projects would go some way towards providing an answer for these schools.

Given the lack of resources in many regional, rural and remote areas, program workers such as the Rural Youth Workers and Youth Development Officers are a source of further partnership work. Networks such as the Rural Youth Workers Network, funded by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, need to be fully resourced and provided with opportunities to link with other networks.

## THE SOCIAL ROLE OF SCHOOLS

As stated in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (HRSCEET) report of the Inquiry Into Truancy and Exclusion of Children and Young People from School (1996),

*The analysis clearly indicates that there is considerable agreement among the key players, education providers, teachers, parents, workers with young people and other community workers, that a situation exists where young people are removing themselves from school, or are being removed, that this affects their life chances and that the situation..... is serious enough to demand urgent remedial attention. (pviii)*

Also,



*Government, schools and community representatives agree that education, welfare and justice issues for young people should be addressed by integrated programs and services delivered through inter-agency cooperative and coordinated mechanisms which ensure that .....no one falls through the safety net.*

*Children and young people who chronically truant or are excluded from school are severely educationally disadvantaged. The causes of truancy and exclusion, taken individually are serious problems, which require urgent remedial action. When an individual experiences several of these causal factors, the likelihood of what individual's marginalisation is greatly increased.*

YANQ calls upon Education Queensland to immediately review its policy on Exclusions and Suspensions which we believe places inappropriate powers in the hands of principals, has an inadequate appeals mechanism and further disadvantages many students who are already marginalised and 'at risk'

There are many reports of inquiries and surveys undertaken during the past few years, which are highly relevant to the social role of schools. All of them have been concerned with a group of young people who share at least some of the following characteristics: early school leaving, homelessness, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, alienation, criminal activity, substance abuse, physical and emotional abuse and welfare dependency. They include:

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Our Homeless Children, Children*, Report on the National Inquiry into Homeless Children, 1989.

David Mackenzie and Chris Chamberlain, *The National Census of Homeless School Students*, 1994.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Report on Aspects of Youth Homelessness*, 1995.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *The Literacy Challenge*, A Report on Strategies for Early Intervention for Literacy and Learning for Australian Children, December 1992.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training, *Sticks and Stones*, Report on Violence in Australian Schools, March 1994.

The social issues for students have been well researched. It is time to systematically address these issues. The HRSCEET, 1996 Report should be revisited and the recommendations reviewed for further consultation with the youth sector.

YANQ believes that schools, whether facilitated by Education Queensland or community-based organisations, must consider themselves sites of learning that not only prepare young people for the labour force. Schools must provide multiple opportunities for young people to develop critical thinking skills and need to consider the definition of learning not only as centred around the 3R's. In preparing young people for the future young people need an understanding of the communities in which they live and need skills in participating in those communities.

*Many schools have launched their own innovative reforms in response to the opportunities and threats they see facing them. Many of these reforms have worked in spite of the system. It is now time for the system to respond. (p3)*

YANQ agrees that there have been a number of innovative, creative responses initiated by and with the Education system. However, many of these responses have not been instituted as systematic change, rather they have often been given insufficient funds and timelines and rarely integrated into the system. Many of these responses are resource intensive as this is what is required in many instances, as is the case with one on one support needed by some students.

On July 23rd 1998 the Health Minister Wendy Edmond announced the introduction of the School Health Nurse Program. It is intended that the initiative will involve 100 nurses over four years covering up to 500 schools across the state.

It is our understanding that the first fifty school health nurses have been recruited with 25 already employed in schools and a further 25 preparing for induction in July. YANQ commends the State Government on it's allocation of funds in this area noting that this initiative will assist schools in their work with other government and community services in the interest of their students.

YANQ understands that the school based health nurses will have a range of responsibilities, including counselling, nutrition information, eating disorders, drug and alcohol education, suicide prevention awareness and sexual health programs. It is essential that the nurses are well networked in the community so as to make appropriate, timely referrals aiding prevention and early intervention.

State Government Department programs such as the school based health nurses, Young People at Risk (YPAR) and community based programs like YSC's and YACCA, whether based in schools, or working alongside, must be embraced by state schools to enable the education system to respond to the variety of young people's needs. We are often told that teachers and school staff feel that they are expected to meet all the needs of their students whereas effective partnerships with the community and the variety of services offered should provide many of the referral points required. In fact, the attitudes, skills and knowledge of skilled teachers in schools need only additionally encompass: -

- 1) An ability to identify issues for young people
- 2) Networking skills, and,
- 3) Skills in appropriate referral.

School principals need to recognise the multitude of resources existing in their communities and be prepared to invite community-based professionals into schools to enrich school curricula. Whether this is in the form of community education or in response to issues arising, there are many programs that could be run in schools to take advantage of opportunities for early intervention and prevention work. Feedback from some community-based organisations has included the difficulties that some have experienced in seeking opportunities to provide state school students with innovative

programs available. This is perhaps related to the lack of understanding by school staff, particularly the hierarchy, regarding the available resources in the community.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

*We are facing enormous change unleashed by the rapid entry of Australia into the global marketplace and the advent of the revolution in digital information technology. (p. 3)* The need to address this issue must not outweigh the many other needs that young people have in preparing for a life beyond the State School system. Meeting the challenge of an advanced industrial society must continue to include opportunities to develop the necessary interpersonal skills for negotiating the world post school as well as opportunities to experience the hardware and software of new technologies.

The human aspect of the global marketplace must not be forgotten nor the need to develop skills necessary to work with other people and groups.

## TEACHERS WORK

Teacher's roles encompass a pastoral one in so far as requiring an understanding of young people's rights, identifying issues, networking in their communities and possessing skills in appropriate referral. No one expects teachers to be super workers who have all the answers, however in our increasingly complex society, school staff professional development and training will need to include challenging values with regard to young people and ensuring that they have the skills, attitudes and knowledge to work appropriately to address the needs and rights of today's young people. Additionally, they must value the young people with whom they work.

## LASTLY,

'Participation, respect, relevant curricula, flexibility, access to information and appeals processes are key areas that need to be addressed in order to meet the educational needs of marginalised young people.' (YANQ, 1995)

If state schools are to adequately prepare young people they need to start with a human rights approach as outlined in the Articles contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and involve young people in all levels of decision making and developmental processes in our state school system.

## **IN SUMMARY (Recommendations)**

1. Following the positive evaluation of the Youth Support Coordinator Initiative the State Government should significantly increase resources allocated to the program enabling more school sites to take advantage of the model of partnership between schools and community based agencies key to the success of the initiative.
2. YANQ recommends that the YACCA program be recognised as the States leading primary crime prevention strategy and enhanced funding allocated to extend the program.
3. The State Government should allocate funding to enable a range of alternative education programs to operate across Queensland. These programs should be funded to a level that workers are appropriately paid and that staffing levels are appropriate to the needs of the individual programs.
4. YANQ calls upon Education Queensland to immediately review it's policy on Exclusions and Suspensions, which we believe further marginalises young people 'at risk'.
5. YANQ recommends that there be a pro-active and compulsory implementation of a policy by Education Queensland to retain and support young women in education while they are pregnant and/or parenting.
6. YANQ calls upon the State Government to review the HRSCEET, 1996 report into Truancy and Exclusion from School with a view to implementing recommended strategies following extensive consultation with the Youth Sector.

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*NESBYIN RESPONSE TO EDUCATION QUEENSLAND'S CONSULTATION ON THE  
FUTURE OF SCHOOLS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM – 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999*

**INTRODUCTION:**

NESBYIN welcomes the opportunity to input into the development of the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's (YANQ) submission to Education Queensland regarding the future of state schools into the new millennium. NESBYIN is a statewide issues based network comprised of approximately 130 individual and/or organisational members who share common concerns and interests relating to NESB youth issues.

From the outset NESBYIN would like to make it clear that it is our belief that free quality education should be available to all people in Queensland irrespective of background. Education is a fundamental right of all people. Education therefore needs to be accessible and flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse people. Additionally, state schools need to recognise that not all young people start from a level playing field. Therefore, schools need to implement and monitor strategies and initiatives based on equity. A typical example would be the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. ESL will be discussed in more detail further into this response paper.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YANQ AND NESBYIN:**

YANQ in its role as the community youth sector peak body in Queensland supported the establishment and development of NESBYIN some 9 years ago. The result of the partnership that continues to develop over time, has most notably been the employment at YANQ of a Policy Officer specifically concerned with NESB youth issues. The position has been supported by YANQ for the previous 4 years. This support will continue into the future.

**RESPONSES TO DISCUSSION PAPER KEY QUESTIONS:**

**Question 1: Enrolment share?**

- State schools are an attractive option in any community because they often bring together people from within the same geographic area who can also often share common understandings about their particular community. In this context state schools can be seen as a central facet of the community which fosters connectedness.
- State schools are free in theory, although associated costs are incurred through such things as school uniforms and textbooks. This undoubtedly makes state schools an attractive option for those NESB families who may be in poverty or are low-income families. However, this should not detract from the provision of quality education, which the state has a fundamental responsibility to provide.
- State schools do not affiliate with any particular religion. This can be an attractive option for those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds that may not wish to connect their family to a particular religion. This is particularly important in ethnic communities where the paramount concern for parents and students can be the level of acceptance toward their culture in the school environment. In this context state schools can be seen as institutions that promote and foster diversity as a valuable asset to the whole school environment and broader community. State schools therefore also have responsibilities in the maintenance of acceptance and value of cultural diversity, which again can make them an attractive option for parents and students.
- Programs attached to state schools such as the Youth Support Co-ordinator Program can also promote state schools as an attractive option. This is so because parents can feel reassured that their children have opportunities for support if required.

**Question 2: Retention?**

**CHANGES NEEDED TO INCREASE RETENTION RATES**

- Reduce poverty so NESB young people do not have to leave school early to augment family income.
- Principals having power to expel or suspend. Appeals processes should occur before the student leaves the school environment. Students should have access to an advocate if this is required.
- Negative experiences of school among those NESB students who do not possess proficient English language skills and who are receiving ESL support can lead to incidences of early school leaving. ESL Program is severely under-resourced in state schools. This systematically disadvantages those students

with English as a second language. Additionally, teacher aids are required to support and assist ESL students.

- Behaviour modification programs do not necessarily foster retention. They facilitate students' being stigmatised and isolated from the broader school environment. This can lead to incidences of early school leaving. Youth workers located in schools should be available to support and assist students who are perceived to have "behavioural" issues.
- Negative experiences at school where racism is involved can leave students devastated, isolated and under-valued. Again, this can lead to early school leaving. Many research reports and anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of NESB young people experience racism in the school environment, even from teachers in some cases. This trend has to be reversed through innovative whole-of-school initiatives designed to combat racism. Sporadic and ad hoc initiatives are not enough. A systemic and well-resourced anti-racism program is necessary and should be included as a core part of every school curriculum. (see following research reports: Valuing Cultural Diversity on the Sunshine Coast: Every Face Tells a Story (1997), Cultural Diversity: The Cooloola Story (1999), Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma Survey of Schools Research (1998), ESL Advocacy Network ESL Issues Paper (1998) – these are available from YANQ).
- Lack of hope can be a direct result of the above issues among NESB young people. This undoubtedly fosters poor retention rates.

#### **CHANGES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF INCREASED RETENTION RATES**

- Increased resources to deal with increases in retention rates.
- Increased funding for the ESL Program – some 5 Million Dollars is required to bring Queensland in line with other states who are at a comparable level regarding ESL support. This includes Milpera Special School gaining full recognition as a state school in Queensland.
- Alternative Education options for all students will increase retention rates especially models that are community based and facilitated by community organisations.
- Curriculum reforms designed to acknowledge the true development of knowledge from a global perspective would assist in developing acceptance of cultural diversity. A curriculum that fosters critical thinking is also required, which will assist in increased retention rates through studies that are more about the real world and more interesting.
- Enhanced training for teachers, including core anti-racism studies in tertiary institutions.
- Community development processes should be implemented in all ethnic communities regarding the importance of education and young people's well being and safety.

#### **Question 3: Distinctive State Schools?**

- Students with high behavioural support needs should be appropriately supported in the school environment – passing the buck does not resolve issues for young people.

#### **Question 4: Social Outcomes?**

- Schools should support disadvantaged families by ensuring that their children receive a quality education. Youth workers in schools should also be available to support disadvantaged students and their families.
- Schools that assume a central role within their community and who are well linked to community services can also provide additional support to disadvantaged families.

#### **Question 5: Social Role?**

- Enhanced ESL Program and a whole-of-school anti-racism curriculum development process will contribute to schools solving broader social issues.
- The development of a curriculum that fosters critical and analytical thinking will also plant seeds of positive change among students in generations to come.
- Schools which are the hub of the community and who are explicitly linked to their community will and can contribute to solving broader social problems. Many schools are currently insular – they need to accept responsibility as one of the most universal institutions that most people will come into contact with, and therefore accept that they have broader roles than teaching, such as acknowledging and referring to professional welfare workers.

#### Question 6: Complex Society?

- The question should be about what value can educational experiences give to culturally diverse students. The question framed as it is suggests that the dominant culture will *take* rather than *give*. Multiculturalism is a two-way-street where all should be equal irrespective of background.

#### Question 6: Changed Labour Market?

- Curriculum reforms as mentioned above will prepare students for the real world – this will facilitate the development of future leaders and workers in Queensland and Australia who have the knowledge and understanding to enact positive social change. This is critical. How can we prepare students for the labour market in Queensland that is experiencing a rapid casualisation of work rate? What we can do immediately is assist and support all communities in Queensland to develop local and sustainable employment initiatives – at the very least this should ensure that no person lives in absolute poverty. Youth workers and school community development workers could work with communities to identify local resources and strengths that could be utilised in self-sustainable employment initiatives that the whole community benefits from. People working together with and for their community builds understanding and resilience which will carry communities forward until such time as the new generations of critical and analytical thinkers emerge to enact real changes in society. This is not idealism, but a real possibility if governments develop the kind of vision necessary to break down the doors of treasury and resource such initiatives. The long-term costs will act as a significant investment in Queensland communities and young people.

#### Question 7: Technology?

- All students should have equal access to computers and professional teachers who can teach students their full use.

#### Question 8: Teachers/Community Partnerships?

- Teachers should be trained in basic youth work/social work so they are able to better support students in referral processes. If schools had better links to their community, then community services would be in a better [position to assist and support students and their families. This is especially important in ethnic communities because of the additional disadvantages they face as opposed to the broader community. Milpera Special School is one such institution that is well linked to the community and should act as a positive model for others to emulate.
- Youth workers and school community development workers should be employed in all state schools to assist in the above-mentioned processes – this will ease the pressure on teachers who are currently expected to fulfil these roles.

#### Question 9: Teaching & Learning?

- Every teacher should have drastically reduced numbers of students per lesson. Teaching will then become more personalised and effective because individual assistance will be able to be given when needed.
- Education in the community should also be an option.