Name: Queensland Past and Present: 100 Years of Statistics, 1896–1996

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QUEENSLAND PAST AND PRESENT

Current education issues

In the 1990s the Department of Education is committed to the priority areas of literacy and numeracy, languages other than English, and computer education including training and access to on-line information services such as the Internet. Another educational focus has been on health-related issues such as alcohol, drugs, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition, skin-care and cancer awareness. The range of subjects available to senior secondary students continues to broaden. Developments have occurred in the traditional subjects such as art and music, while new subjects have been introduced such as Film and Television and Small Business Studies. Emphasis is placed on establishing closer links between education, business and industry. Innovative programs include those for gifted and talented students.

The department also aims to maintain levels of teacher professionalism. Measures undertaken to assist teachers have included the employment of teacher aides, career structures for teachers, remote area incentive schemes, in-service education and teacher overseas exchanges. Other developments in the 1990s include the phasing out of corporal punishment and greater involvement of parents and other interested parties in school decision making.

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Boys’ grammar schools were founded at Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Townsville, Maryborough and Rockhampton, and functioned under the Grammar Schools Act 1860 (Qld).
They were administered by boards of trustees and operated under state subsidy. The schools were inspected by the Department of Public Instruction inspectors, and in this respect differed from other private schools which were only inspected upon request. In general, girls' grammar schools were built later and by the 1890s were offering academic subjects similar to those offered by boys' grammar schools.

Private and denominational schools provided alternatives to the State system. The University Commission of 1891 stated:

We apprehend . . . that in the establishment of education as a Government institution on a secular basis the people of Queensland in no way intended to discourage religious teaching by others as a matter of the deepest interest to humanity in the conduct of life in the home, and in public action in the outer world.26

As noted in chapter 4, one of the few State referendums ever passed was the introduction of religious instruction into state schools in 1910. Most non-government schools provided primary education, and most of these were Catholic parochial schools. The Catholic Church strongly defended its right to maintain its own education system independent of the State system.

State aid to denominational schools had been abolished in 1880 and was not reintroduced until the 1960s. In 1963 the Commonwealth Government provided financial assistance to government and non-government schools for science buildings and equipment, capital assistance and scholarships. Commonwealth funding was also available in 1968 for library facilities. In 1969 the Commonwealth undertook continued funding for non-government schools based on enrolments.

Under the Grammar Schools Act 1975 (Qld), the Department of Education retains links with eight grammar schools that operate as statutory bodies within the portfolio of the Minister for Education. In 1985–86 the total expenditure by grammar schools in Queensland was $12.1m, 85% of which came from government grants. State government grants to grammar schools amounted to $5.0m, while Commonwealth grants totalled $5.3m. Almost all of the Commonwealth grants were spent on recurrent purposes compared with about 80% of state government grants.27 In 1995–96, $203.3m was allocated to non-state education from Consolidated Revenue and $319.4m from trust and special funds.28

Data on Queensland’s non-government schools by affiliation is only readily available from the 1970s (table 7.7). While the total number of non-government schools in Queensland increased from 342 in 1970 to 408 in 1995, the number of Catholic schools declined from 294 to 271 over the same period. Most of the new non-government schools were opened by institutions not affiliated with either the Anglican or Catholic churches. These schools increased in number from 34 in 1970 to 115 in 1995. The student to teacher ratio for non-government schools declined from 26.8 students per teacher in 1970 to 16.0 in 1995. Although the student to teacher ratio for Catholic schools fell from 29.4 to 16.8 over the same period, the ratio for these schools remains higher than the ratios for Anglican and other non-government schools.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education in Queensland started in 1881 with the opening of the Brisbane School of Arts. A university was first proposed in 1875, although the University of Queensland did not