



Catholic Education Commission, NSW

RESPONSE TO NSW GOVERNMENT

CONSULTATION PAPER ON

RAISING THE NSW SCHOOL LEAVING AGE

JULY 2008

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Executive Summary

In response to the NSW Government's proposal to increase the compulsory school leaving age in NSW, the Catholic Education Commission, NSW, on behalf of the State's 600 Catholic schools, their staff, parents and students, has concluded that:

1. Systematic research into the reasons for early leaving is required to underpin the development of a wider strategic policy.
2. The NSW Government should reconsider its decision to raise the statutory minimum age a child may leave school in NSW beyond 15 years.
3. The focus of NSW Government policy should be on development of a comprehensive strategy for increasing the participation in education or training of all students to age 17.
4. The notion of a mandatory school leaving age should be complemented by a mandatory education or training participation age.
5. The school leaving age should remain at 15 but the mandatory participation age should be 17.
6. The *School Certificate* needs to be reviewed to make it more effective as a school leaving credential.

The CEC's extensive consultations and research have highlighted the key issues to be addressed as student participation and engagement in schooling and training, not the compulsory age of school attendance.

1. FORMULATING THE CHALLENGE

1.1 The starting point for the NSW Government's proposal for consultation on *Raising the School Leaving Age* is its decision outlined in the NSW State Plan (2006) to increase the School Leaving Age to 'at least 16'¹. This decision is justified in the *Consultation Paper: Raising the School Leaving Age* on the basis of 'overwhelming evidence'. The CEC believes, however, that the evidence cited is not overwhelming. Rather the evidence is ambiguous, complex and contestable at many levels. In 2004 there were 5,640 15-year olds (6% of all 15-year olds) not in school or training, there were 13,560 16-year olds and 23,130 17-year olds (or 25% of all 17-year olds) in the same position. While it is necessary to focus on the 5,640, the other 36,690 deserve at least equal attention. What is required is a more sophisticated and deeper policy analysis leading to a wider vision of how to address the identifiable challenge of too many students dropping out of education and training at too early an age, not just before and at the current minimum schooling age of 15.

1.2 Priority S.5 of the NSW State Plan, *A New Direction for NSW* (2006), is aimed at increasing the proportion of students completing Year 12 or recognised vocational training from current levels to 90% by 2016.² The text of the plan argues:

*It is not sufficient to just keep young people at school. Students need to be provided with a sufficient range of options and pathways, including vocational education to ensure they are obtaining meaningful skills before they move on to further education or into the workforce.*³

In the *Raising the School Leaving Age* discussion paper the Government states that raising the school leaving age is 'one action that would form part of an overall strategy to meet the State Plan targets'⁴. However, it is clear that the aim of the strategy is not simply to keep students at school, rather to facilitate the development of 'skills and experiences that give them a smooth transition into work or further

¹ NSW Government, *Raising the School Leaving Age*, Consultation Paper (February 2008), p.3. See also Table 4, p.13. Subsequent citations from this document will be abbreviated as *Consultation Paper*.

² In 2006 82.7% of students in NSW either completed Year 12 or received a vocational qualification.

³ NSW Government, *A New Direction for New South Wales* (2006), p.54. retrieved 20/06/08 from <http://www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan/>

⁴ *Consultation Paper*, p.5.

education'.⁵ That challenge already applies equally to students at whatever age they leave school.

1.3 The CEC agrees with this assessment and urges the government to develop as its prime policy goal a multi-faceted approach to increasing the proportion of students completing Year 12 or equivalent recognised training to 90% by 2016. These students are already in Year 4 (Year 5, 2009). Serious analysis of their current level of skills and engagement as measured, for example, by their performance on the NSW Basic Skills tests for Year 3 in 2007, followed by a sound and sustainable strategy, should be an immediate priority for the NSW Government. For many of the Year 12 cohort of 2016, the seeds of early leaving may already be sown.

1.4 Such a policy should begin with a well-researched and a clearly documented understanding of why NSW students leave school before the end of Year 12, not just before the minimum mandatory attendance age. The reality is that while there is much anecdote there is little hard evidence and none has been cited in the consultation process except for a survey by the NSW Office of Children and Young People which highlights issues to do with relationships, quality of the learning environment and teacher attitudes. Otherwise, it is assumed that the relevant factors are related to unsuitability of Stage 6 curriculum, lack of access to Vocational Education options and inflexibility of school organisational structures. Above all, it is clear that certain categories of students are most at risk of leaving (Aboriginal rather than non-Aboriginal, rural rather than urban, boys rather than girls, students from lower rather than higher SES areas). Students who leave early also have a higher rate of unemployment. Why they leave early, however, is another matter altogether and it appears to be taken for granted rather than well researched and understood.

<p><i>Conclusion 1:</i> Systematic research into the reasons for early leaving is required to underpin the development of a wider strategic policy.</p>
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⁵ *Consultation Paper*, p.5.

1.5 Addressing systematically and coherently the larger issue of students leaving school and training between 15 and 17 is dictated by the current National Goals for Schooling (Adelaide 1999) which state that before leaving school students should have *participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies and participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.*⁶ With regard to the completion of schooling, these goals propose that all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent, and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.⁷

1.6 Further, these sections of the *National Goals for Schooling* are a reflection of the targets for participation and levels of attainment in post-compulsory education and training, established by the Finn Report in 1991. Finn recommended that by 2001 95% of 19 year olds should have completed Year 12 or an initial post school qualification or be participating in formally recognised education or training.⁸ By 2008 these policy targets have still not been achieved anywhere in the nation and Australia remains well below OECD average in post-compulsory school qualifications.⁹ Moreover, once more there is repeated supposition rather than agreed explanation as to why NSW's school retention rate should be below that of Victoria¹⁰.

1.7 To address the fact that upwards of 25% of young people do not complete a senior secondary certificate, most Australian States have opted to force all students to stay longer at school by raising the school leaving age. Some studies contend that this policy has been not only economically advantageous both to the state and to individuals, but also educationally beneficial. What is more, it is argued, it is likely to

⁶ The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century 2.3, 2.4.

⁷ *ibid.*, 3.6.

⁸ B Finn, (Chair), *Young People's Participation in Post Compulsory Education and Training* (1991) See summary at <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/reviews/macqt/voca06.htm#fn0> Retrieved 20/06/08

⁹ Productivity Commission, 1999, p.31. Retrieved 27/06/08 from <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/1999/education/prefaceb.pdf>

¹⁰ *Consultation Paper*, p.10.

have similar effects in those states which propose to do so¹¹. Yet, the matter is not so simple and the connection not necessarily so direct.

1.8 In NSW the average age of a student completing Year 10 and qualifying for the School Certificate is 15 years and 9 months. Raising the compulsory school leaving age to 16 would require all students to return to school until they reach the age of 16 sometime over their first three to sixth months in Year 11. For many students intending to leave school on turning 16 in order to undertake other education, training or work, returning to Year 11 may not be the best use of their time. Besides, numbers of unwilling or time-serving students in Year 11 could have negative effects on staff and other students. In the 21st century, a chronological age is not as valid an endpoint for schooling as a qualification such as the *School Certificate*. Hence, the CEC sees little value in a policy position which merely raises from 15 to 16 years the school leaving age and all the apparatus of its statutory legal enforcement. What is required is that students engage in meaningful education and training beyond 15 but school may not be the best place for many of them.

1.9 In addition, as the *Consultation Paper* acknowledges, researchers agree that the ranks of early school leavers are drawn disproportionately from lower SES sections of the community, including Indigenous youth, boys, and young people from rural areas¹². Many of these students have negative experiences of school, lack motivation to succeed, are disengaged and are academically weak. Often their decision to leave school is in response to opportunities for employment¹³. Hence it can be concluded with some certainty ‘*that there are some young people who simply are not well suited to the schooling environment either in terms of their individual preferences or of the benefits they can expect to gain*’. Forcing them to spend another year at school, rather than in work or other training, will not necessarily help them.

¹¹ See A. Leigh and C. Ryan, *Estimating Returns to Education: Three Natural Experiment Techniques Compared*. Discussion Paper No 493, ANU Centre for Economic Policy Research (2005) p.20, and A. King, *The Cost to Australia of Early School-Leaving*, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, Canberra (1999), passim.

¹² See *Consultation Paper* pp.8-10. See also S. Lamb, A. Walstab, R. Teese, M. Vickers, R. Rumberger, *Staying on At School: Improving Student Retention in Australia*, University of Melbourne (2004) pp.39-40

¹³ These factors are discussed in depth in G.N. Marks, ‘Do Schools Matter for Early School Leaving? Individual and School Influences in Australia’, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, xviii, 4 (2007) p.446.

Conclusion 2: The NSW Government should reconsider its decision to raise the statutory minimum age a child may leave school in NSW beyond 15 years.

2. POLICY ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

2.1 The CEC therefore acknowledges that the key issue is not raising the school leaving age but increasing retention in school or training. That immediately requires further analysis of certain inter-related assumptions that (1) students are better off at school than in employment or other training, and (2) students who leave school for genuine employment make a successful transition to work.

Employment and School Retention

2.2 The assumption in the *Consultation Paper* (p.13) that retention is automatically linked to learning improvement, so that early school leavers would be better off if they completed school, can be challenged¹⁴. Instead, it could be argued that for some students *'full-time work may offer greater benefits ... than further time in school'*¹⁵. In effect the weight of evidence leads to the conclusion that *'there is no significant gain from additional years of schooling for the less-academically inclined'*¹⁶. The key issues surrounding student retention is outlined by Lamb and his colleagues as follows:

- completion is not necessarily preferable in all cases - quality education is more valuable;

¹⁴ Ibid, p.446.

¹⁵ A. M. Dockery, *Assessing the Value of Additional Years of Schooling for the Non-academically Inclined*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report 38, Australian Council for Educational Research (2005), p. 41, with reference to the following research:

1. G. Marks, K. Hillman, and A. Beavis, *Dynamics of the Australian youth labour market: the 1975 cohort, 1996-2000*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report 34, Australian Council for Educational Research, (2003).
2. J. McMillan, J. and G. Marks, *School leavers in Australia: profiles and pathways*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report 31, Australian Council for Educational Research (2003).

¹⁶ Dockery, *op.cit*, p.42.

- many young people who leave school early to enter an apprenticeship or traineeship experience successful outcomes;
- transition from school to work is not always successful;
- many apparently successful students do not complete their studies at whatever level.¹⁷

2.3 On the basis of these complex conclusions the researchers concluded that *'alternatives that involve early entry to work may ultimately achieve an outcome at least as effective as completing a senior certificate... This is especially the case with the traditional craft apprenticeship'*¹⁸. So any policy which closed off an employment option as an alternative to school or training might be counter-productive, even for 15 year olds.

Learning and Retention

2.4 Another questionable assumption is that students who leave school early to take on genuine employment make a successful transition from school to work. For some, especially those from particular educational and social backgrounds it is problematic¹⁹. It seems that the chances of participating in post-compulsory education to the level of a senior secondary certificate are in direct proportion to a student's academic ability. It is evident, moreover, despite the arguments to the contrary, that not all individuals will receive equal benefits from increased years of schooling²⁰. Thus it must be acknowledged that high retention is not an end in itself. Any policy decisions must have 'regard to the quality of programs, quality of experiences and quality of outcomes' for these students²¹. The compulsory years must ensure that a student is adequately prepared for the transition to work or further study irrespective of whether the mandatory school leaving age is 15 or 16.

¹⁷ See Lamb et al, *op.cit.*, pp.147-8.

¹⁸ Lamb et al., *op.cit.*, p.148.

¹⁹ See S. Lamb & P. McKenzie, *Patterns of Success and Failure in the Transition from School to Work in Australia*, Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth, Research Report 18, ACER (2001), p.53.

²⁰ A.M. Dockery, *Assessing the Value of Additional Years of Schooling for the Non-academically Inclined*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report 38, Australian Council for Educational Research (2005), p.39.

²¹ Lamb et a., *op.cit.*, p.143.

Conclusion 3: The focus of NSW Government policy should be on development of a comprehensive strategy for increasing the participation in education or training of all students to age 17.

3. DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC POLICY

3.1 Students in NSW should be allowed to leave school at 15 or at the end of Year 10, if not yet 16. However, if they are not to be in school they must be in some other form of approved education, training or work until they turn 18. This policy is already in place in most other states and it makes good sense. If, as proposed here, it should be introduced in NSW then attention needs to be paid to the key research finding that:

*there is a need to ensure that young people are not just participating in education and training to occupy their time but are engaged in programs and courses which promote the acquisition of skills that will help lead to secure jobs and better futures.*²²

3.2 Underpinning such a mandatory participation policy must be a guarantee of relevant and effective schooling to age 15, as well as clear options for other forms of education and training after 15, or subsequent points of exit from school. Research only underscores the importance of students having the requisite skills and attitudes to make a success of education outside a school setting. A NSW mandatory participation policy would entail certain strategic elements and obligations on the part of the NSW Government. It could be introduced by amending the NSW *Education Act* to introduce a 'Part 5 (A) Participation of Students in Education and Training' with similar provisions to those already in 'Part 5 Attendance of Children at School', especially 'Section 22 Compulsory Schooling'.

Conclusion 4 The notion of a mandatory school leaving age should be complemented by a mandatory education or training participation age.

²² S. Lamb, P. Dwyer, J. Wyn, *Non-Completion of School in Australia: the Changing Pattern of Participation and Outcomes*, Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth, Research Report 16, ACER (2000), p.59.

Participation in School or other Education or Training

3.3 The central plank of the mandatory participation policy should be retention to Year 12 as already indicated by the Government in the State Plan (2006). At the same time, increased numbers of 15, 16 and 17 year old students who are not now in any form of education or training will need to have available appropriate Vocational Education and Training programs as an alternative to school²³. Research confirms that

*the recent downturn in school completion may reflect an increase in the numbers of young people wanting to take advantage of alternative education and training opportunities. In other words school numbers may have declined but overall educational participation has remained much the same.*²⁴

This may be advantageous. Marks, for example, argues that

*post school vocational education works best if it is closely tied to actual jobs in existing workplaces, for example, apprenticeships.*²⁵

and suggests that schools may not necessarily be the best places to gain work-related skills. Furthermore, he contends, in a climate of low unemployment, the expansion of the school curriculum to include VET courses may not always have the desired effect.²⁶

3.4 On the other hand, not all early school leavers are successful in their VET studies. No policy or course or program is universally successful; a variety of approaches is called for. On balance, however,

*the VET system, as a provider of vocational training that is more directly responsive to industry requirements . . . provides one of the few avenues for many of these groups of young people to re-start their education and to obtain employment-oriented training.*²⁷

This position respects the social and economic realities of the 21st Century. Making participation in school or other education/training will help fill critical skill shortages

²³It is estimated to lower apparent retention rates by approximately 2.7 percentage points. Lamb et al., *op.cit.*, Table 8.1 p. 123

²⁴S. Lamb, 'Completing School in Australia: Trends in the 1990s', *Australian Journal of Education*, xlii, 1 (1998) p.27.

²⁵Marks, *op.cit.*, p.447.

²⁶*ibid.*

²⁷K. Ball & S. Lamb, *Participation and Achievement in VET of Non-completers of School*, Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth, Research Report 20, ACER (2001) p.30.

and build a pool of talent that meets the future needs of industry for higher level skills. It also addresses the increasing international competition for skills and will mean that young people either in school, training or employment will not suffer the disadvantages associated with early school leaving²⁸.

3.5 Accordingly, the CEC believes that the best future policy settings would be to leave the compulsory school attendance age at 15 years but have it enveloped in a wider policy of compulsory participation for 15-17 year olds in any one of the following settings:

- school
- TAFE
- a registered RTO
- approved work

<p>Conclusion 5. The school leaving age should remain at 15 but the mandatory participation age should be 17.</p>
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Alternative Pathways at School

3.6 Nevertheless, since the NSW Government is committed to improving completion rates, the provision of alternative pathways for students who will be remaining at school must be considered. Among these are increased options at the senior secondary level by the provision of vocational subjects in the Higher School Certificate and Trade Schools²⁹. These, together with apprenticeships and traineeships are certainly an option for students. In the past VET-in-Schools programs have been criticised for catering for students from lower SES backgrounds who are frequently low achievers.

3.7 Obviously these programs are not intended to be inferior, 'designed to deal with the problem of managing a diverse student body rather than [be valued] for their

²⁸ The benefits of staying at school are documented at 1.4 of *Consultation Paper*, pp.5-7.

²⁹ *Consultation Paper*, pp.12-13.

potential contribution to improving student outcomes’ but there is a perception to the contrary. Contradicting this view

*highlights a set of policy issues around the development, organisation, accreditation and recognition of senior school programs that are designed to attract young people who have traditionally not completed school and for whom meaningful and successful programs are needed.*³⁰

3.8 VET-in-Schools, however, is not the sole option to support improved outcomes for students who are to remain in the classroom. The NSW Government has pledged itself to an examination of the kinds of support that would be needed. It has outlined the potential risks inherent in introducing legislation without appropriate support structures. These include

- failure to achieve worthwhile outcomes;
- participation in low-quality curriculum offerings;
- narrowing of pathways through geographical or equity factors;
- increased discipline problems.³¹

Curriculum and Assessment

3.9 Recent research has shown the most influential predictor of successful student retention is student aspiration which embraces achievement, motivation to learn and orientation to learn³². Allied to this is the evidence gained from the Australian Council for Educational Research’s *Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth*³³, namely that academic achievement, especially in literacy and numeracy, is a major predictor of retention³⁴. Hence the conclusion that

in order to improve the success and outcomes of all, but in particular ‘at risk’ youth, school curriculum must be learner-centred and focussed on individual need, interests and concerns, emphasising self direction

³⁰ Lamb/ Dwyer/Wyn, op.cit., p.57.

³¹ *Consultation Paper*, 5.0, p.14.

³² Lamb et al p. 143. See also S. Roussel & T. Murphy, T., *Participation in Post-compulsory Schooling*, DETYA, (2000), *passim*.

³³ Auspiced by ACER. Available at http://www.acer.edu.au/research_reports/

³⁴ See S. Rothman, & J. McMillan, *Influences on Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy*, Longitudinal Studies of Australian Youth, Research Report 26, ACER (2003) p.3.

*and constructive learning that includes purpose, empowerment, rigour and success.*³⁵

3.10 This applies both before and after the compulsory school leaving age. CEC,NSW therefore endorses the NSW Government proposals outlined in the *Consultation Paper* to improve academic achievement, to raise expectations, to support at-risk students and to review current assessment and credentialling arrangements.³⁶ Among other possible support measures are the following

- early intervention
- ongoing monitoring
- community-school relations
- creating a positive learning culture within schools
- careers education and guidance
- transition outcomes monitoring
- returning to study programs
- measuring attainment and outcomes³⁷

Of particular relevance to this line of reasoning is the structure and appropriateness of the current compulsory English courses in the NSW senior secondary curriculum. CEC,NSW supports proposals to revise these courses, making them more accessible to lower achieving students.

Quality Teaching and School Climate

3.11 Other factors affecting achievement and hence retention include quality teaching and the school climate³⁸. The importance of the latter is underscored by the extent to which school climate issues are cited as reasons for early leaving (cf. para. 1.4 above). With regard to the former, it has been demonstrated there is a high degree of correlation between student outcomes and the level of intellectual demand of teaching. One researcher has shown that

³⁵D. Zyngier, 'Hanging Out – Hanging On – Hanging In' or is it 'Elect Out, Drift Out and Driven Out'. *What Works for 'At-Risk' Students – How a Connected or Generative Pedagogy Improves Student Educational Outcomes for all but in Particular for Marginalised Students*, Paper Presented at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Biennial National Conference, Adelaide (2003), Zyngier, op cit., p.13.

³⁶ *Consultation Paper*, 5.0, p.14.

³⁷ These policy directions are explored in Lamb et al pp.153-154.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.143.

*it was students most 'at risk' of failure from socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged conditions who were the least likely to be exposed to intellectually challenging and relevant material.*³⁹

Organisational and Pedagogical Change

3.12 While few would contest these findings, the implications are clear; namely that if students who will be required to remain longer at school are to experience success, organisational and pedagogical change must occur⁴⁰. The call for organisational change is supported by research demonstrating that

*the objective of policy should be to ensure there are alternative pathways and institutional arrangements available to meet the varying needs, abilities and preferences of young people and to make available the information they require to make informed decisions on what is optimal for them.*⁴¹

Resourcing Schools

3.13 Increasing student retention in education, especially at school is costly but an essential community investment. Disproportionately, the students who need to be retained are indigenous, rural and lower SES background students. They will require special curriculum, teaching and other support in order to make their time in school meaningful and productive.

4. REVIEWING THE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

4.1 As the *Consultation Paper* notes, among the support measures to which the NSW government is committed to assist young people who will be obliged to continue in school is an examination of the implications of assessment and credentialing arrangements⁴². This has inevitable consequences for the role and structure of the current *School Certificate*. Although proposals have been advanced for the modernisation of the *School Certificate* over the past decade or more, no serious inquiry has been held into its current validity and effectiveness. Any proposal

³⁹ Zyngier, op.cit., p.11.

⁴⁰ Zyngier op.cit., p.20.

⁴¹ Dockery, op.cit., p.42.

⁴² *Consultation Paper*, Section 5.0, p.14.

to increase retention at school, along with participation in education and training more generally, cannot avoid this challenge.

4.2 The 1997 Report produced for the NSW Government by Professor Barry McGaw, *Shaping Their Future*, gave details of ‘widespread dissatisfaction with the current School Certificate’, citing evidence that

- those who use it for entry to employment or training are the minority who have been least successful
- there is little respect for the Certificate in the community
- it is not taken seriously by students⁴³.

Together with the reality that there was no credential available for students who leave school between the end of Year 10 and the end of Year 12, this information lead McGaw to recommend

*that the School Certificate be abolished and replaced, for students leaving school at any time from the end of Year 10 up to the time at which they are eligible for a Higher School Certificate, by a ‘Statement of Achievement’, issued under the authority of the Board of Studies.*⁴⁴

4.3 In 1997 the policy of the CEC,NSW did not support this recommendation. The CEC was influenced at that stage by the needs of the significant number of 7-10 secondary schools and Central Schools (K-10). Ultimately the NSW Government did not adopt the recommendation. In 2006, however, the role of the *School Certificate* came under scrutiny once more in the context of a review of assessment in NSW, K-12.⁴⁵ The author of this review, Professor George Cooney, repeated the dissatisfactions noted by McGaw a decade earlier, adding that until the purpose of the credential was clarified, proposing options for its reform was of little value.

4.4 With the introduction of national literacy and numeracy tests for Year 9 students from 2008, the future of the School Certificate as a worthwhile credential

⁴³ B. McGaw, *Shaping Their Future, Recommendations for Reform of the Higher School Certificate*, Department of Training and Education Co-ordination, NSW, 1997, p.79.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Recommendation 18.

⁴⁵ G. Cooney, *Review of Statewide Assessments in the Context of National Developments*, 2006.

Retrieved 27/06/08 from

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2007/cooneyreviewfill.pdf>

seems, at best, uncertain. Professor Cooney, confirming McGaw's conclusions, recommended that

- *the role of the School Certificate as an exit credential be reviewed in the first half of 2007, with consideration given to a credential being presented at the time at which a student leaves school and that contains a cumulative record of achievement*
- *the review include consideration of the role of the current Year 10 examinations.*⁴⁶

As with McGaw's recommendations, Cooney's were not taken up. Over the years between them the number of schools in the Catholic Sector which terminate at Year 10 had decreased and the balance of the discussion on the *School Certificate* has shifted to accommodate a changed scenario involving stronger support for a more meaningful and flexible *School Certificate*.

4.6 Now, in the light of national and state developments affecting Year 10 examinations, the CEC,NSW supports the view that the future of the *School Certificate* is a contestable matter and should be made the subject of a separate public review. Such a review should consider the role of the *School Certificate* in the context of

- the extension of VET options into Stage 5;
- Year 9 national testing;
- the development of a national curriculum for schools.
- a mandatory participation provision to age 17.

<p>Conclusion 6: The <i>School Certificate</i> needs to be reviewed to make it more effective as a school leaving credential.</p>
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⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Recommendation 10.