

## LINK 23: OPEN ENDED SURVEY ITEM ANALYSIS

Compiled by Andrew Bills (University of South Australia)

### 72. What factors do you think help to promote the public purposes of schools?

There were about 900 responses which are grouped into 8 areas as follows:  
(NB: Some respondents provided more than one opinion).

1. Adequate, equitable resourcing and support
2. Belief in students, partnerships and diversity
3. Sympathetic political processes and policy
4. Positive media and school promotion
5. Address societal problems and believe in public education
6. Quality teaching and learning
7. Transparency and accountability for funding
8. Public perception, understanding and knowledge about education and schooling

A summary of the number (N), percentage (%) and example responses for each category are included in the following table. Three-quarters of responses relate to factors external to schools.

#	Name	Responses		Examples
		N	%	
1	Adequate, equitable resourcing, facilities and support	292	27%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHANGES TO FUNDING MODELS FOR SCHOOLS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS SUCH AS ESL, ABORIGINAL STUDENTS, NEP'S, BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES - LOWER CATEGORY SCHOOLS. RESOURCE SUPPORT FOR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS AND SCHOOL COUNSELLORS</li> <li>• Clear and transparent policies of state and federal governments and funding that support the disadvantaged schools. Supporting disadvantaged schools to be able to endeavour to have a level playing field BER funding allows the rich to get richer and the poor get poorer!</li> <li>• A huge resourcing divide still continues to exist between gov't and private school sector. A more serious attempt must be made to ensure all students have access to the same educational opportunities in facilities that are of equal standard ... funding sources for schools should reflect this. It is a huge pity that the value of a school is now measured only on NAPLAN results with little or no recognition of the tremendous work being done in some schools in promoting values of equity, justice, tolerance, resilience , etc etc.</li> <li>• The public purpose is built upon principles of equality, a fair go for all, reward for effort etc as opposed to birth rights. The old school tie philosophy and right of passage needs to be removed.</li> <li>• Certainly there is a need to increase the investment in education in a way that brings people together not provide opportunity to further disengage from the wider community with a small secular mindset. I see a lot of that.</li> <li>• Equitable funding policies and removal of discriminatory policy and practise.</li> <li>• Sufficient funding and resourcing to ensure that public schools are not seen as the 'poor cousins' of their private contemporaries in terms of facilities, quality teaching and ultimately student results. Funding schools on a needs basis should ensure that all schools receive adequate funding to meet the needs of their students and those with additional needs and challenges receive additional funding accordingly.</li> <li>• Education should ensure a level playing field for all.</li> <li>• Public funding needs to ensure public schools are adequately financed and resources to achieve the levels of education expected by the community. Any funds left once this is achieved may be split amongst private suppliers. This is needed as most private schools exclude large sections of the public from their schools/systems. Teacher professional development is the key. Well trained teachers are the cornerstone of a good school/system.</li> <li>• Well resourced programs which are able to benefit the needs of students</li> </ul>

				<p>in given settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well resourced, good looking public schools would be a start. Looks count!</li> <li>Provide high levels of resourcing to enable primary schools to function autonomously within an accountability framework. Resourcing must be matched to specific school needs determined through social, academic and physical needs of each student.</li> </ul>
2	Belief in students, partnerships, community, inclusion and diversity	210	19%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The positive relationships that are fostered between the school and the community. The communication that is engaged in between staff, students and parents.</li> <li>Strong Local School Community involvement in decision making and the development of partnerships between staff, parents and students in most educational arenas.</li> <li>Great relations with parents, connection with the local community.</li> <li>The success rate of people who attended public schools when faced with real life situations compared to those who attended private schools.</li> <li>Access for all, including high achievers and not to be looked upon as the school of last choice.</li> <li>Our schools promote equity, social cohesion and reconciliation, and continue to be a core institutional component of our democratic society</li> <li>The partnerships created between schools and their communities.</li> <li>School need to promote inclusivity of all students and recognise their individual needs and visible differences.</li> <li><b>PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE INCLUSIVE. WE DO NOT JUDGE STUDENTS ON ENTRY RATHER, WE ACCEPT EVERY CHILD WHO WALKS THROUGH THE DOOR AS AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS. IN THE TIME THE STUDENT IS WITH US WE STRIVE TO MEET ALL THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE PRESENTED TO US. THESE CHALLENGES ARE OFTEN SYSTEM BASED THROUGH LACK OF RECOGNITION AND THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES HOWEVER, WE PRIDE OURSELVES IN OVERCOMING ALL OBSTACLES IN THE PROVISION OF QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS.</b></li> <li>The enrolment of all children in our schools no matter their ethnicity, religious beliefs or capacity.</li> <li>The fact that we take everyone, whatever their needs forces Public Schools to be aware of the diverse needs of people in our community.</li> <li>For a tolerant society to be achieved, we must be exposed to difference in nationality, culture, religion, economic wealth and social input. To be effective, this must happen in the formative years of development. The more segregated our society becomes through the introduction of schools based on wealth, ethnicity, religion etc the more intolerant society must become. Australia's success as a multicultural society has benefited from a strong public system that the majority of society's students attend. As we move away from this we will lose this wonderful social asset. Public education needs to be fostered and presented as a quality system that benefits all who attend it. Without this we will degenerate into an intolerant society.</li> <li>Developing a culture of tolerance and respect for others - along with the understanding that ALL students are capable of learning and progressing and success- this is NOT dependent on high socio-economic status.</li> <li>Involvement of communities in schools. Use of school facilities by the community. Involvement of students with local community groups e.g. Local Council.</li> <li>In essence we must ensure that we model and foster values [of] diversity, address disadvantage and allow for all members of the organisation to participate, relate and care.</li> <li>A reciprocal arrangement between the school and its community. We need to be supportive of what the community does either through student and staff involvement in community events in return for the help and support through parent rosters and P and C involvement etc. This is so important in small rural towns.</li> </ul>
3	Sympathetic political processes and policy	168	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government policy and the development of broader understandings across all schools as to the interdependence of public schools and the importance of promoting the common good in developing a cohesive society.</li> <li>A strong public system supported and promoted by government</li> <li>Essentially political factors are the ultimate drivers of the public purposes of schools. The factor that should drive the public purposes is evidence based research.</li> <li>Currently schools need to be promoted positively as a specific government strategy and the media needs to be better educated to the purpose of schools</li> <li>A far more active/assertive Federal/State Government stance on the merits of public education.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recognition by politicians, policymakers and the community in general that public education is successful for our children.</li> <li>• Less politicisation of education and curriculum by state and federal governments linked to re-electing the Minister for Education/the Government and less power given to minorities not representing public education who have the ear of government. Too few educators are advisers to state and federal government policy makers - too many career bureaucrats without understanding of the school-level needs are making decisions without informed consultation.</li> <li>• Governments do not communicate and celebrate the skills and work of principals in managing very efficient but under staffed and resourced businesses with generosity of spirit, commitment to social justice and high academic and social outcomes for students and creating a positive society, as well as or better than most corporate companies.</li> </ul>
4	Positive media and school promotion	142	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories about the successes and the value added work done in schools. The Government system schools only seem to get media coverage for sensational and negative stories. There is a lot of great work that goes on each day and it is not acknowledged.</li> <li>• Having an employer who regularly makes positive statements to the media and beyond to endorse the great education public schools provide. It rarely happens!</li> <li>• Positive accurate reporting on television news and current affairs including information around the importance of parent attitude to successful learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Good press. Journalists need to have a real understanding of schools</li> <li>• Highlighting good news stories in the media. Whilst we get a lot of negative publicity around actions and events there are many more 'good news' stories going on daily which fail to gain the recognition they deserve. Most of what we do - especially in public schools - can be described as advancing the common good.</li> <li>• Positive press that focuses on the many good things that are happening in many schools.</li> <li>• Schools (enabled to be) self-promoting in their own community.</li> <li>• A positive media campaign that looks at success stories and goes nowhere near tables based purely on academic results. Talk about happy schools, emotional content students and values programs that are being presented in schools.</li> <li>• Positive promotion of public education. Advertise our academic, cultural and sporting achievements. Advertise our good news stories showcasing community support.</li> </ul>
5	Address societal problems and believe in public education	128	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government schools should be linked to the ongoing needs of society as they arise: that is; drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy, abuse. However, there are solid values which must be sustained and developed in conjunction with parents and community. For example, respect, self discipline, honesty, keeping safe, politeness. Additionally, there should be the concern for democratic principles and fairness.</li> <li>• Instilling democratic principles, social justice, Australian values, nationhood except it is all too obvious to all that the private school system continues the elitist club that supports a "caste" system with regard to access, enrolment, funding etc. The widening gap between those that can access private and those that cannot is further creating a divide in this land, my children go to a private school.</li> <li>• School policies and practices model appropriate social values and try to meet society's changing needs so that we produce quality citizens who can shape a positive, productive future community</li> <li>• Valuing diversity inclusion community participation in all aspects of schooling high level of commitment to development of the individual focus on preparation of students to be contributors to a socially just democratic society</li> <li>• Government schools carry too large a % of students from poorer backgrounds, with learning and social issues, with disabilities compared to the private system. This concentration of needy students impacts on a school's capacity to solve all of society's ills, when specific groups are "over-represented" in the school population. Most schools do a great job in preparing students for the future but insufficient recognition is given to the "value addedness" re social dev'p, personal dev'p in comparison to those schools which serve "middle class" communities.</li> <li>• The development of future responsible citizens</li> <li>• Public education is the service available for all students, regardless of background or needs. The very reason public schools should be promoted, that is equality for all, is most likely the reason, we are often condemned for not getting as good results as private schools who weed out the difficult and challenging students and send them to public schools where they work hard to address the disadvantage, whether it be social or</li> </ul>

				<p>academic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision and support for the societal issues students bring to school.</li> <li>• Community commitment to and support of public education.</li> <li>• Current divisions and stresses in society that are creating 'haves' and 'have nots', 'excluded' and 'included'. These divisions lead to the promotion of extremist groups and eventually create a climate where terrorism can grow. Public schools provide society with a powerful opportunity to minimise these divisions, promote equity and tolerance and build a stable society that is better equipped to withstand international stressors.</li> <li>• Programs and procedures that encourage and promote values such as unity, equity, belonging and providing quality teaching and learning within a consistent, appropriate curriculum.</li> <li>• This system is so important particularly for the disadvantaged in our society. In these tough times it is even more important that we do our best to make sure we are serving the needs of all of our society.</li> </ul>
6	Quality teaching and learning, teacher professionalism and professional development opportunities	119	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper funding of teacher professional learning A focus on quality teaching NOT one off tests. An end to mass public testing and a focus on the development of the "whole" student.</li> <li>• Social skill learning, Active Citizenship, Environmental education activities in community, rigorous learning and expectations in areas of need for future adults ie science, higher order thinking skills, problem solving and innovative thinking approaches</li> <li>• Quality education regardless of family financial resources should be available to all Australian children. Quality education needs quality teacher training and support. Quality education requires quality resources to meet the diverse educational needs of all students.</li> <li>• Promote critical thinking skills among students</li> <li>• Professionalism of teachers Level of Teacher training Funding Departmental support for teachers and administrators Positive profiling of schools Celebrating all teachers Time and resources to provide more than adequate PD to teachers</li> <li>• Developing a culture of tolerance and respect for others - along with the understanding that ALL students are capable of learning and progressing and success- this is NOT dependent on high socio-economic status.</li> <li>• Teacher professional development is the key. Well trained teachers are the cornerstone of a good school/system.</li> <li>• Pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Development of critical thinkers.</li> <li>• Curricula that recognises and develops difference.</li> </ul>
7	School transparency and accountability for government funding use and student outcomes	23	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent funding of Australian schools</li> <li>• The promotion of tolerance and equity, fairness in funding levels and transparency in the use of those funds as well as funds from other sources including parents, must be evidenced.</li> <li>• All schools should be transparent in their practices and procedures.</li> <li>• There needs to be more accountability in the private sector. Public schools should also be allowed to voice concerns of disparity and inequality when necessary, or have media/school promotions staff more accessible and to carry out and promote public education more liberally and take away yet another 'duty' to smaller schools already trying to do what they can when they can.</li> <li>• A reasonable level of accountability is necessary.</li> <li>• Community involvement transparent processes the rights of all are privileged against the right of the individual</li> <li>• Transparent accountability National Curriculum- Academic and Non-academic outcomes Social equality</li> <li>• Have open and transparent policies that reflect community values</li> </ul>
8	Public perception, understanding and knowledge about schooling and education	19	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public knowledge of what teachers do and are expected to do.</li> <li>• Common curriculum and assessment practices that are easily understood by the community and school staff.</li> <li>• Understanding of what it is that schools do, understanding of 'distance travelled' vs single assessment points in time, understanding that all of society is enhanced when all children are supported to achieve, eliminate the appalling differences in facilities between affluent and non-affluent communities, in Finland all schools look like the other schools - this helps a lot with many parents current 'drive-by assessments' of schools</li> </ul>

### 73. What do you think are the greatest barriers to achieving the public purposes of schools?

There were about 950 responses. Some respondents provided more than one opinion and these were sorted into the following eleven categories:

1. Inadequate, inequitable facilities and resourcing
2. Unsympathetic, divisive, fragmented and expedient political processes and policy
3. Mistaken belief that public schools can fix all societal problems
4. Negative media and political portrayal of public schools
5. Competitive national testing and league tables
6. Unfair enrolment policies and practices
7. Poor teachers, curriculum and school organisation
8. Negative and incorrect public perceptions about the quality of public education (and the consequent residualisation of public education)
9. Teacher and principal quality, income, workload, planning time, administrative demands, training and access to quality professional development
10. Societal issues and fragmentary change e.g. individualism
11. Lack of principal and school autonomy e.g. to hire and fire staff, resource use...

The summary of the number (N) percentage (%) and example responses for each category are included in the following table. The first six categories and categories 8,10 and 11 relate to factors external to the school (92%) with the remaining three categories (8%) attributable to inside the school.

#	Name	Responses		Examples
		N	%	
1	Inadequate, inequitable facilities and resourcing	235	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● \$ I find it an impossible task to address the educational vision of our community. Our three teacher school operates in under very unique circumstances. Unfortunately, the curriculum is only one part of the bigger picture. If we were allocated a greater number of teachers/support staff and given the opportunity to hire/fire, I feel we could become much more effective. Currently, I feel like I am treading water.</li> <li>● Under resourcing the work of teachers in addressing student learning and social needs. Creating further social divide with inequitable funding criteria.</li> <li>● MONEY, RESOURCES AND EXTRA STAFFING!!!! for disadvantaged schools - we are one of the poorest schools in the state in terms of SFO and receive very little to compensate.</li> <li>● Inequities of funding when compared to the private sector Public schools have to deal with those who can't get into the private system</li> <li>● Lack of equity in funding is the greatest barrier to achieving the public purpose of schooling.</li> <li>● Lack of resources to schools in lower socio economic areas (personnel).</li> <li>● Competition between private and public schools. Unfair over-funding of private schools. Private schools advance the interests of individuals.</li> <li>● The levels of government funding provided to private schools who have invested in buildings without any / limited accountability for investing in practice. Not really understanding how different the work really is in severely disadvantage schools and what it takes to reverse the slide into the abyss</li> <li>● Uneven playing field between public and private sectors. Public must enrol all whereas private pick and choose only those that fit their schemata.</li> <li>● A terrible lack of real funding as opposed to what private schools have access to.</li> <li>● Current funding arrangements that provide the non government school sector with enormous advantages</li> <li>● No government money should be going to support alternative systems. There was none 40 years ago. It is scandalous that we are closing public schools when many independent schools survive with fewer than 100 students in metropolitan areas. Parents with connections and influence are lost to the public system cause and they argue for maintaining difference; thus division and separation. They take</li> </ul>

				<p>themselves away from needing to deal with issues that arise in a public system that takes all children, irrespective of circumstance, but without the resources to support them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We wish to be supported to offer the best educational opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities and socio economic backgrounds. This includes the brightest students as well as those with learning disabilities.</li> <li>• Underfunding to support disadvantaged students and lack of service delivery to support disadvantaged families.</li> </ul>
2	Unsympathetic, divisive, fragmented and expedient political processes and policy	178	19%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented policy. No common approach at system level.</li> <li>• Government policies that encourage elitism and segregation of children by encouraging the private system.</li> <li>• The fragmentation of schooling into public and private, haves and have nots, advantaged and disadvantaged. This is a result of divisive federal government policies over the past 12 years.</li> <li>• Political and vested interference in the core business of schooling, which is to assist all students achieve their best academic and social potential</li> <li>• The shift to private education. Governments would prefer to have privately owned education and the shift towards this has meant a crisis in public education. It creates 'ghettos' and dual systems of education. We need a healthy 'mix' of students in schools to reflect Australian society. We also need fewer government schools but make them state of the art learning facilities. Use research to guide practice. We are an intelligent country and we need to use the resources and the expertise we have to create a better society.</li> <li>• Market driven models for education.</li> <li>• Bureaucratic short-sightedness and their attempts to treat education like a business - looking for uninterrupted continued growth and using "scientific" approaches to determine success when it is obvious to all educators that national testing has the narrowest of focus in determining success and rarely achieves the goal of determining how successful schools have been Politics has been the greatest problem over the past 15 years that I have taught.</li> <li>• Community values, ethics and social justice issues are only as strong as the public education system. The diversity in provision and the "brain drain" to affluent independent schools can only result in a widening and entrenching of intergenerational barriers to full and equal participation opportunities. We wish to be supported to offer the best educational opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities and socio economic backgrounds. This includes the brightest students as well as those with learning disabilities.</li> <li>• Whilst we have no clearly defined public purpose it is easy for schools to advance the private good. The increase in the numbers of private schools under the Howard government is an example of how schools are able to advance their own purposes.</li> <li>• We have seen the greatest piece of social engineering in this country since Federation during the Howard years. I often comment to my Executive that, when a decision is to be made it should be the "greatest good for the greatest number" be they staff, parents or students. The drive to assess everything that moves and use it to further divide our society sickens me. I note that Principals and teachers in the Territory are to be held accountable for the results of their students, a majority of whom are indigenous. What a convenient way to pass the buck to a teaching service for decades of neglect by Territory and Federal governments.</li> <li>• Lack of system support when negative press is encountered by a school. Failure of the system to "challenge" negative press. The continual "beating up" of schools and school leaders and the results driven agendas of senior management who are on "performance contracts"</li> <li>• Culture of blame - culture of competition over resources - culture of the haves and the have nots</li> <li>• A government that supports media advertising that 'bashes' government schools and teachers. A government that blames teachers and yet makes them the panacea for all ills. A government that continually add things but does not add the resources both in human and monetary to support the initiative and the expectations</li> <li>• Government policies impacting on responsive work at the school level curriculum not relating to local community and student need teachers not being properly trained policy makers not gathering relevant information from schools and community members</li> <li>• Too strong an emphasis on short-term accountability and political expediency.</li> <li>• Political inaction / apathy - and a Federal Government that refuses to ensure that `social justice` is the central plank in its education policy.</li> </ul>
3	Mistaken belief that public schools can fix all societal problems	129	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overwhelming expectations on schools - seen as the social clearing house for every issue of society</li> <li>• Public perception of the education system. The system is held responsible for everything from literacy to bike education and when something 'bad' happens the media are quick to say that the answer is to teach it in schools!</li> <li>• The supposition that schools are the panacea to fix all of society's problems without accountability for parents to take ownership of their parenting</li> </ul>

				<p>responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media expectations that schools are the panacea for all of the problems of society</li> <li>• Expectation that schools provide the basic parenting for students in some cases, like meals, showers etc. as well as the ethics building.</li> <li>• Society keeps 'dumping' problems into schools for them to solve or teach: eg sex ed, bike ed, non-sexist ed, healthy eating, sun safe policies, bike ed...</li> <li>• We try to do too much. We have taken on the role of agent of social change, fixing society's ills, integrating whatever minority group, adhering to the latest fad in educational theory or practice. It's time to make a stand on what the role of the school really is.</li> <li>• The expectation that schools can and should fix all of society's problems.</li> <li>• Community values, ethics and social justice issues are only as strong as the public education system. The diversity in provision and the "brain drain" to affluent independent schools can only result in a widening and entrenching of intergenerational barriers to full and equal participation opportunities.</li> <li>• Community expectations that the schools will take responsibility for roles that were traditionally undertaken by parents.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
4	Negative media and political portrayal of public schools	127	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The press loves a scandal in a state school: Mt Druitt springs to mind. The story ran for days and to what end? To kick in the guts a community already severely disadvantaged? Yet the horrible stories coming out of exclusive schools such as Cranebrook, Knox and St Stanislaus seldom last more than a day or two for these schools can afford the barristers and spin doctors to side step or muzzle the press.</li> <li>• School image-the media portrayal of everything negative about the state system and everything positive about the private system</li> <li>• The media are an incredibly negative impact on education, unless you come from a private school setting. The facts are they do not tell the truth, they distort any activity around public education and they are not interested in the good stories.</li> <li>• Direct and inferred comments from politicians, the media and other pundits that schools are failing children without recognising the broad systemic inputs that mediate outcomes for students present a continuing, insidious barrier to improving the public purposes of schools. Improving the whole system needs to be the focus not simply a narrow focus on blaming teachers, individual schools etc. Whilst this blaming culture is prevalent, attempts to improve the education system for all students will remain fractured, divisive and inefficient.</li> <li>• I think the media and the government both play very negative barriers to achieving the public purpose of schools. They use the public system as a bashing rod for all the wrongs in society with teachers being the easy target. The society values that staff who teach at the private/elitist schools as they are under the misguided belief that they have better teachers in the private system.</li> <li>• Media portrayal of public schools as second rate.</li> <li>• The mistaken public perception that public education is crap - as pushed by the Liberals and most of the media.</li> </ul>
5	Competitive national testing and league tables	68	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing to have the best NAPLAN results. It is a one point in time test and invalid much of the time. The terrible state of facilities. Lack of confidence in public schools and teachers shown by the government.</li> <li>• League tables and comparisons based on raw data that does not take into account the clientele of a school will create angst, division, disparity between schools perceived to be successful and those not and, ultimately, destroy the morale of the teaching service. Already I have seen the farce of people moving into suburbs of Canberra or creating fictitious addresses so that they can be in the drawing area for a "successful" school.</li> <li>• NAPLAN. We are now told that our primary purpose is to get kids through this test! Sadly, this is where the real focus of schools is heading. Low socio-economic communities are humiliated by numeric comparisons which do not reflect the real PROGRESS made and the excellent achievements made in so many aspects of schooling.</li> <li>• League tables approaches and a focus on quantitative data rather than qualitative data. Not enough focus on the Arts and creativity in the curriculum due to focus on Literacy, Numeracy, Science, and History. The State and Australian Governments are so obsessed with Literacy and numeracy results that they can't see the wood for the trees! What about developing the whole child - a lot of lip service is given to this but is not and has not been supported with adequate resources for many years! Where has the development of creativity gone - the nurturing of the human spirit through the arts - music, drama and visual arts? And don't get me going about the crowded curriculum!! It is still alive and well and will only get worse as schools pick up the slack of our dysfunctional society!</li> <li>• Publishing league tables and other information which does not necessarily reflect a school's effectiveness having schools compete against one another for enrolments a large, well-funded private school sector which, by its nature, is not inclusive, or diverse inadequate funding of education</li> </ul>
6	Unfair enrolment policies and	59	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deliberate withdrawal of funding to address the needs of students with support needs and specific learning needs i.e. fewer classes for students with specific diagnosed needs. The supposition that mainstream classes are the best place for</li> </ul>

	practices			<p>those students and the lack of understanding of the impact on their peers and staff when those needs cannot adequately be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequitable funding arrangements where taxpayers funds are poured into private schools that pick and choose their students to the detriment of public schools which are open to all.</li> <li>• Inadequate funding of differential support for students with special educational, social, emotional or welfare needs. Schools that cater for 'more difficult to educate' students (emotionally disturbed, Indigenous, disabled, etc) need to be recognised, supported and funded to continue this work.</li> <li>• Over-representation of needy groups within schools. Insufficient funding. Lack of social workers</li> <li>• Lack of state-wide policies and guidelines. Competition amongst schools generally. Competition for enrolments. Insufficient funding, particularly for schools in low SES communities. Disproportionately greater number of students with disabilities and impairments attending government schools.</li> <li>• Schools' student selection policies</li> <li>• Government schools are forced to take enrolments, while private schools can select their intake.</li> <li>• We have established an uneven playing field for children entering education. Most parents don't have 'real choice'.</li> <li>• Schools having to compete with other schools for enrolments because enrolments mean money!</li> <li>• Private schools and the institutionalised elitism under the guise of free choice. Let the people with influence send their students to a government school and then we will have a chance of creating equity for all.</li> <li>• Because state schools do not discriminate, the level of need for many students and their families is significant. The criteria for assistance such as Disabilities and Impairments for teacher aides, creates barriers for many students who have significant issues but do not qualify for support. The burden on the school to cater to these students and their families is a major barrier and can be the reason other families leave a school. The stress on teachers already overloaded with curricular and other expectations means that other students do not receive the attention and support they need since the teacher cannot ignore the high needs students who are not eligible for support.</li> </ul>
7	Poor teachers, curriculum (crowded) and school organisation	39	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers include: A narrow focus on only academic learning and tests instead of on quality teaching and learning and relationships. Embracing too many programs without any philosophy or vision. A failure to recognise the importance of the social/emotional ie relationships and trust building. Too many accountability constraints. Non-inclusive practices which fail to recognise the wonderful involvement of parents. Systems based on rewards and punishments</li> <li>• The constant overcrowding of the curriculum.</li> <li>• Crowded curriculum that prevents us treating many areas in the depth they require. * age of the teaching force.</li> <li>• Superficial attention paid to teaching values/civics/citizenship.</li> <li>• Imposed curriculum (lack of diversification). Over crowded curriculum.</li> <li>• Overcrowded curriculum. Schools need to focus on literacy, numeracy, and social skills and make sure every child achieves success in those areas. After that they can worry about everything else. Schools have been overrun by organisations and policy which advocates for life education, drug education, healthy eating, fitness, learn to swim, sex education etc etc etc. These things are all worthwhile and do have a place in schools but it needs to be peripheral to the main game.</li> <li>• The inability to clean schools out of the dysfunctional teachers; it's difficult to make a silk purse out of a sows ear.....a fine teacher out of a someone who is burnt out or got in for the wrong reasons.</li> <li>• The lack of a National Curriculum to fairly rate performances.</li> <li>• One of the saddest barriers is the teachers themselves. Although 99% are hard working, dedicated, passionate professionals there are the few who let the whole side down by their slack attitude, poorly spoken grammar and their totally inappropriate dress sense.. thongs at work! Oh please!!!!</li> <li>• Constant changes to curriculum and system priorities away from basic needs of children within the system.</li> <li>• Lack of opportunity for schools/systems to really get to the heart of what is the common good.</li> <li>• Lack of school relevance when the curriculum does not appear relevant to students. That they can't join the dots between what they do at school and their future. Lack of resilience (mental and general health) many students exhibit which significantly affects their ability/desire to learn.</li> <li>• Lack of access to excellent teachers.</li> </ul>
8	Negative and incorrect public perceptions about the quality of public education(and	38	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorrect perceptions about public education</li> <li>• Societal attitudes- an increasing trend toward criticism and attacks on schools and school staff based on the perceived unmet needs of individuals.</li> <li>• A lack of understanding in the wider community of the bigger picture in education - in particular its role in developing and sustaining a socially just and tolerant society.</li> </ul>



	the consequent residualisation of public education)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public perception that a diverse environment is not "ideal" for all students. A belief of a large cohort of "middle class" parents that a diverse school population is not healthy for their child. A perception that private and catholic systems are "more disciplined"</li> <li>Poor public perceptions of public schools.</li> <li>Media = Public perception Funding of disadvantaged public schools Lack of transparency in outcomes across sectors</li> <li>The mistaken public perception that public education is crap - as pushed by the Liberals and most of the media.</li> <li>Gossip in a school community from misinformation given in the media.</li> <li>The growth of private schools fuelled by parents who think because they pay for a product, it must be better.</li> <li>Parents with connections and influence are lost to the public system cause and they argue for maintaining difference; thus division and separation. They take themselves away from needing to deal with issues that arise in a public system that takes all children, irrespective of circumstance, but without the resources to support them.</li> <li>Public perception and delivery/propaganda displayed in state and national newspapers</li> <li>The public - they really don't know or understand the demands placed on schools and as a group are not prepared to force governments to adequately fund education and education programs.</li> <li>A real lack of understanding among the community as they only hear the bad things. Invariably people love their local school but feel the Public system is not much good.</li> <li>The removal of school zoning has created a dysfunctional system where schools develop reputations based on untruths and schools within low socio economic areas lose all their middle class students to private schools or out of area enrolment at public schools. Add to this the skimming of OC students your local public primary school is left with a residual of the hardest to educate students, unless of course you happen to be the flavour of the month.</li> <li>The perceptions of some parents who believe that they have to send their children to a private school to give them the best start to their careers. The perception by some employers that private school students are better than comparable public school students.</li> </ul>
9	Teacher and principal quality, income, workload, planning time, administrative demands, training and access to quality professional development	35	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work overload and underfunding /resourcing of schools.</li> <li>Lack of funds primarily for teachers salaries. We do not attract quality applicants as the pay is too low so the entrance requirements for teaching have to be lowered to gain sufficient applicants. A vicious circle!</li> <li>Trying to spread everything too thin, we need more high quality leadership, the ability to select staff to suit the community needs, not enough funding for children with challenging behaviour and learning difficulties, more professional development for staff and better facilities for teaching and learning.</li> <li>Schools have too many demands upon them with a crowded curriculum and resources that are spread too thinly.</li> <li>Principal role too much focussed on admin. We need an admin leader &amp; an educational leader (as private schools have)This goes for schools of all sizes - it's criminal that small schools do not have a full time SAM! This is 2009!! Not 1809!! Teaching principals are multitasked but must have 5 day admin support!</li> <li>Monetary funding Opportunity for ongoing teacher professional development</li> <li>The administrative tasks that flood staff every day and take away precious day to day teaching time with students.</li> <li>Lack of leadership development - principals have been overloaded by local management without admin support to undertake the required tasks - and in doing so have lost the focus on students and learning as central to our work.</li> <li>More and more demands and less time to get things done properly</li> <li>All teachers should have access to quality professional development. This naturally flows onto the level of student attainments achievable. Quality Teaching = Quality Learning.</li> <li>Professional Development funding and additional SD time to have these conversations within school learning communities.</li> </ul>
10	Societal issues and fragmentary change e.g. individualism	23	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A culture that is increasingly 'all about me', the perception that diversity = deficit and that it could be catching, the congregation of poor kids from communities in public schools without a mix of community kids to provide alternate models and ways of thinking and enabling kids to learn from each other, the facilities inequities (even the current School Pride Program keeps the gap wide)</li> <li>The breakdown of family structures. Some parents expect others (schools) to be responsible for providing moral development and fail to accept their responsibility for their child's integration into a safe environment.</li> <li>A changing society and community not understanding how our students have changed and therefore how things need to be done differently to achieve success.</li> <li>Inclusivity - Parents don't want their child's learning interrupted by behaviour students and special needs kids. They don't want them mixing with the local drug</li> </ul>

				<p>dealers kid and so on. Integrating extreme special needs students into mainstream classes. These teachers DID NOT choose, nor train to be, special education teachers but by reducing funding to these students and mainstreaming them EVERY CHILd misses out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family breakdown and social dysfunction.</li> <li>• The importance of the partnership between school and home is often extremely difficult to achieve when families/caregivers are struggling with other significant issues e.g. drug/alcohol dependency, domestic violence, abuse, poverty and their literacy levels.</li> <li>• Student behaviour - generational poverty has at times given students and parents the notion that they do not have to operate within the boundaries that affect others. Students who don't come to school well behaved and well mannered adversely affect those around them , both socially and academically.</li> <li>• Public schools advancing the common good, private schools the interests of the individual.</li> <li>• Parental demands and expectations of schools as a place where the individual is developed for their secondary (private) school experience and for a world as known by the parent community limited community access to/understanding of diversity</li> <li>• The deterioration of family values and the family unit.</li> <li>• Lack of agreed collaboration between community members and school staff, competitiveness between community groups and their schools, single-mindedness of schools, parental and community groups (not my kid's school, not my business) fostering unwillingness to share. Lack of funds to promote positive means to attaining public purpose.</li> <li>• 1. Dysfunctional families. 2. Aberrant behaviour at school.</li> <li>• People apathetic to making the decision makers accountable for their actions toward public education.</li> <li>• Socio-economic background of students. Role modelling at home is often detrimental to the needs of students, and the overall cohesiveness of the community</li> <li>• Dysfunctional families with dysfunctional children</li> <li>• The common good is not equitable for all students. Many of the very disadvantaged students we have visit have physical and mental health needs that are not met and never will be as their needs are too great for schools to provide for. The common good is the sum of individuals experiences and many of our children are not getting their basic needs for safety, a roof over their heads, an adequate diet, dental and health care etc met.</li> <li>• Socio economic factors Parents attitudes to education and its values The unstable nature of the family The effects on a child's ability to get the most from what is offered / available at school from the conditions within the home- cleanliness; nourishment; exposure to inappropriate things on TV and in the home e.g. language etc</li> </ul>
11	Lack of principal and school autonomy e.g. to hire and fire staff, resource use.	21	2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to choose best staff to serve the local culture of public schools. Difficulty of removing inappropriate/ badly performing teachers.</li> <li>• Lack of school autonomy HR Policies Capital funding (BER might change this)</li> <li>• Attracting quality educational practitioners to low SES schools.</li> <li>• Schools have little control over the resources they need. Staffing, facilities and levies and fundraising should be given at least some local control.</li> <li>• The greatest barrier is not resourcing the most disadvantaged and remote schools with top quality teachers that are retained long enough to make the difference required to raise the bar and close the gap. Research clearly indicates that it is the teacher that makes the difference. Start taking notice of the research whatever the cost.</li> <li>• It is a simple fact that Educational Bureaucrats are only interested in telling politicians what they want to hear and have, for at least a decade, never said no to anything that has been forced on schools by politicians seeking popular favour. Greater autonomy must be given to school Principals.</li> <li>• Unable to choose teaching staff</li> <li>• Hire and fire policy Teachers not performing their duties (basic teaching, duty of care) should be fired.</li> <li>• Principals and their schools are the ones who know best what their needs are and what their priorities should be. Allow principals greater autonomy within their schools and pay them the salaries they deserve.</li> <li>• Too many strings as to how resources can be used</li> </ul>

#### 74. Any other comments?

Almost half of the responses related to calls for schooling to contribute to a more inclusive, cohesive, collaborative society and for political policy to offer greater fairness and equity for all. Examples follow:

- **Inclusive and collaborative society**

- There needs to be more cohesion between what the students need and what is taught. The curriculum needs to be more RELEVANT to the 21st century, to students & to the local and global community. Delivery should be more FLEXIBLE and take into account the different learning styles, needs, backgrounds and aspirations of students. HIGH SCHOOLS should be more joint task oriented instead of subject specific.... e.g. one theme for year 8 and all KLA's work towards a shared outcome.
- Our history will reflect a time of wasted opportunity and social divisiveness due largely to our failed approach to schooling and the provision of education in the second half of the 20th century. Unless we agree as a nation to bring together all those involved in policy making and develop a bipartisan approach to the provision and funding of education, Australia as a nation will continue to slide further down the list of advanced countries. How can we possibly expect to remain a highly advanced futuristic nation with our current haphazard, highly political approach to education?
- Given Australia's high level of multiculturalism with people from many countries and faiths, it is a remarkable feature of our country that we have very little social unrest. This can be directly attributed to the socially inclusive and supportive programs of public schools. Public schools are the only schools which take on the most challenging children in all areas of need. These children are sensitively and objectively nurtured.
- I and my colleagues in state schools are seeing many more children and families in distress. While this varies from area to area, we are likely to see more distress everywhere due to the global economic downturn. If schools are to be the hub of their local communities, how can the government support schools to address more than the academic needs of the students, since it is these 'other needs' that impact on student learning and the creation of a sustainable and cohesive community of learners.
- We must sustain a strong Public education system which draws children from all races, religions, socio-economic levels and levels of ability, and promotes tolerance and equity. We must never allow the Public education system to become a residual system for those who cannot afford an alternative. Our Public schools must be a reflection of the diversity of our communities. Independent schools can promote isolation, segregation and ignorance through selective enrolment policies, which in turn promote intolerance and undermine the principles that serve the public purpose.
- Government schools must take all comers and are a true reflection of society as a whole. Even though I believe there is room for all systems, I sometimes worry that if you have money at your disposal you have access to greater advantages in later life. I believe our society still places favour on where you live and where you went to school when it comes to entering the job market.
- John Howard said on retirement that giving parents 'choice' was one of his greatest achievements. How sad it is that it is premised on ability to pay; and where entry is through interview, scholarships and intellect. The Australian tenet that every child deserves 'a fair go' has been affected by the decade of his government's policy directions and it can only be hoped that the maintenance of our cohesive society has not been jeopardized.
- Until the state and national Health systems and associated Community Services agencies (including Youth Justice and Child Protection) are linked to supporting the family/child in a collaborative and holistic way in partnership with schools, then schools will continue to be expected to carry out far more than their core business of academic and social learning and to have to deal with/respond to the mental health issues of families, to clothe, feed and nurture as well as teach students.
- The public school system offers children educational opportunities that do not depend on the wealth of their families or the cultural or religious backgrounds of families. It offers children and their families the huge advantage of being part of inclusive learning community that reflects the make-up of Aboriginal and multicultural Australia.
- We need to ensure that we do not further facilitate the growth of a two tiered education system in Australia: ie. One for the 'Haves' & one for the 'Have Nots'!
- School clusters must always work together to promote best practice and to ensure optimum opportunities for all students.
- That schools should not be 'pitted' against each other - we are in the same business, providing a quality education for the next generation. there needs to be much more emphasis on teacher professionalism, qualifications, skills, competency - in the media, by government there needs to be basic trust that principals and schools are doing the best that they can do with the resourcing they are given. if a school is not performing then supports, accountability measures etc need to be forthcoming immediately. if principals/teachers are proven to be not competent then assistance is available to retrain for other jobs we need other tools for measuring school effectiveness rather than being judged by a one off, narrow national test
- A quality public education system that includes and values all is the chance for us all to have success in life regardless of our background.
- Good public schools are essential to any successful culture. Many of the social problems we are experiencing are the result of the in balance and non representative nature of students in public schools due to the exodus to private schools driven by some sections of our community,

- We do it well in the Public System
- Up until there is a genuine systemic and political valuing of schools for their ever increasing role they play in society we will see little change in outcomes.
- School systems need to be restructured to better reflect the community it serves and not the system. Private schools have the advantage of serving only a limited school community- What ways are available for community schools to do the same. In such a way, curriculum, services, programs and direction is set up to reflect the community and its values I believe that the basis of our Australian society is being eroded by the lack of funding to the public education system. This lack of funding, and the continual struggle to create programs for our students, is creating a society which thinks the public schools are considered second rate. Our students deserve equality of opportunity, but this is not always made possible - we seem to have to fight for everything we get. For Australia to become a truly equitable and inclusive society we need to support the public education system to a far greater extent.
- Successive governments have failed to grasp the need to create school communities that do not discriminate against race, religion, wealth or anything else. In public schools all students are embraced and if we want to live in a society that is not riven by religious conflict we must create an environment that nurtures secular friendships based around rigorous academic study.
- Public education is its own good and its purpose is social cohesion.
- I am disillusioned with the current govt system and will be looking for another job. I have spent my entire career working in education and with the disadvantaged believing that I could assist in making a difference. As a principal of a large school I don't believe that I can make that difference anymore with the current policy settings. It is a fight each day to try and ensure the students receive the education that will deliver a better outcome for them for their future. One is not supported by the any level of govt in fact most policies have the effect of putting up barriers for govt schools to overcome. We need to think more about the public good of education and less about the individual need to get more than the next person. We are rapidly becoming a class society where the have nots have less each day.

### • **Inaccurate public perception**

As a PSP school with a high Aboriginal enrolment (25%) I find it very difficult to convince the public that just because my school population is poor or disadvantaged that the education that is on offer at my school is below par or not as good as it could be.

### • **The need for *schooling futures* thinking and planning**

Schools have needed to start looking at the future for a good while. We seem afraid to consider the future and reframe / rename our practice. Is education really about creating the future or maintaining the status quo???

- I think that in rethinking and re-examining the public purposes of schooling we are providing an opportunity to rethink relationships within and beyond the public sector and explore the possibilities for now and in the future.
- My dream is to have a school where our kids' results are so good we get accused of cheating (which we won't do!). I also dream that there is a wait list for enrolments and parents move suburbs to be located in our "zone". (This in turn would affect housing prices!) I have been in government schools for 25 years and I don't plan to leave soon. Government schools have a huge responsibility to serve for the greater good of the community. My challenge is to match these values with the values in action.
- Narrow understandings of the nature of schooling in the 21st century on the behalf of politicians, influential community members and educational bureaucracies continue to hamper the work of schools, the learning of young people and the development of productive community/school partnerships. Curriculum lacks depth in terms of 'difference'. The gains of the late 80s/early 90s in terms of teacher knowledge of the impact of difference in the learning context and the content (eg SES, culture, gender, sexuality, rural/urban etc) have been lost, leaving most teachers unable to understand the intricacies of their work in terms of the 'common good'. So much is asked of teachers and schools. Teachers need time.....to reflect, to re-prioritise their work, to re-evaluate the purpose of their work. Schools must be better resourced to manage the diversity of students and communities. We have 21st century needs, but are funded on a model that does not understand the nature of our student need. Inadvertently schools then become the scapegoats for all that is amiss in society. Schools can do better for the common good- no doubt about it - but we need to be resourced and supported to respond to contemporary needs, not those of a bygone era.

### • **The need for greater autonomy and devolution**

- Let all public school have more devolution - let us `hire and fire` ( within parameters ), give us more resources - straight from Canberra, not via State Treasuries. Spinks and Caldwell were espousing this concept 25 years ago - let's get on with it!

- **Inadequate facilities and resourcing**

- My school continues to attract students from the private sector but there is no support for this from the government. My staff work exceptionally hard to use restorative practices to manage bullying and harassment but they continue to work in poorly maintained buildings, struggling for resources and money to equip the school to the necessary levels. Many are Contract Teachers who deserve better. They give their hearts and souls but work in extreme heat without adequate air-conditioning which we can't even improve with all of the BER funding available.
- One of the main reasons parents select private schools is because of the state of facilities and what they see as strong discipline. Government schools have to deal with very difficult students who not only give the schools a bad name but take up so much time and resources. With the proposed reduction in the length of suspensions that can be given and making it more difficult to expel students this will only serve to make it even more difficult for Government schools. The Department needs to take a strong stance in supporting schools and teachers with difficult students/ parents. Schools as they are currently resourced do not have the facilities or personnel to deal with some of these students.
- Public schools operate in difficult circumstances to serve their communities as well as possible with often limited resources and bureaucratic constraints. This is done by a reliance on good will and extreme hard work that is over and above the realms of what is realistic. The future of education hangs in the balance of this goodwill, however pressure and ill health are going to be an increasing trend in the teaching workforce. Teachers must be valued and appreciated more in many ways by the community at large.

- **Unfair blame**

There is a simple philosophy going around for State education. "If it works -the government must have thought it up, if it fails it was the Schools responsibility" -At least this is how it seems to most teachers.

- **Principal angst about national testing**

Schooling is being distorted by a national testing agenda - the curriculum is narrowed; opportunities for students to actively participate in curriculum decisions are narrowed. Schools & universities are inadequately funded by commonwealth and state governments. In particular, disadvantaged students and communities are funded so inadequately that these students have limited opportunities for success.

- Where are the value added comparisons?
- One discussion point that always emerges after national testing and tertiary results is that the parameters of reporting and publication are unfair and do not show the true picture between private and public, 'leafy green' or 'dirt brown,' and there is no process to show the value adding that is often much greater in the dirt browns than in the leafy greens.
- Politicians follow populist strategies; they serve orders upon the higher bureaucracies, who then feed demands down the chain until it hits the classrooms. Classroom teachers tend to refocus their efforts on getting improved outcomes for the national testing and so reduce their focus for a specific outcome. Those schools who capitulate are rewarded and so the process continues. We have become obsessed with graphs and data - from information that is largely flawed from tests performed infrequently in a student's life. The schools worth is then judged by these measures. I have seen a steady growth in teachers teaching to these tests - hence the slow improvements over time. Education as a whole is poorer for it. I am guilty of teaching to the tests myself of which I am ashamed. But at my PARS (principal assessment and review schedule) the results are put under my nose and my future directly linked to the results. One last point on IT in schools. We have, as a region, been berated over our failure to implement rich interactive tasks based on computer and internet education. Teachers have not had the opportunities to learn these new technologies, nor the time to gather the new skills. We have not had the infrastructure within schools; teachers have not had access to their own PC or laptop. But they are expected to suddenly be providing this type of interaction. Some (most) classrooms have one or two computers - how is it possible then for teachers to be actively engaged in this new and expansive teaching technology. Bureaucrats - they love spruiking the big picture, however they never have a roadmap as to how teachers are supposed to get there.
- Reducing the measure of common good to test scores is not in the best interests of developing a better society/community.

- **Leadership and the *Crap Filter***

- Garth Boomer - used the term *Crap Filter* for principals another term now adjoining this is computer filter and commonsense advocate.

- **Teacher work focus on pedagogy rather than administrivia**

- Teachers work hard.....we need teachers to work hard in a different way but our system continues to promote, value and expect more in terms of management then wonder why leadership isn't demonstrated for the important aspects of schooling. We need a push to give schools permission to

focus on pedagogy - our core business, learning that is appropriate to ensuring that our students are well prepared for their place as 21st century learners.

- **Panacea for society's ills**

Schools must not be given the responsibility for curing all of society's problems

- **Media**

Media negativity towards public education is a serious problem in undermining public confidence - and in suggesting to well intentioned parents that private education is a better option for their child.

- **Choice and Money**

Place some imperative on moral purpose and less importance upon economic imperative.

- An emphasis on choice over public education policy results in greater disadvantage and a widening of the gap between low SES families and the rest of society.