

# Submission to Tasmanian Review of schooling years 9-12

## Background

This submission is not one which is going to go over ground covered by others. This submission acknowledges the work done by Professors Eleanor Ramsay and Michael Rowan in describing problems within the senior years of the Tasmanian Education system and is attached to this submission (Attachment 1). They have assisted in defining the problems.

Clearly there is a lack of engagement of many students in the year 9 to 12 age group. Many students appear not to have developed a meaningful relationship with learning, education providers and their perceived role in the wider world. This is not to dispute the fact that many students attend school regularly and achieve positive outcomes. It is clear from the attached (Ramsay and Rowan) research that Tasmanian students underachieve in comparison to other States.

## Teaching and Learning

The focus of this submission is draw attention to research on processes around learning and teaching that enhance the student's ability to develop meaning and engagement with their schooling.

It is teaching and learning that is central to the schooling system and the most important element in the development of better outcomes. Rather than suggest small changes it is time to renew the processes of teaching and learning with a focus on the relationship of the learner to learning. While structural changes are never easy they can be made within relatively modest time frames. To make changes to teaching and learning processes requires long term planning, development, research and evaluation.

The Advocacy Project run in Victoria from 1999 to 2003 achieved substantial positive outcomes documented in the three evaluations of the Project. Central to the Project was the establishment of a one to one relationship of a learner with a teacher with a strong focus on developing a detailed profile of the learner so that any shortcomings might be addressed through this relationship. Based on substantial research evidence regarding the impact of teacher-student relationships on adolescent wellbeing and school engagement, the project involved training teachers to take the role of student advocates and giving them the opportunity within the school structure to support students through one on one interaction. Among the positive outcomes documented were increased attendance, increased detention, better academic achievement and better psychological and social wellbeing.

Please read attachment two [“Developing the reflective function: The Advocacy Model as a way of developing a sense of meaning in young people.”](#) By Brendan Schmidt and Bernie Neville, this gives a background to the processes involved in a newer version of the Advocacy project.

'One of the most important developments in the last 20 years has been the convergence of research findings from across the spectrum of related disciplines, including developmental psychology, neurobiology and attachment theories .....' Knox J. 'Archetype, Attachment, Analysis.' Routledge. New York. 2003. Page 168.

We have endeavoured to utilise this research in developing The Advocacy Model.

Somebody Knows, Somebody Cares: Reengaging Students through Relationship Paperback – May 8, 2015 by Kirsten Hutchison (Editor), Tricia McCann (Editor) is a publication which provides more detailed experiences with the Advocacy model.

The model has been developed over many years involving many teachers, researchers and learners and it is with this in mind that I ***recommend*** that the processes involved with the Advocacy project be central to a longitudinal research study to outlined below which is based on research finding across psychology, neurology, human consciousness and focussed on gaining better educational and social outcomes for adolescent learners.

Having seen the results of the Kirby review in Victoria where the outcomes were only lasting in the structural and curriculum changes, where money spent on Managed Individual Pathways has not led to lasting changes in the system or to learning and teaching.

Pathways Planners in Tasmania were able to achieve some success but not enough to warrant ongoing support or extension.

Our recommendation is for a long term research project to institute cultural change within the education system based on the Advocacy Model.

## International Institute for Research into Relationships in Education (IIRIRE) PROPOSED PROJECT

**AIM:** To research the impact on student outcomes, school culture, teacher satisfaction, student and staff wellbeing of an intervention facilitating teacher self-awareness and better student-teacher relationships.

### **Outcomes:**

To increase student engagement with schooling years 7 to 12 as measured by attendance and satisfaction scores.

To increase the level of success with schooling for learners in years 7-12 as measured by retention and academic achievement.

To assist individual schools to develop their own models based on the central framework of the Advocacy Project.

To develop with teachers and administrators a new set of accountabilities for teachers based on personal interactions with students, development of learner narratives, goal setting, ability to appraise and consider others in their decision making.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

1. Teacher personal and professional development using contextual insight-navigated discussion (CIND).
2. Principal personal and professional development using contextual insight-navigated discussion (CIND).
3. Teacher training in basic counselling skills within a Rogerian framework.
4. Development with teachers of a new teacher accountability framework focusing on teacher personal and professional development and student-teacher interaction.
5. Establishment of an advocacy/mentoring structure and processes within schools involving one to one student-teacher interaction using a reflective function model.
6. Adapting curriculum development and provision to take full advantage of current and developing technologies and theory and to free teacher time to enable a focus on the quality of teacher-student interaction. Development of MOOCS for secondary curriculum.
7. Development of a digital data-base to facilitate productive student-teacher interaction.

## **RESEARCH PARTNERS**

IIRIRE which includes members from Australian Catholic University, Deakin University and Victoria as well as retired academics from LaTrobe University.

UTAS

Tasmanian Education Department

School partners: Three Tasmanian state schools from different like-school groups using ACARA data.

Philanthropic funding bodies

Tasmanian Health Department

Tasmanian Government

## **DURATION OF STUDY: Eight years**

Year 1: Teacher personal and professional development and training. Principals' personal and professional development. School structure development. Development of the data base.

Year 2: Introduction to year 7

Year 3: Progression to year 8. Evaluation and publication. Expansion of model.

Year 4: Progression to year 9. Ongoing evaluation and publication. Ongoing expansion

Year 5: Progression to year 10. Ongoing evaluation and publication. Ongoing expansion

Year 6: Progression to year 11. Ongoing evaluation and publication. Ongoing expansion.

Year 7: Progression to year 12. Ongoing evaluation and publication

Year 8: Final evaluation of processes and outcomes. Publication.

## EVALUATION

1. Student academic achievement
2. Student wellbeing
3. Student attendance and retention
4. Teacher wellbeing
5. Teacher satisfaction
6. Teacher attitudes
7. Principals wellbeing
8. Changes to school culture
9. Teacher accountability model
10. Comparison with like-schools data. The current Tasmanian schools accountability data (ACARA) provides the baseline for comparison.

It is intended that the project could be run out to many more schools over the eight years as teachers are trained to institute the model.

**Costing:** The research model at this stage is not costed but is intended to show the type of long range change at the interface between teacher and learner which has much more chance of success than other non substantive changes.

Results can be achieved and published within the three year political cycle.

**Attachment one.**

**STATE OF TASMANIA  
YEARS 9 – 12 EDUCATION REVIEW**

**Submission by Eleanor Ramsay and Michael Rowan**

**ATTACHMENT 1**

## Using *MySchool* to benchmark Tasmanian Year 12 attainment rates against similar schools in other states

Prof Eleanor Ramsay and Prof Michael Rowan, June 2016

[Minor correction 2 July 2016 – see note (2), page 24.]

*Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life,  
few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even  
to hope, by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identified as lying within.*

Stephen Jay Gould

### PREAMBLE

Prof Alan Reid, in his defence of the importance of public education, *Building our nation through public education*, writes

Apart from denying individuals the chance to develop to their fullest potential, there is now overwhelming evidence demonstrating the deleterious effects of educational inequality on social and economic outcomes and political participation. Productivity falls, participation in civic life is diminished, and social dislocation is greater. Since education is one of the most important determinants of levels of inequality, it is clear that there is need for urgent action to improve equity in Australian schooling.

The kind of evidence for inequality in Australian schooling Prof Reid would have in mind compares the outcomes for students in wealthier schools in wealthier communities with the outcomes for students in poorer schools in poorer communities. This evidence is well known, and is the basis for attempts to reduce inequality in schooling, most recently by the Gonski funding reforms.

In what follows we compare Tasmanian schools to like schools elsewhere in Australia. We do not compare unlike schools. Thus we do not consider the kind of evidence that is usually presented to demonstrate the level of inequality in Australian schooling.

But while we seek to compare outcomes only from like schools, inequality is still at the heart of this analysis. For, as the data analysed in the following pages will show, the educational outcomes for

senior secondary students in Tasmanian government schools are much lower than for comparable schools in other states, which means **there is not only inequality between unlike schools in Tasmania** (as elsewhere), **but also between Tasmanian government schools and like schools in other states.**

Furthermore, this difference increases as we look at schools in more disadvantaged communities, here and in other states. The inconvenient truth revealed by this data is that the outcomes from Tasmanian state senior secondary schools do not match those from like schools in other states, and fall further and further behind for students from less advantaged communities.

Thus we have in Tasmania a double inequality in our schooling. First, and as in the rest of the country, students in our more advantaged schools are achieving much better outcomes than students in schools at the other end of the scale. That is the problem Gonski is trying to fix. But then we also have inequality between our government schools and like schools in other states. That is a problem we in Tasmania need to fix.

And this is despite all but two of the Tasmanian state schools in this analysis receiving more dollars per student than their similar schools, Burnie and Kingston High Schools being the exceptions.

We have an equity problem in Australian schooling. But we have almost exactly twice the problem – an equity crisis – in the senior secondary education in Tasmania. This has been the main motivation for our work.

## **AIM**

The aim of this analysis is:

- first, to compare the rate at which students from Tasmanian high schools gain their senior secondary certificates, in comparison to students from comparable high schools in other states, and
- second, to compare the performance of the students in the same schools in NAPLAN at year 9, and
- third, to reflect upon the substantial difference in the educational outcomes identified by these two comparisons.

## **SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Attempts to compare the performance of schools across jurisdictions are bedevilled by claims that comparisons between the schools or systems chosen:

(1) are in some way 'not fair' or 'misleading' due to differences between the schools that are not reasonably considered to be a property of the school itself – such as the level of parental support for children's learning, or

(2) do not compare 'apples with apples'.

To overcome the first objection we need to find sets of schools which can be fairly compared, and thus for which it is **reasonable to expect that all the schools will have a similar level of performance on some measure.**

Here we accept the work done by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which manages the NAPLAN testing. ACARA has undertaken research to develop a measure for identifying schools which can fairly be expected to have the same performance in NAPLAN tests. The measure they have developed is the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

ICSEA is determined by a formula which, since its revision in 2013, takes account of :

- the educational attainment of the parents of the students at each school,
- the category of employment of the parents at each school (Senior management in large business organisation, government administration and defence and qualified professionals • Other business managers, arts/media/sportspersons and associate professionals • Tradesmen/women, clerks and skilled office, sales and service staff • Machine operators, hospitality staff, assistants, labourers and related workers • Not in paid work in last 12 months),
- the school's location (metropolitan, provincial, remote or very remote), and
- the percentage of the students who are Indigenous.

For a simple explanation of ICSEA see

[http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/20160418\\_ACARA\\_ICSEA.pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/20160418_ACARA_ICSEA.pdf) and for a more thorough discussion see

[http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Guide\\_to\\_understanding\\_2013\\_ICSEA\\_values.pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Guide_to_understanding_2013_ICSEA_values.pdf).

ACARA claims that schools with the same ICSEA can reasonably be expected to have the same NAPLAN results, and thus that any differences between the NAPLAN results of schools with the same



ICSEA need to be explained by factors internal to the school, such as the quality of the teaching, rather than by looking at the context of the school itself, such as its location in a particular community, or its students' family backgrounds. ACARA uses this proposition as a selection rule to constitute sets of similar schools which can be fairly compared in terms of their performance in the NAPLAN tests.

**We intend to accept this claim, and the list of similar schools which ACARA's work has provided on the *MySchool* site for each Tasmanian school in this study, with several qualifications.**

First, we understand some critics claim that it is not fair to compare state and private schools with the same ICSEA. As we recall discussion of this from some years ago, their argument runs as follows: regardless of their educational background and kind of employment, parents who choose to send their children to private schools are more likely to be strongly committed to their children attaining good school results than parents of the same background who do not choose private schooling for their children. Also, parental interest in their children's performance is positively correlated with students' higher performance. Thus, a public school cannot fairly be expected to have the same level of student attainment as a private school with the same ICSEA.

We do not have any data to test this hypothesis, and so far as we are aware it is not supported by ACARA's research on ICSEA as a means of identifying similar schools – schools whose performance on NAPLAN it is fair to compare. But here we accept the hypothesis to forestall as a line of criticism of our results that it is not fair to compare public and private schools with the same ICSEA. This would have been important in considering the results for Tarooma High School, since most of the schools in the *MySchool* similar schools list for Tarooma are private schools, a consequence of Tarooma's high ICSEA. (The 2015 ICSEA of Tarooma (1109) is about the same as Launceston Church Grammar School (1111).)

So we do not include interstate private schools among the comparison schools for Tasmanian public schools, but we do allow the reverse.

On the basis of a similar concern, we exclude from the list of similar schools any single sex girls school – on the assumption that comparing two schools of like ICSEA, one a single sex girls' school and the other either a co-educational or single sex boys school, the single sex girls school could be expected to have a greater proportion of its students performing at a higher level.

Likewise, we exclude from the list of similar schools any school which is academically selective, for obvious reasons.

This gives us a total list of 202 interstate schools, in similar schools groups numbering between 8 and 33 for the 14 Tasmanian schools in our sample, (10 government schools, and 4 non-government schools). In addition, we include all of the Tasmanian colleges in our analysis, since most students from the high schools in our sample will attend one of the colleges if they continue to Year 12.

Thus, in response to objection (1) above, we take as a premiss of our argument that:

[A] non academically selective, co-educational schools of the same type (government/non-government schools) and with a similar ICSEA can be fairly compared in relation to their NAPLAN results;

and make the further assumption that:

[B] schools that can be fairly compared in relation to their NAPLAN achievements can also be fairly compared in relation to their Year 12 attainment levels.

Relevant to this assumption, note that factors which are commonly held to affect Year 12 completion rates, such as school location and parental level of education and kind of employment (whether employed, and if so, unskilled, skilled or professional) are already taken into account in determining a school's ICSEA, which in turn determines which schools may be fairly compared in relation to their NAPLAN results. See, for example, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40Mar+2011>

This allows us to use the *MySchool* web site to identify, for any given Tasmanian school, a set of similar schools elsewhere in Australia for the purposes of considering and comparing both NAPLAN and Year 12 attainment.

To be precise, in this study *MySchool* was used to identify a list of interstate schools with about the same ICSEA as each of the fourteen Tasmanian schools in this analysis, and from this set of schools we extracted the subset of schools which meet the requirements of (A) above, relaxing this requirement, as already indicated, to admit interstate government schools to the list of similar schools for a Tasmanian non-government school, but not interstate non-government schools to the list of similar schools for Tasmanian government schools.

For this study, we selected the following Tasmanian schools based on two factors: their location (to give a spread around the State) and their ICSEA (to include more and less advantaged schools). The schools were chosen from a list which did not include data about their Year 12 attainment. The schools (in ICSEA order), their 2015 ICSEAs, and the number of interstate schools used for comparison are:

The Friends School	1169	9
Scotch Oakburn	1118	9
Taroona High School	1109	8
Launceston Christian School	1054	15
Marist Regional College	1020	31
Kingston High School	995	14
Burnie High School	957	24
Devonport High School	956	28
Queechy High School	953	33
Scottsdale High School	933	28
Wynyard High School	914	23
Huonville High School	910	32
Campbell Town High School	909	12
Mountain Heights School	885	9

Note that none of the mainland comparison schools are from the ACT or the NT, because both are too different to Tasmania to be useful for comparison, e.g., the average ICSEA of the ACT colleges is about the same as Taroona, the Tasmanian government school with the highest ICSEA. Neither do we use any WA schools, as their 2012 Year 10 cohort was unusually small following a change to the school starting age some years before.

Note also that some of the sets of similar interstate schools share members.

In total, our data set of 224 schools comprises:

- 10 Tasmanian government high schools
- 8 Tasmanian government colleges
- 4 Tasmanian non-government schools
- 151 government schools in other states
- 51 non-government schools in other states

Having determined the set of schools to be compared, we now consider the second problem in comparing schools in different states: how do we ensure we are comparing 'apples with apples', or more precisely, considering measures which are equivalent and thus a fair basis for comparison.

This issue is easily resolved where different states use the same measure, as with NAPLAN attainment. This is a national measure, which we take as a fair measure of performance across all schools with the same or very similar ICSEAs. (See [http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Reliability\\_and\\_validity\\_of\\_NAPLAN.pdf](http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/resources/Reliability_and_validity_of_NAPLAN.pdf), and Masters et al 2008, at [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/resources/ACER\\_Report\\_on\\_Reporting\\_and\\_comparing\\_school\\_performances.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/resources/ACER_Report_on_Reporting_and_comparing_school_performances.pdf)).

For Year 12 attainment, however, we do not have a national measure, and thus it is possible that in comparing the rate at which students attain their state's Year 12 certificate we are not comparing like with like.

But all we need to assume is that if a sample of students in one jurisdiction attained their senior secondary certificate, then almost all of them would have attained their certificate had they studied in another jurisdiction, all other things being equal; and similarly if they had not attained their certificate in one jurisdiction, almost all would not have attained it in another.

This is all we need to claim for the Year 12 attainment rates in different states to be fairly comparable. We do not need to say that the requirements to attain a certificate in one state are exactly the same as those in another, nor even that the standards or amount of study required in one state are the same as those in another - but simply that the nature of the certificates and the standards of assessment for the courses that make them up are sufficiently similar that **any big differences in rates of attainment of the senior secondary certificate between schools in different states cannot be explained by differences in the requirements of the Year 12 certificates themselves**. This is all we assume here.

This assumption – that the Year 12 certificates of the various Australian jurisdictions are all apples – is supported by three lines of argument.

First, higher education entry in Australia is based on ranking applicants' study for their Year 12 certificates, with these results determining their ATARs. Now note that more than 10% of domestic undergraduate offers by Australian universities are to students whose home state is elsewhere (see <https://www.education.gov.au/undergraduate-applications-offers-and-acceptances-publications>, 2013 Report, Table 11). Could it be that with such a large movement of students, and a strong focus on university course/unit pass rates and graduation rates, that substantial differences in the level of preparation of applicants from different states would not be noticed and cause controversy across the higher education sector, particularly in relation to the highly competitive entry to prestige, high ATAR courses such as law and medicine? We think not – from which it follows that Year 12 standards must be comparable across jurisdictions.

Second, with the sole exception of Tasmania, the Year 12 certificates of all Australian jurisdictions are overseen by independent boards which include strong representation from amongst the most respected school leaders in each state, who can typically be expected to have national roles also. It is most unlikely that a board overseeing the Year 12 qualification in one state would be unaware that the demands of their certificate were out of line with the requirements elsewhere.

The same goes for teaching staff, especially principals and other senior staff (mainly in private schools), who regularly move between states to new positions.

On the basis of these three independent lines of argument, we conclude that schools' attainment rates of each jurisdiction's Year 12 certificate give us a fair basis for comparison.

For ease of comparison we also need to find a single measure based on NAPLAN results. We use year 9 NAPLAN test results for a single year, and rather than use the results of all five of the tests, we use the average of the percentages of students above the national minimum standards for reading and numeracy.

We use NAPLAN data for 2015, as at the time of writing this is the most recent data available on *MySchool*.

Likewise, Year 12 attainment data for 2014 is used as the most recent data on *MySchool*, and we also have this same data for Tasmanian high schools that (wholly or dominantly) end at Year 10, thanks to the recent much welcomed data release by the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) and the Department of Education – see <http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1324>. This gives direct continuation data for each Tasmanian high school, i.e. the number and percentage of the 2012 Year 10 students at each high school gaining their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) in 2014, wherever they undertook their senior secondary study, providing only they remained in Tasmania. We use this data for all of the Tasmanian high schools in this study - with the exception of the two schools with enrolments of less than 300 students for which we use an average of five years of TCE attainment (2011 – 2015) to smooth out small sample fluctuations, with each year weighted 10% more than the preceding year to take account of the general improving trend.

Unlike the *MySchool* Year 12 attainment data that we use for schools in other states – which counts all certificates awarded in a calendar year regardless of which year the students commenced their senior secondary study - this TASC data does not include students who completed their TCE over three or more years. However, data from the Legislative Council Hansard provided in answer to Questions on Notice numbers 26 of 2014 and 69 of 2016, asked by the Hon Ruth Forrest, shows that including students who take up to four years to complete their TCE at college adds no more than 5% to the total of TCE completions.

While such an increase is important, most especially for the students concerned, including such extended completions does not change the overall picture emerging from comparing the rates of Year 12 certificate completion at schools in Tasmania with those of similar schools interstate, as the range of the differences between Tasmanian and interstate schools are many times greater than this. Moreover, we have no data to attribute the 'year 13/14 completion rate' for individual colleges back to individual high schools, so we have not included these part-time completers in this analysis.

Nor does this analysis take account of the fact that some students leave Tasmania after Year 10 without completing their Year 12 certificates. According to data from the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA), the number of such students is about 120 per year, which is negligible in this analysis, assuming they are reasonably evenly spread across at least most of our high schools.

With those qualifications we can use the *MySchool* Year 12 attainment data for other states' schools to provide a comparison to Tasmanian schools' direct continuation data. We do this by calculating for each interstate school in the sample, the number of students gaining their Year 12 certificate in 2014 (which *MySchool* gives us) as a percentage of that school's 2012 Year 10 cohort.

For QLD and Victoria, year level enrolment for individual schools is available here (see <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/statistics/enrolments.html> and here <https://www.data.vic.gov.au/data/dataset/all-schools-fte-enrolments-feb-2012>), respectively.

For NSW and SA, year level enrolment by school is not publicly available. But we can estimate the size of the 2012 Year 10 cohort from each school's total enrolment for that year based upon what percentage of the 2012 total enrolment in that state in that calendar year was in Year 10.

We note that that if this estimate for any interstate school is lower than the actual Year 10 enrolment for that school in 2012, this would overestimate the percentage of Year 10s gaining their senior secondary certificate. To reduce the likelihood of this occurring, we apply to each interstate school's total 2012 enrolment, the percentage of Year 10s in the class of schools in each state which has the highest proportion of its enrolment in Year 10. By doing this, we can be confident that we are making a high estimate of Year 10 numbers for these interstate state schools taken as a whole, resulting in a low estimate for their rate of senior secondary certificate completion.

Thus for each NSW school, we estimate the 2012 Year 10 enrolment as 18.5% of the total school enrolment for that year. This is the percentage of the total school enrolment in Year 10 in the educational region of Western NSW, which has the highest percentage of the total school enrolment in Year 10 in that State – in consequence, no doubt, of this region having the highest rate of students leaving after Year 10 or year 11. (See <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/key-statistics-and-reports/statistics-bulletins/stats2011-cese-bulletin.pdf>) Likewise, we use 19.7% as the percentage of the total 2012 Year 10 school enrolment for all SA schools, this being the percentage relevant to country SA schools. (See <http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/pages/reports/2012/2012enrolmentterm1.pdf>.)

We use 2012 data for the Year 10 cohort since most of this cohort of students attaining their senior secondary certificates would have done so in 2014, the year for which we consider Year 12 attainment data. As noted above, some of the 2012 Year 10s will have completed their senior secondary certificates in 2015, or will do so in later years, and some of the Year 12 certificates awarded to students in each school in 2014 will have been awarded to students who were in Year 10 in 2011, perhaps even earlier. We assume the rate of part time study has not varied significantly over the few years prior to 2012, and thus that the number of certificates issued in 2014 is an accurate measure of the number of Year 10s from 2012 gaining their certificates in 2014 or later.

There is a final consideration to be discussed before leaving this measure. Some schools enrol a significant number of students at Year 11 or 12, and thus there will be some students in the count of Year 12 certificate completers who were not Year 10 students at that school. Like the issue of part-

time study considered in the paragraph above, this is not an issue with the Tasmanian data as this tracks individual students. But in other states there is the possibility that the data is skewed, particularly by international students enrolling after Year 10. However, only six schools amongst the set of state schools considered in this analysis are licensed to enrol international students (as listed on the CRICOS register), all in NSW – or more precisely, only these six schools are licensed to enrol students without either citizenship or permanent residence status. All but two of these six schools were low ICSEA schools whose ‘international students’ will be recently arrived refugees likely to have little English, and not more likely to be in Year 12 than any other year. And the two higher ICSEAS schools have the lowest percentage of their Year10s attaining their HSC in their similar schools group. Accordingly, we conclude that this is not a factor that is likely to make interstate comparisons of Year 12 certificate attainment rates unfair to Tasmanian government schools.

**We claim that taking these precautions gives reasonable grounds to assert that the performance measure for Year 12 attainment for each school used in this study – the *MySchool* figure for the number of 2014 Year 12 certificates, expressed as a percentage of the known or estimated Year 10 class of 2012 – is fair to Tasmanian schools.**

But there is also a simpler measure of Year 12 performance available which is not subject to these concerns at all – the percentage of students who enrol in Year 12 that gain their certificate. This can be calculated from two pieces of data which *MySchool* gives for each high school that offers Year 12 – which of course excludes most Tasmanian high schools, the reason we cannot use this as our only basis of comparison.

*MySchool* defines these two measures as follows:

**Senior secondary certificate awarded:** The number of students for each school who left at the end of 2014 having fulfilled the requirements for a senior secondary certificate issued by a Board of Studies in the relevant state or territory.

**Completed senior secondary school:** The number of students for each school who left at the end 2014 having completed the equivalent of two or more years post Year 10 studies (not necessarily full-time nor consecutive) who are eligible for a statement of results, or a record of achievements.

These and more nuanced definitions for each jurisdiction are given at <https://www.myschool.edu.au/MoreInformation/CaveatsForSeniorSecondaryOutcomes2014#SeniorSecondaryOutcomes>.



*MySchool* warns that these measures are based on state by state definitions rather than a single national definition and thus must be compared with caution. However, the additional detail given about the definitions used in each jurisdiction does not suggest any difference between states that would entail that the percentage of students gaining their senior secondary certificates at a particular school in a particular calendar year, expressed as a percentage of the students who completed secondary school at that school in that year, cannot be fairly used as a performance measure for all similar schools in all states.

To confirm this we have read the 2014 Annual School Reports of the 23 interstate schools similar to Burnie High School. Fifteen of the 23 school reports gave either the number of Year 12 students and the number attaining their senior secondary certificate, or the percentage of Year 12 students gaining their certificate. The fifteen include schools in all states used in this study.

In all cases the numbers reported to the school community in the school's annual report were very close to those we found on *MySchool*, and in all but two cases where the figures were different the annual report gave a higher figure for senior secondary certificate attainment. In the two cases where the *MySchool* data was higher than the annual report data, the difference was 1% and 2%.

For the Tasmanian colleges we can conduct a similar check of the *MySchool* data for the number of students in Year 12 in 2014 and the number receiving their Year 12 certificates that year, by using the Attainment Profiles given on the web site of the TASC (see <http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1324>). Again, this data is sufficiently close to what is given on *MySchool* – at most a 6% difference – that it does not affect any conclusion we can draw from the numbers, as we will note below.

**Accordingly, we conclude that the *MySchool* information on the number of students studying Year 12 and the number of students completing their senior secondary certificates, gives a fair and accurate measure of the success of the school in supporting those students who are retained to Year 12 to complete their senior secondary certificates.**

We use this measure for the eight Tasmanian colleges and all private schools, the former not enrolling Year 10 students and the latter, as P-12 schools, making estimations of Year 10 enrolments more difficult. As already noted it is not possible to use this simpler measure for Tasmanian high schools since until very recently these either do not offer Year 12, or – historically – have done so as a subsidiary means of attaining the TCE with the major route for their students to Year 12 study being enrolment at one of the colleges located in Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.

Note that our use of this measure is not invalidated by the criticism that in the competition for enrolments, schools use their Year 12 class' results as a marketing strategy, and keep these results

up by discouraging less able students from enrolling in Year 12 – so what looks like an excellent performance in supporting Year 12 students to gain their senior secondary certificates might in fact be the result of a ruthless culling of Year 11 students judged less likely to succeed at Year 12.

However schools reputed to do this – high prestige private schools in the major cities - are not included in our data. And for government schools in particular, there is a strong counter-pressure of accountability for retaining students to Year 12. A key performance indicator for NSW public schools, for example, is the percentage of students who took their year 9 NAPLAN tests at the school that go on to gain their HSC.

Before proceeding, we summarize the performance measures for which we have collected the data discussed below.

#### **NAPLAN:**

For each school, the average of the percentages of the 2015 Year 9s above the national minimum standard for reading and numeracy.

#### **Senior Secondary Certificate:**

1. % of Year 10 students gaining the senior secondary certificate:
  - for Tasmania, the % of the 2012 Year 10 students at each school gaining their TCE in 2014;
  - for QLD and VIC, the number of students at each school gaining their state's senior secondary certificate in 2014, expressed as a % of the Year 10 students at the school in 2012;
  - for NSW and SA, the number of students at each school gaining their state's senior secondary certificate in 2014, expressed as a % of the estimated number of Year 10 students at the school in 2012.
2. % of students enrolling in Year 12 in 2014 gaining their senior secondary certificate in 2014.

Two final methodological or perhaps philosophical points before getting to the data.

First, clearly we rely on NAPLAN as measure of school performance. We are of course aware of many criticisms of NAPLAN in the literature, and among practicing teachers, who sometimes call it 'NAPALM'.

Our use of NAPLAN does not imply that we think it is the only or even the most important measure of the quality of a school, nor even that its most important use is as a measure of school quality rather than a diagnostic tool to identify where students are having trouble – school by school, class by class, and individual by individual – so that action can be taken to improve their learning. The Gonski reforms are a good example of such action at the systems and national level – which is one reason why former champions of NAPLAN such as Dr Kevin Donnelly now oppose it (see <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-05-10/34006>).

Second, while we began looking at schooling in Tasmania with the assumption that Year 12 is a qualification for all, we were somewhat surprised to find some denying this. For example, one mayor asked us to draft a short paper for him to use as a basis for discussion with some in his area opposed to extending schools to Year 12 on the basis that not all local students could (or should?) aspire to that level of education.

In case the nationwide assumption about the value of Year 12 for all students is not shared by all, we quote from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) document referred to above to show that any lingering views to the contrary are now very much out of step with thinking in the rest of Australia:

Within Australia, Year 12 attainment is regarded as a key factor in the formal development of an individual's skills and knowledge. Those with Year 12 have a greater likelihood of continuing with further study, particularly in higher education, as well as entering into the workforce. Year 12 attainment contributes to the development of a skilled workforce, and in turn, to ongoing economic development and improved living conditions. The Council of Australian Governments' [National Education Agreement \(2009\)](#) aims to lift the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate for 20-24 year olds to 90% by 2015.

Moreover, the idea that the way divides at Year 10, with those interested in university study proceeding to Year 12 and those interested in training for a trade taking another path, no longer accurately reflects labour market trends. The ABS report makes this clear in observing as follows:

In 2010, there were around 72,000 employed 20-24 year olds who were trainees or apprentices, with males comprising the majority of this group (88%). **Two-thirds (66%) of these trainees or apprentices had attained Year 12.** [Emphasis added]

Traditionally, apprenticeships and traineeships have offered alternative training-employment pathways for students who have not attained Year 12, particularly for young men. However, most recently the majority of young people employed as apprentices have attained Year 12.

To sum up the above: gaining their Year 12 certificate is important for all students. Accordingly, it is important that young people in Tasmania, in every community, have an equal chance of gaining that qualification compared to their fellows in other states. Data from *MySchool*, and the TASC, allows us to benchmark the performance of Tasmanian schools with like schools in other states to determine whether our young people are being afforded this equal chance.

## **RESULTS**

The full data set of results can be downloaded from the *Education Ambassadors* web site by clicking on the link in the *Did You Know* section – see <http://educationambassadors.org.au>.

Here we summarize our results in a series of graphs, with comments on each, and a table which presents an overview of how the Tasmanian schools compare with their interstate groups of similar schools.

We begin with a comparison between each Tasmanian school and its set of similar schools in other states, and where possible to do so, further divide this set of similar schools into metropolitan and provincial/remote, and smaller and larger schools.

We then discuss what we learn from these comparisons.

Note that we organize the comparison around the high schools, and in each set include the college or colleges at which we expect most students from that high school would enrol for Years 11 and 12.

### **One final and most important note.**

The data that follows, except for Campbell Town and Mountain Heights as noted above, could be described as a single year snapshot of the schools' performance.

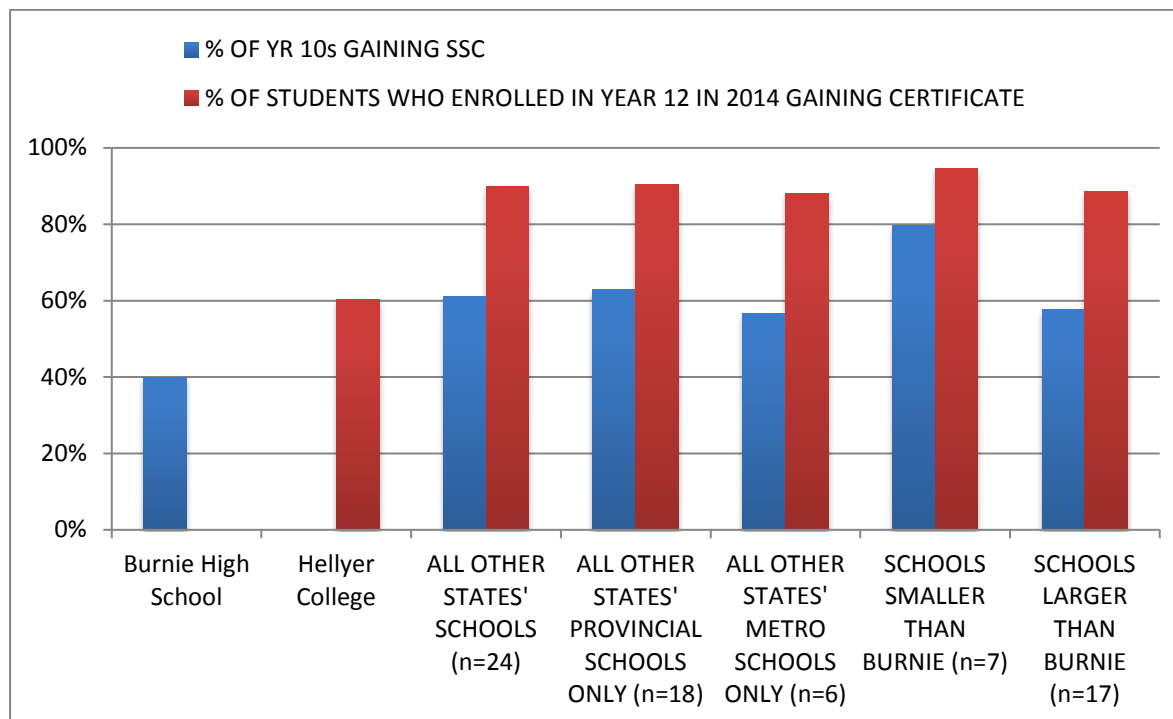
The word 'snapshot' is well chosen. We have all had the experience of looking at a holiday snap of ourselves and thinking 'that does not look like me!'

It would be wrong, therefore, to look at the 2014 Year 12 attainment data for the 2012 Year 10s from, say, Burnie High School, and conclude 'that is what Burnie is like as a school'.

But what we can say is that taking all the Tasmanian schools together a pattern emerges – actually two strikingly different patterns, one for NAPLAN, one for Year 12 attainment.

If we looked at a different year's data, Burnie's snapshot might well change. But the wider picture it fits into would remain the same. That is what we should focus on.

## BURNIE HIGH SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>



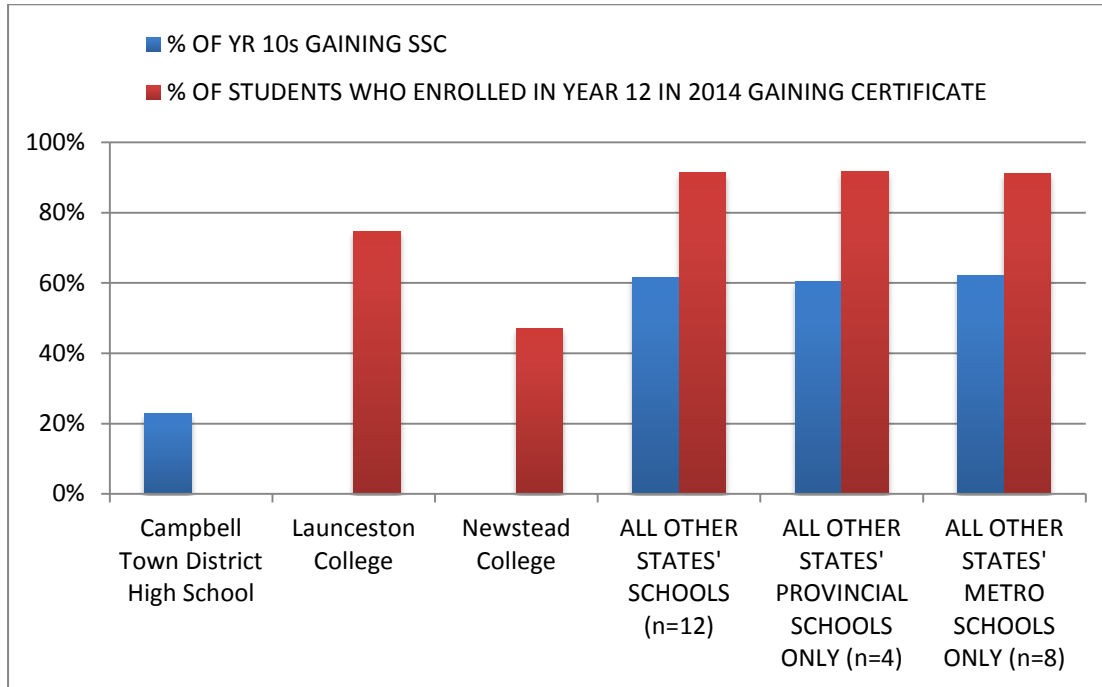
Note that:

1. Both Burnie High and Hellyer College are well below Burnie's similar schools in other states for senior secondary certificate (SSC) attainment - Burnie's Year 10s are 21% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSCs, and Hellyer's Year 12s are 30% below.
2. In schools similar to but smaller than Burnie, the average rate for Year 10s attaining their SSC is 22% above the larger schools, and these smaller schools also have 6% more of their Year 12s gain their SSC.
3. Among Burnie's comparison schools the Year 10s at provincial schools also gain their SSC at a rate 6% higher than metropolitan schools. Other differences are less than 5%, which we ignore as too small to be meaningful.
4. In Burnie's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 to SSC results closest to Burnie's (40%) are Woodville High, 35% (SA Metro), Kingaroy High, 48% (QLD Provincial) and Woolgoolga High, 48% (NSW Provincial).
5. In Burnie's set of interstate similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC attainment rates closest to Hellyer's (60%) are Woodville High, 62% (SA Metro), Kingaroy High, 75% (QLD Provincial), and Bundaberg North State High School, 78% (QLD Provincial).

<sup>1</sup> The data on which this and other tables are based, including NAPLAN data, will be found in *Did You Know* at <http://educationambassadors.org.au>

6. Burnie is 4<sup>th</sup> amongst its 25 similar interstate schools for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 24<sup>th</sup> of 25 for the % of Year 10s gaining their senior secondary certificate.
7. Devonport and Burnie are similar schools.

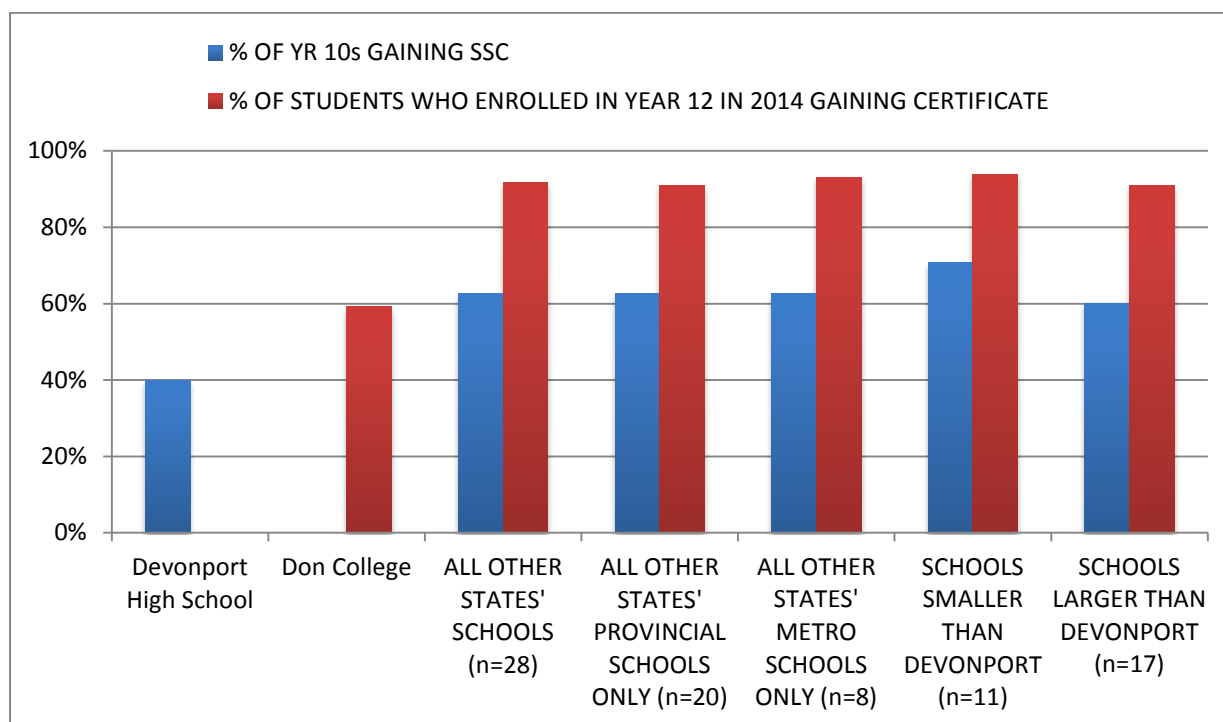
### CAMPBELL TOWN HIGH SCHOOL



Note that:

1. Campbell Town High, and Launceston and Newstead colleges are well below Campbell Town's similar schools in other states for SSC attainment.
2. Although Launceston College (75%) is well above Newstead College (47%) for the % of Year 12s attaining their certificate, it is below every school in Campbell Town's interstate similar schools list on this measure except for Hay War Memorial High School (NSW, Provincial) at 73%, with the next lowest two being Bass High School, 84% (NSW, Metro), and Heatley Secondary College, 85% (QLD, Metro).
3. Campbell Town is first out of 13 for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 13<sup>th</sup> out of 13 for % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.

## DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL

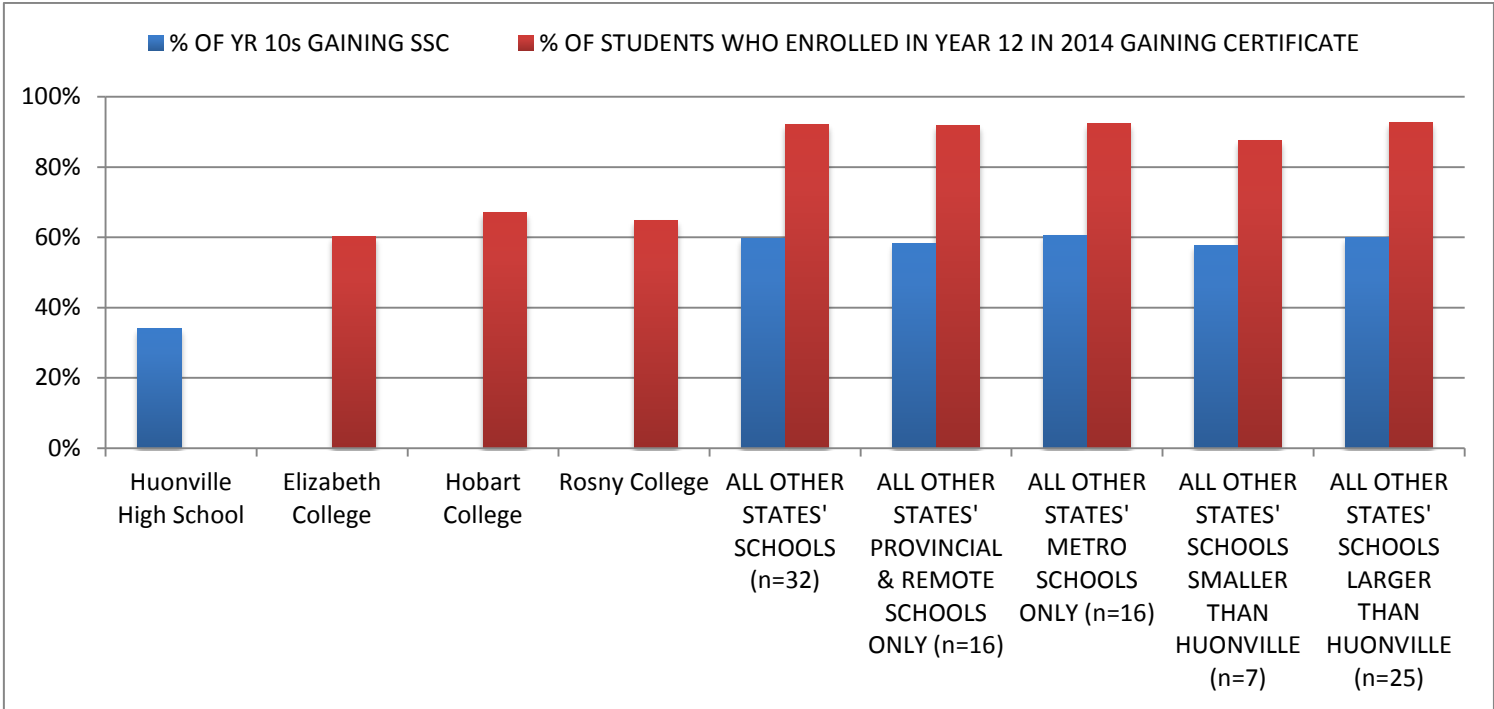


Note that:

1. Devonport High and Don College are well below Devonport's similar schools in other states - Devonport's Year 10s are 23% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSC, and Don's Year 12s are 33% below.
2. There is very little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures, except that Year 10s from the smaller schools similar to Devonport have a rate of SSC attainment 11% above the larger schools.
3. In Devonport's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 results closest to Devonport (40%) are Woodville High, 35% (SA Metro), Kingaroy High, 48% (QLD Provincial) and Woolgoolga High, 48% (NSW Provincial).
4. In Devonport's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 results closest to Don College (59%) are Woodville High, 62% (SA Metro), Kingaroy High, 75% (QLD Provincial), and Bundaberg North High, 78% (QLD, Provincial).
5. Devonport and Burnie are similar schools.
6. Devonport is 8<sup>th</sup> out of 29 for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 28<sup>th</sup> out of 29 for % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.



**HUONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**

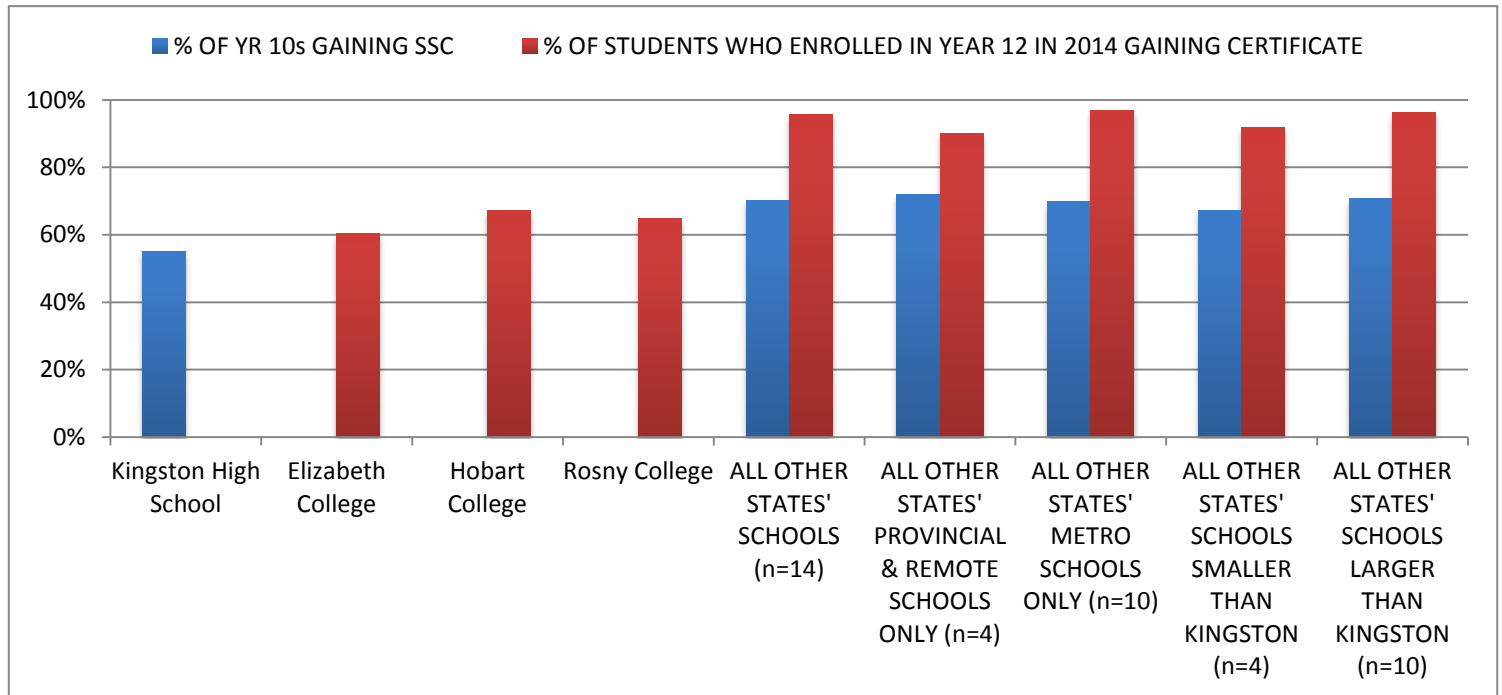


**Note that:**

1. Huonville High and the three colleges are well below Huonville's similar schools in other states - Huonville's Year 10s are 26% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSC, and the colleges' Year 12s are 25% and more below.
2. There is very little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures, although the larger interstate schools have 5% more of their Year 12s gaining their SSC.
3. In Huonville's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 to SSC results closest to Huonville's (34%) are Orara High, 40% (NSW Provincial), Warialda High, 42% (NSW Provincial), and Cobar High, 44% (NSW Remote).
4. In Huonville's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC results closest to the three Hobart located Tasmanian colleges (60-67%) are Hay War Memorial High, 73% (NSW, Provincial), Moura State High School, 81% (QLD, provincial), and Cobar High, 83% (NSW, Remote).
5. Huonville is 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 33 for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 33 for the % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.



## KINGSTON HIGH SCHOOL

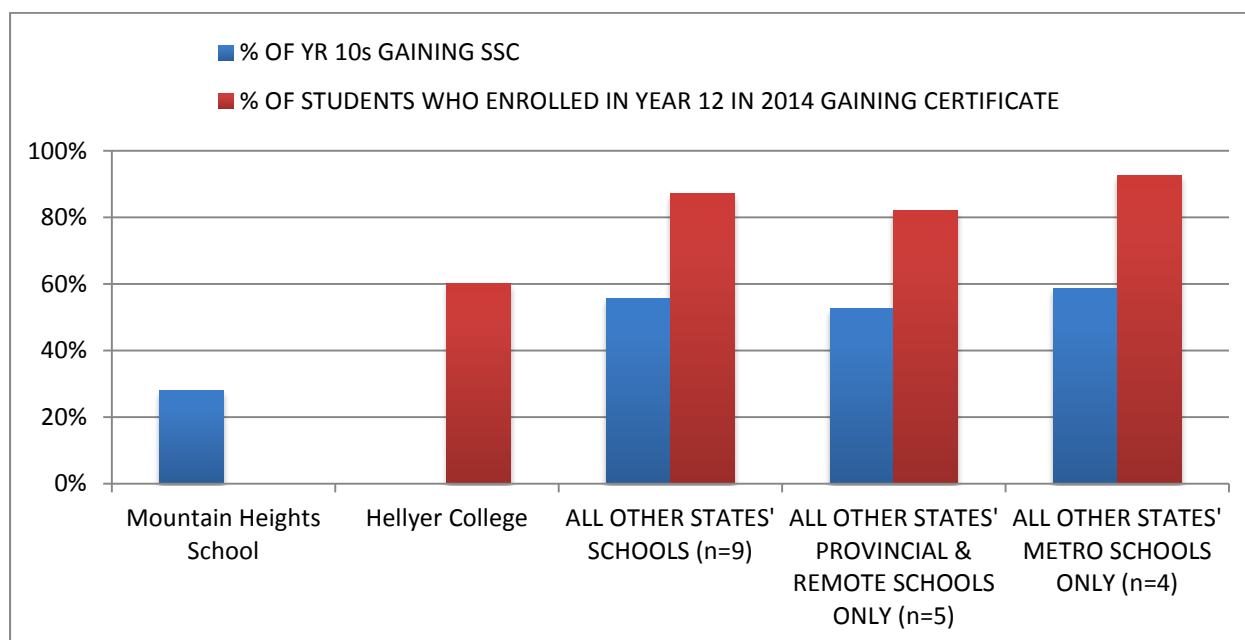


Note that:

1. Kingston High and the three colleges are well below Kingston's similar schools in other states - Kingston's Year 10s are 15% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSC, and the three Hobart located colleges' Year 12s are about 30% and more below.
2. There is little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures, with metropolitan and larger schools doing better on their Year 12s completing their certificates by 7% and 5% respectively.
3. In Kingston's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 results closest to Kingston's (55%) are all NSW Metro schools – Whitebridge, (50%); Elizabeth Macarthur, (52%); and Karabar high schools (60%).
4. In Kingston's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC results closest to the three Tasmanian colleges' (60-67%) are Clare High School, 85% (SA, provincial), Daylesford Secondary College, 89% (VIC Provincial), and Warrnambool College, 92% (VIC Provincial).
5. Kingston is 8<sup>th</sup> out of 15 for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 13<sup>th</sup> out of 15 for the % of its Year 10s gaining their SSC.



## MOUNTAIN HEIGHTS SCHOOL

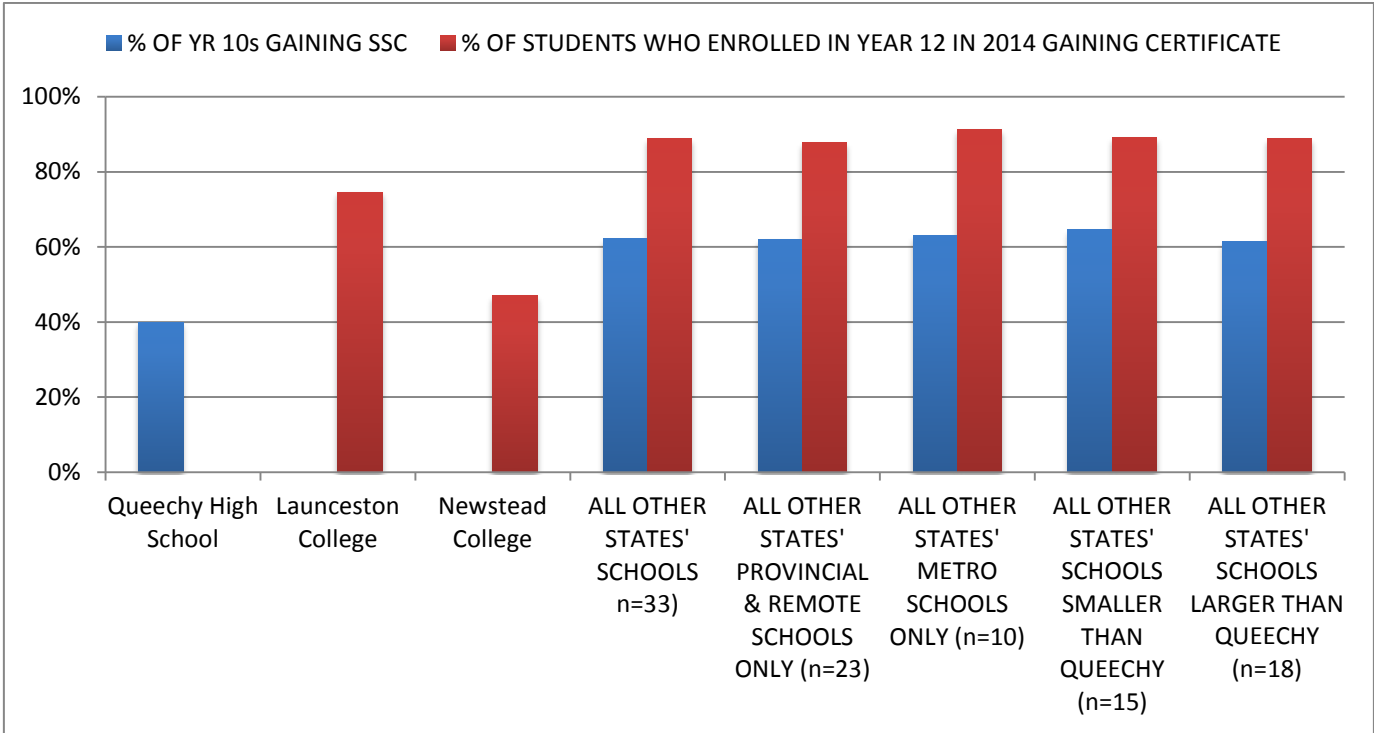


Note that:

1. Mountain Heights and Hellyer College are well below Mountain Heights' similar schools in other states - Mountain Heights' Year 10s are 28% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSC, and Hellyer's Year 12s are 27% below.
2. The Mountain Heights similar interstate schools in metro areas are about 6% better than the provincial schools on Year 10s gaining their SSC, and 11% on their Year 12s gaining their SSC.
3. In Mountain Heights' set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 results closest to Mountain Heights', (28%) are Port Augusta High, 30% (SA, Provincial), Tamworth High School, 41% (NSW, Provincial), and Warrawong High, 51% (NSW, Metro).
4. In Mountain Heights' set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 results closest to Hellyer College's (60%) are Port Augusta High School, 47% (SA, Provincial), St George High, 79% (NSW, Remote), and Spinifex State College, 86% (QLD, remote).
5. Mountain Heights is 1<sup>st</sup> out of 10 for average Yr 9 NAPLAN, and 10<sup>th</sup> out of 10 for the % of its Year 10s gaining their SSC.



**QUEECHY HIGH SCHOOL**



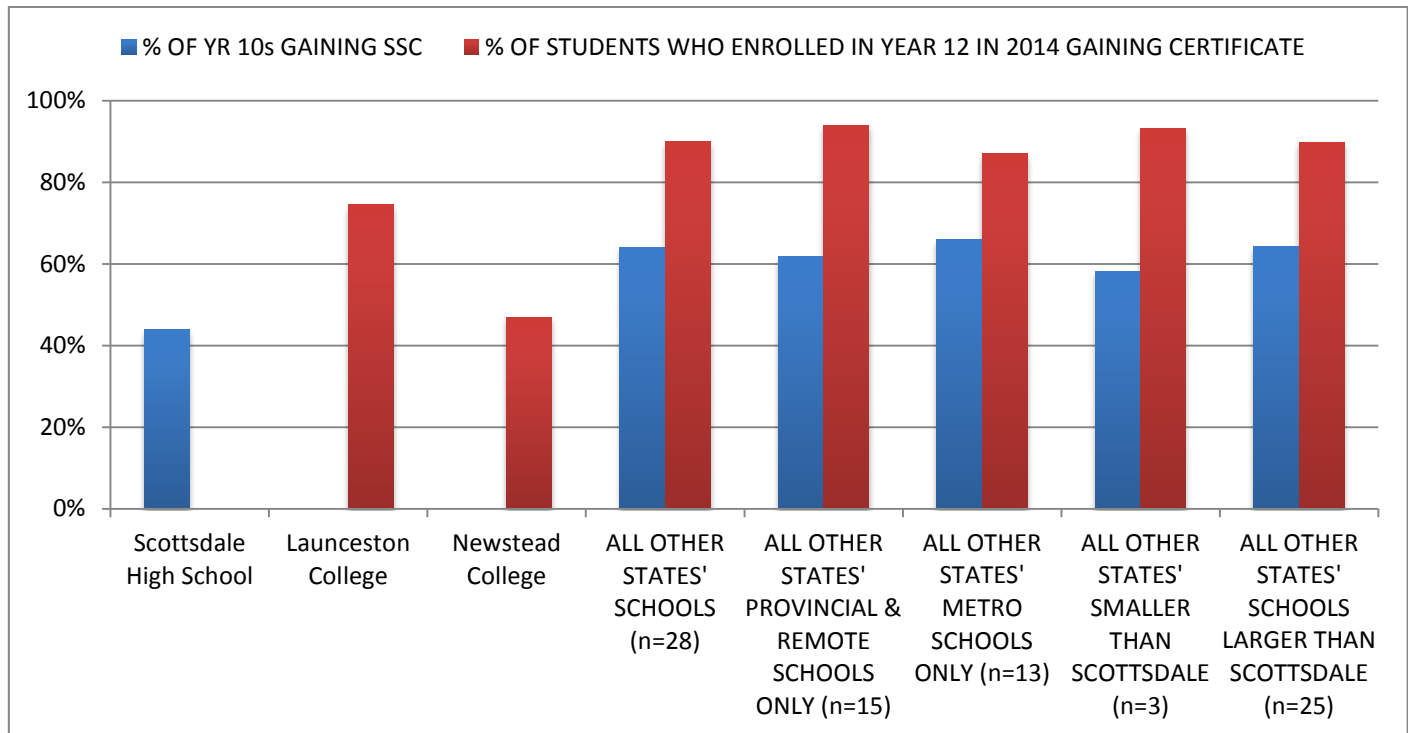
Note that:

1. Queechy High and the two colleges in Launceston are well below Queechy's similar schools in other states - Queechy's Year 10s are 22% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSC, and Launceston's and Newstead's Year 12s are 14% and 42% below.
2. There is very little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures.
3. In Queechy's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 results closest to Queechy's (40%) are Woodville High, 35% (SA Metro), LeFevre High School 41% (SA, Metro), and Broadford Secondary College, 51% (VIC, Provincial).
4. In Queechy's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC results closest to Launceston's (75%) and Newstead's (47%) colleges are LeFevre High School, 61% (SA, Metro), Woodville High, 62% (SA Metro), and Dalby High, 66% (QLD Provincial).
5. Queechy is 29<sup>th</sup> out of 34 for average NAPLAN, and 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 34 for % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.





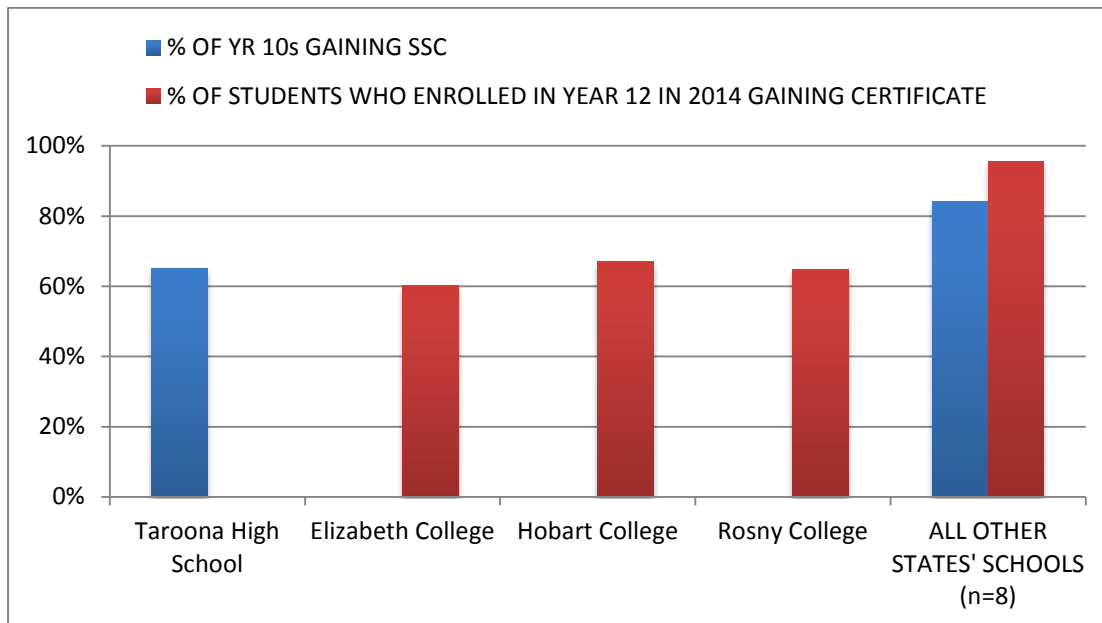
## SCOTTSDALE HIGH SCHOOL



Note that:

1. Scottsdale High and the two colleges in Launceston are well below Scottsdale's similar schools in other states - Scottsdale's Year 10s are 20% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their Year 12 certificates, and Launceston's and Newstead's Year 12s are 15% and 43% below.
2. There is little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures, with 6% fewer Year 10s in schools smaller than Scottsdale gaining their SSC than in the larger schools, but 7% more of the Year 12s in provincial and remote schools gaining their SSC compared to metropolitan schools.
3. In Scottsdale's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 SSC attainment closest to Scottsdale's (44%) are Valley View High, 37% (SA, Metro), Kurunjang Secondary College, 38% (VIC Metro), and Batemans Bay High, 41% (NSW Provincial).
4. In Scottsdale's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC results closest to Launceston (74%) and Newstead (47%) colleges' are Beenleigh High, 60% (QLD, Metro), Valley View High School, 67% (SA, Metro), and Craigmore High, 76% (SA Metro).
5. Scottsdale is 5<sup>th</sup> out of 29 for average NAPLAN, and 26<sup>th</sup> out of 29 for the % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.

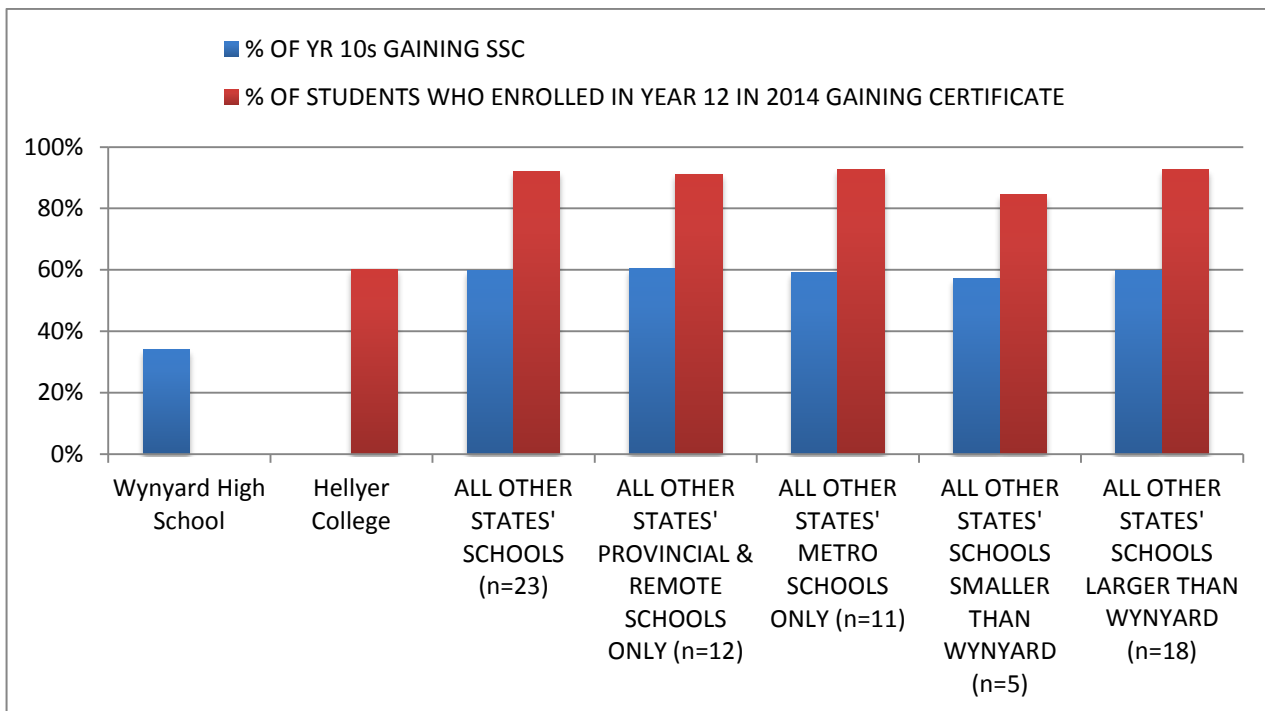
## TAROONA HIGH SCHOOL



Note that:

1. Taroon High and the three colleges are well below Taroon's similar schools in other states - Taroon's Year 10s are 19% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their SSCs, and Hobart, Rosny and Elizabeth colleges are 29% - 36% below.
2. In Taroon's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 SSC results closest to Taroon's (65%) are Chatswood High School, 67% (NSW, Metro), Killarney Heights High, 75% (NSW, Metro), and Marryatville High, 77% (SA, Metro).
3. In Taroon's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 SSC results closest to the three colleges' (60-67%) are Marryatville High, 88% (SA, Metro), Kenmore High, 92% (QLD, Metro), and Northcote High School, 97% (VIC Metro).
4. Taroon is 5<sup>th</sup> out of 9 for average NAPLAN, and 9<sup>th</sup> out of 9 for % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.

## WYNYARD HIGH SCHOOL



Note that:

1. The Tasmanian schools are well below Wynyard's similar schools in other states - Wynyard's Year 10s are 26% below their interstate counterparts in attaining their Year 12 certificates, and Hellyer's Year 12s are 32% below.
2. There is little difference between the other states' provincial/metro/smaller/larger schools' means on either of these measures, except for 8% fewer Year 12s in schools smaller than Wynyard gaining their SSC than in the larger schools.
3. In Wynyard's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 10 results closest to Wynyard's (34%) are Orara High, 40% (NSW Provincial), Kanahooka High, 42% (NSW Metro), and Cobar High, 44% (NSW Remote).
4. In Wynyard's set of similar schools, the three schools with Year 12 results closest to Hellyer's (60%) are Hay War Memorial High, 73% (NSW, Provincial), Moura High School, 81% (QLD, Provincial), and Cobar High, 83% (NSW, Remote).

5. Wynyard is 10<sup>th</sup> out of 24 for average NAPLAN, and 24<sup>th</sup> out of 24 for the % of Year 10s gaining their SSC.

**SUMMARY OF TASMANIAN HIGH SCHOOLS' PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO THEIR SIMILAR SCHOOLS on YR 9 NAPLAN and YR 12 ATTAINMENT**

	NAPLAN position <sup>2</sup>	Year 10s completing SSC position
Burnie High School*	4/25	24/25
Campbell Town District High School	1/13	13/13
Devonport High School	8/29	28/29
Huonville High School	3/33	33/33
Kingston High School	8/15	13/15
Mountain Heights School	1/10	10/10
Queechy High School	29/34	33/34
Scottsdale High School	5/29	26/29
Taroona High School*	5/9	9/9
Wynyard High School*	10/24	24/24

\* see note 2 below

**OBSERVATIONS/CONCLUSIONS**

In presenting the findings from our data analysis, we focus on a number of propositions commonly advanced as explanations for the current outcomes from Tasmanian senior secondary schooling to see which are supported, and which are undermined, by the data just presented.

**1. State by state comparisons are misleading. When we compare Tasmanian schools with like schools in other states our schools are doing just as well.**

The data above shows the this claim – that our schools are doing just as well as like schools in other states - is true of NAPLAN at year 9, and indeed it understates the strength of the Tasmanian high schools. As we have seen,

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<sup>2</sup> The differences between school average NAPLAN scores are typically small. Accordingly, the precise rank of a school does not give much information, while its being near the top, or near the bottom, does. Note also that these ranks were corrected after discovering a transcription error on 2 July 2015, with changes as follows: Burnie, 1/25 to 4/25; Taroona 6/9 to 5/9; Wynyard 12/24 to 10/24.

- two of the ten Tasmanian state schools are top of their similar schools group for NAPLAN – and well clear of the next highest scoring school,
- another six are in the top half, and
- only Queechy and Taroona are nearer the bottom of the group.  
(Note here the importance of similar schools group comparisons. Taroona’s year 9 NAPLAN average is the highest in the group of ten Tasmanian state schools, but its performance against interstate similar schools is in fact the second lowest.)

In relation to Year 12 attainment, however, this claim is not consistent with the data:

- Five of the ten Tasmanian state schools have the lowest number of students gaining their Year 12 certificates, expressed as a percentage of the Year 10 class two years prior, in comparison with their interstate similar schools group, and the remaining five Tasmanian schools are at best three places from the bottom of their group.
- If we look at the percentage of students taking some courses at Year 12 that gain their senior secondary certificates, the situation is no better for Tasmania.
- Launceston College is the lead performer among Tasmania’s eight colleges. But if we add the colleges to the sets of interstate schools that are similar schools to our ten Tasmanian public schools, Launceston’s position on this measure is 145<sup>th</sup> out of 159 (the total made up of 151 interstate high schools plus the 8 Tasmanian colleges).
- The other Tasmanian colleges fill seven out of the remaining 14 positions between 145<sup>th</sup> and 159<sup>th</sup>. (Note that if we use the TASC data referred to above rather than the *MySchool* numbers, Launceston Colleges’ position improves from 145<sup>th</sup> to 140<sup>th</sup>, while the other colleges show less improvement.)

## 2. Small schools cannot offer successful Year 12 programs.

This claim is not supported by the data. Looking only at differences of 5% or more:

- The interstate similar schools **smaller** than Burnie High School had a **greater percentage** of students who attempted Year 12 gaining their senior secondary certificates, whereas for Huonville, Kingston and Wynyard their smaller similar schools had a lesser percentage of Year 12s gain their certificates.
- The differences between Year 12’s SSC attainment for smaller and larger schools are not large – no more than 8%.
- Comparing the rate of Year 10 students going on to gain their senior secondary certificates, the picture is more marked, with Year 10s being 22% and 11% more successful in the schools smaller than Burnie and Devonport in their groups of similar schools, and less successful only in Scottsdale’s group (6% less).

## 3. Year 12 programs are more successful in metropolitan schools.

This claim receives only very weak support from the data, again considering only differences of 5% or more:

- The Year 12 certificate attainment rate by the Year 12s at the provincial schools was lower only for Kingston's and Mountain Heights' group, by 7% and 11% respectively, but 7% higher for Scottsdale's.
  - Of the similar schools groups where the sample size was big enough to divide into provincial and metropolitan schools (which we set at four in the smallest subset), only Burnie and Mountain Heights had differences between the two of 5% or more of their Year 10 students continuing with their schooling to gain their senior secondary certificates, with Burnie's similar provincial schools average being 6% above the metro schools, and Mountain Heights' 6% below.
- 4. Using the rate of TCE attainment as a measure of school performance is misleading, since the TCE has not been respected or seen as important for students' futures. Instead students, and schools/colleges have focused on the ATAR.**

Data from the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification web site (<http://www.tga.tas.gov.au/1324>) does not support this idea.

From the school attainment profiles **for 2014**, of the 5140 year 12/13 Australian resident students between 15 and 19 attending government schools in Tasmania in 2014, 51% achieved the TCE and less than half, just 23%, an ATAR.

- 5. The similar school comparisons are unfair to Tasmania because ICSEA does not adequately take account of the 'feeling of remoteness' of Tasmanian communities.**

To test this hypothesis we chose a further sample of eleven of the most remote schools in Australia, using a map to find remote communities (excluding Indigenous communities) and then looking at *MySchool* to see if there was a school offering Year 12 in that community.

This generated the following group of remote schools, listed in increasing order of their Year 12 students gaining their senior secondary certificates in 2014 (except for schools smaller than 300 students where we use a simple average of the last five years (2011-14) of Year 12 attainment data in schools to smooth out small sample effects):

- Coober Pedy (SA outback opal mining town)
- Leigh Creek (SA outback coal mining town)
- Wilcannia Central School (NSW, River Darling station country)
- Norseman District School (WA outback mining town)
- Ceduna Area School (SA, far west fishing and farming community)
- Centralian Senior College (Alice Springs)
- Lightning Ridge Central School (NSW outback opal mining town)
- Balranald High School (NSW station country)
- Bourke High School (NSW, iconic 'outback')
- Condobolin High (NSW listed as provincial, but in geographic centre)
- Longreach State High School (QLD, station country)

Note that the ICSEAs of these schools are generally much lower than Tasmanian schools, certainly the ten state schools in our sample – only four are above Mountain Heights’ and only one above Campbell Town’s. The average ICSEA of these schools (863) is about as far below Mountain Heights’ (885) as Mountain Heights’ is below Huonville’s (910).

Despite this:

- A greater % of the students enrolling in Year 12 gained their senior secondary certificates in seven out of these eleven remote schools than at Rosny, Hobart and Launceston colleges, and only two, Coober Pedy and Leigh Creek are below Don, Hellyer and Elizabeth colleges.
- To give further detail for just two of these remote schools from their 2015 annual school reports (which are available on line, as for all schools in all other states):
  - Condobolin had 21 students gain their HSC, 100% of their Year 12 class, 50% of whom have gone on to university. The school’s total enrolment was 205 students, 48% of whom were Aboriginal.
  - Bourke High School had 12 students gain their HSC, 100% of the Year 12 class, with 7 receiving an ATAR, and 28% of the class going on to university. 72% of Bourke High’s 147 students are Aboriginal. The school’s language other than English (LOTE) is Paakantji, the local Aboriginal language.

Note that a criticism of using the percentage of the Year 12 class gaining their senior secondary certificate as an indicator of the success of the school in supporting all of its students to get their Year 12 qualification – that this figure can be inflated by a low rate of retention to Year 12 – certainly applies to the smaller of these schools, where the size of the Year 12 class shows that only a minority of student who commence high school continue to Year 12. But taken together – treating them as one school - their Year 12 class is 12% of the total enrolment whereas an ‘equal share’ would be 11%.

Nonetheless our point here is not to compare these schools individually or as a whole with the Tasmanian colleges – as mostly very small and all very remote schools they could scarcely be less suitable comparison schools – but only to show that the claim that the ‘feeling of remoteness’ explains why so few of Tasmania’s Year 12 students gain their senior secondary certificates is not consistent with the successful Year 12 programs of these most remote schools.

**6. The comparison is not fair because the TCE is harder to obtain than the senior secondary certificates of the other states – the SACE, VCE/VCAL, HSC and QCE.**

We have previously undertaken a detailed study of this quite common assertion and found no evidence to support the claim – see <http://educationambassadors.org.au/494-2/> and for a detailed chart of the various requirements <http://educationambassadors.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SSC-Requirements-all-States.pdf>.



Also, this claim is not supported by the rates for senior secondary certificate attainment by the Year 12 class in Tasmanian private schools, which are much closer to those of their interstate similar schools

- with gaps of 6%, 11%, 15% and 19%,
- whereas the gap between the Tasmanian state schools' Year 12 attainment rates and those of their similar interstate schools are in the region of 30%,
- with the smallest gaps being for Kingston High (15%) compared to its interstate similar schools and for Launceston College when compared to the schools in Queechey's interstate similar schools group (14%).

It might be thought that the gaps between the private schools percentage of year 12s gaining their senior secondary certificates and their interstate private schools are large enough to consider that there is an effect here that warrants an explanation. The most plausible explanation, however, is that the three schools with larger gaps – Launceston Christian School, The Friends School and Marist Regional College – are disadvantaged by the choice of year. We have checked this by using the TASC data on the rate of TCE attainment at all Tasmanian schools in this analysis (which allows us to use one source of data for all schools), comparing the percentage of TCE completions for 2014 with the average of the preceding two years. For all public schools and the colleges there is an improvement in the TCE attainment rate in 2014 over the average for 2012 and 2013. For these private schools, however, only Launceston Christian School shows an improvement, with the others all having a 'bad year' in 2014. If we used the average of the 2012 and 2013 data instead of 2014 the gaps for the schools would be 4%, 4%, 10% and 15%. If we had used just 2015, the gaps would have even less, 0%, 3%, 9% and 11%.

This reminds us that using just one year of data for any school can give a misleading picture of its performance. We have done so, however, since the main object of our analysis are the Tasmanian public schools, and while they lag far behind their interstate similar schools they are on an improving trend. Using an average of several years of data would therefore make these school appear to be performing at a lower level than they now are. We have made an exception to this just for the two small schools in our Tasmanian sample, Campbell Town and Mountain Heights, where we have reflected the improving trend in their Year10s TCE attainment by using a weighted average of five years of data (2011-15) giving each succeeding year 10% additional weight in calculating the average.

**7. Poverty in Tasmania is different – our poor people are not out of luck, but out of ambition, affected by generations of welfare dependence, and consequently neither employment or education is valued by them.**

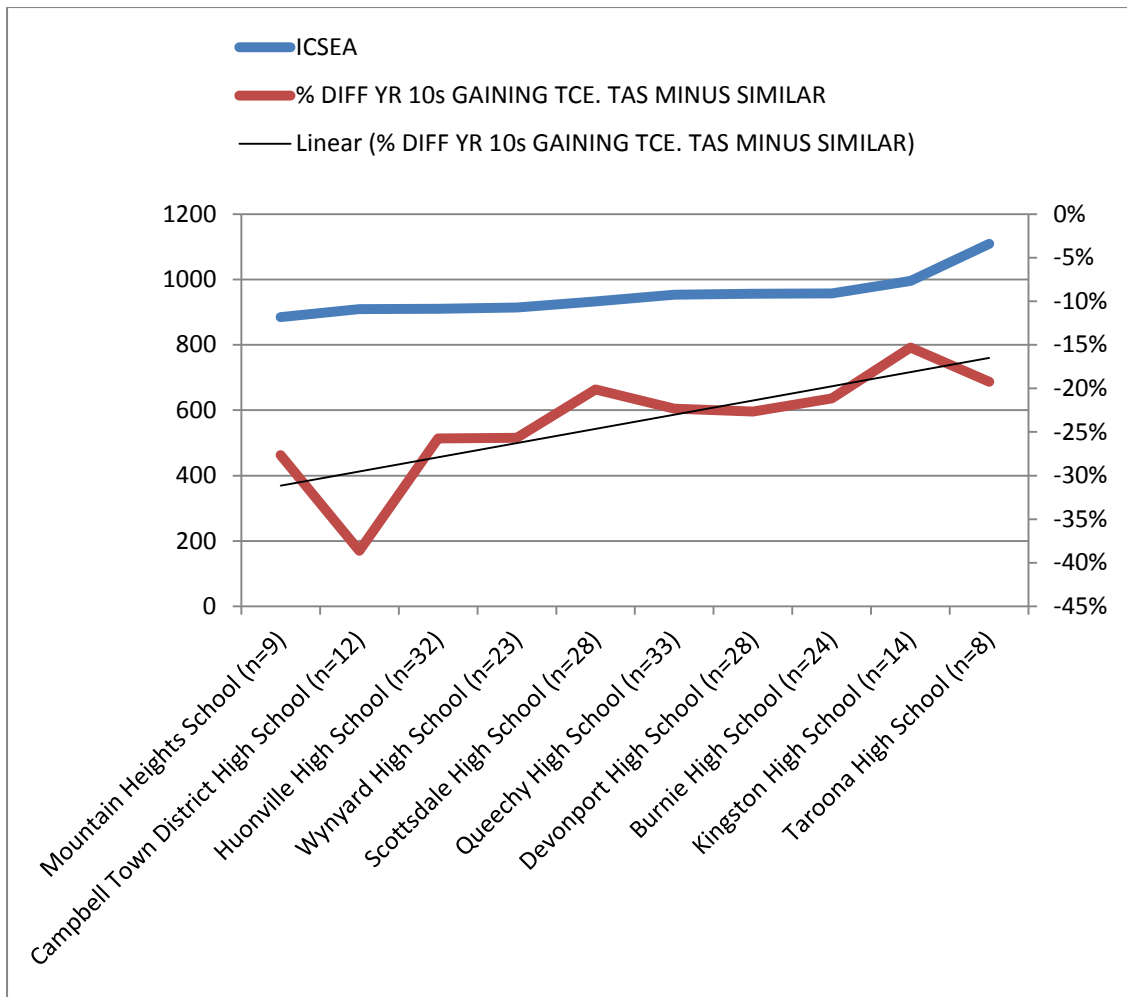
While we have often had this put to us, the facts just do not bear it out. First, Tasmania's rate of welfare dependence, measured by the percentage of children living in welfare dependent families is not that different to other states (see <http://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases/data#social-health-atlas-of-australia-population-health-areas>)

- Australia 23.3%
- NSW 24.0%
- VIC 22.6%
- QLD 24.1%
- SA 26.0%
- TAS 30.0%

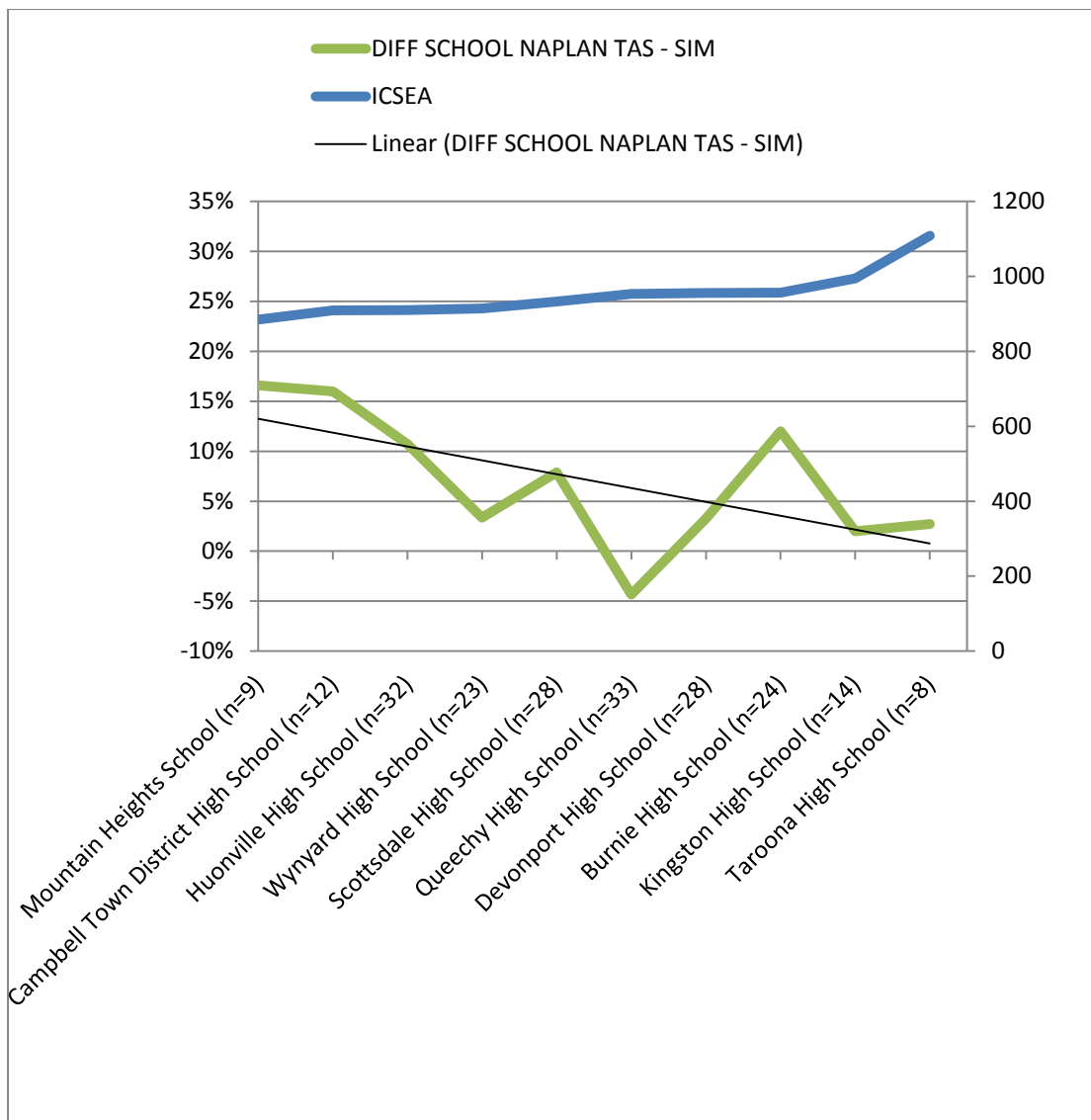
We have gaps here of about 4-7% in terms of welfare dependency, whereas we are looking for an explanation of gaps of about 20% - 30% in Year 12 attainment between our high schools/colleges and their interstate similar schools.

Moreover, our slightly higher rate of welfare dependence is not affecting our NAPLAN performance relative to comparable schools in our sample. There is something of interest here, requiring further exploration and explanation.

If we first look at the graph below of ICSEA vs. TCE attainment for state schools in Tasmania (which uses the % of Year 10s gaining their TCE), it shows **an improvement in school performance and thus a decrease in the gap** between Tasmanian and other states' schools with **increasing ICSEA**, with the trend narrowing the gap from -30% to -15% as we move from lower to higher ICSEA schools.



However, if we look at the graph for the difference between Tasmania’s state schools’ year 9 NAPLAN and those of the other states’ schools, the relationship is reversed, with a **fall in the Tasmanian school performance and thus Tasmania’s ‘positive gap’ decreasing with increasing ICSEA** for the schools in our sample



Hence, so far as NAPLAN goes, Tasmanian students from lower ICSEA schools in our sample are outperforming their interstate counterparts in similar schools by almost 15% (on the average of year 9 reading and numeracy results), but for students at schools enrolling students from more advantaged backgrounds this falls off to around parity at Taroona's ICSEA.

An illuminating way to look at this data is this.

Outcomes from schooling in Australia are correlated with parental background. Children from better educated and wealthier parents, living in major cities, have greater success at school by any ordinary measure.

In Tasmania, if we can generalize from our sample – and we see no reason why the schools we have chosen would not allow us to do this - the equity gap is narrower than in the rest of Australia for NAPLAN outcomes, evidenced by the NAPLAN performance of our lower ICSEA schools in the sample exceeding that of their similar schools interstate, with the superior performance falling away as ICSEA increases.

For Year 12 attainment, however, it is the reverse, with our lower ICSEA schools further behind their comparable schools interstate than the higher ICSEA schools in our sample.

**Thus, provided only that our sample is representative of all Tasmanian high schools, we can say to the end of Year 10, Tasmanian schooling is less inequitable than in the other states, but beyond Year 10, it is more inequitable.**

This is a conclusion we should take very seriously indeed, and make more widely known.

Moreover, informed by this data, it is hard to argue that our families with lower levels of education, employment more towards the unskilled than the professional end of the classification and higher unemployment, do not value education – at least until year 9 or, since that is not a stopping point, the end of Year 10.

If there is a problem with education not being valued by lower ICSEA families, it is a problem that only begins with senior secondary education.

#### **8. There is a Tasmania effect, cause to be identified, which explains the gap.**

Let us review what we have discovered about the schools in our sample from these findings, which we infer also holds for all schools in Tasmania.

The Year 10 students at each of two state schools, from an equivalent combination of

- families which are alike in parental level of education and category of employment, and attending schools in comparable locations within their states, with similar levels of Indigenous enrolment,

and who achieved a similar level of results in their year 9 NAPLAN test,

- will at best be 15% less likely to achieve their Year 12 certificate if their school is in Tasmania rather than SA, Victoria, NSW or Queensland,
- and most likely the Tasmanian Year 10 students' chances of attaining their Year 12 certificate will be around 25% less,
- and, depending on their school, up to 40% less than their interstate counterparts.

If we now look just at the students who enrol in Year 12, the Tasmanian students from these same similar backgrounds will, compared to their interstate counterparts, be:

- at best 15% less likely to end their schooling achieving their senior secondary certificates
- at worst more than 40% less likely to end their schooling achieving their senior secondary certificates
- and most likely to have about a 30% lesser chance of completing their certificates.

What can explain these results?

Clearly we cannot look to the children themselves for an explanation, or to their families, for in comparing schools with like ICSEA we have chosen schools in which any differences between the children and their families have no explanatory power in relation to their achievement, at least as measured by NAPLAN.

Might they nonetheless differ, however, in their attitude to the importance of gaining their Year 12 qualification?

Not according to the findings of the UTAS-DoE Linkage research project (2012- 2014) which found that of almost four thousand rural and outer regional primary, high school and college students in the study, 90% think that education is important, 73% that continuing past Year 10 is important, with almost half intending to go to university and about a third to get an apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As reported by a member of the research team, Dr Jane Watson, in the *Mercury*, December 10, 2014, pages 18-19

But in any case it does not follow from the claim, that Tasmanians differ from their mainland cousins in their attitude to the importance of gaining the Year 12 certificate, that Tasmania's poor performance in senior secondary education is to be explained by **facts about the students and their families**. For where do students and their families get their ideas about the importance for all of gaining their Year 12 certificates?

We think the answer will be found in the hidden curriculum – to use a wonderful concept of Ivan Illich's – communicated by the division between junior and senior high school. What message does it send to teachers, principals, communities and most of all to families that their local school ends at Year 10, whereas elsewhere in Australia schools successfully offer the senior secondary years even in the most far flung places?

This was put to us most crisply by a tradesman on the West Coast, who said the reason the local kids think school ends at Year 10 is that their school ends at Year 10.

In short, on the basis of all the data discussed and other information just presented, we conclude that **the Tasmania effect which explains the gap in senior secondary attainment between Tasmanian and like schools interstate, is a property not of the students, or their families, or their communities, but of our senior secondary schooling system.**

Perhaps others will be able to offer another explanation better supported by the data. But whatever we take to be the cause of our situation, it is clear that we need to act to eliminate the intolerable inequity in Tasmanian schooling laid bare by this analysis.

Indeed, to return to the theme of inequality with which we began, this data confronts us with some sobering realities.

The gap between Year 12 attainment rate of year 10 students in schools in other states that are similar to (with ICSEAs as low as) Mountain Heights School (56%), compared to schools in other states that are similar to (with ICSEAs as high as) Taroona High School (84)%, is 28%.

Everyone agrees we should not have such unequal outcomes from schooling in Australia for students with different backgrounds and family circumstances as reflected by their schools' **very different** ICSEAs. And pretty much everyone agrees that we need something like the funding model recommended by the Gonski review to deal with these inequalities of opportunities and outcomes. The Australian Education Union, and the ALP, have been at the forefront in arguing the case for the Gonski funding on the basis that this level of inequality is unacceptable.

But the gap between the Year 12 attainment rate of year 10 students in schools in other states

that are **similar** to (with ICSEAs as low as) Mountain Heights School (56%) and the rate at Mountain Heights School itself (28%) is exactly as great – 28% - while for Taroona it narrows to 19%.

In all conscience we cannot say that one year 12 attainment gap of 28% is unacceptable in modern Australia, and another of 28% - or even 19% - is something not to be concerned about.

We need to take the 'Tasmania gap' as seriously as the 'Gonski gap', seek out the evidence which will explain the Tasmania gap, and act to close it with as much energy and urgency as has been devoted to the 'I Give a Gonski' campaign.



## Attachment Two

### **Developing the reflective function: The Advocacy Model as a way of developing a sense of meaning in young people.**

*Brendan Schmidt and Bernie Neville*

#### **Abstract**

The psychological development of children and adolescents, however broadly or narrowly conceived, is central to the purpose and function of schools. However, insufficient attention may be paid to a key aspect of psychological development in adolescence — the reflective function. This paper outlines the rationale for a specific systemic intervention in the schooling experience of adolescents. In a number of schools in Victoria the provision of one-to-one relationships between teacher-advocates and students is coupled with the use of a bank of electronic tools (the Student Achievement Inventory) designed to support the development of reflective function and with it the capacity to construct a meaningful experience of learning within the school context. The Advocacy Model is discussed within the framework of developmental psychology and attachment theory.

#### **Background**

Since 2000, a number of state and commonwealth reports have addressed the problems of adolescent disengagement from schooling, early school drop out and consequent unemployment and disengagement from society. These include the report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001), the National Evaluation Report of the Full Service Schools Program 1999 and 2000 (2001), DETYA's Doing it Well Report on best practice in dealing with at risk young people (2001), the Victorian Dept of Education's Kirby Report (2001), The Queensland DEA's Staying on at School report (2004), the SA Dept of Premier and Cabinet's Making the Connections School Retention Action Plan (2006). These have provided a wide range of recommendations, ranging from early intervention literacy programs, through student support services, to school to work transition programs, many which have been implemented.

A common thread in these reports has been the importance of establishing a positive learning experience for students in the middle and senior school. The importance of a one-to-one relationship with a caring adult in determining student's attitudes to schooling, their learning progress and decisions to complete their education, and — indirectly — to avert undesirable behaviours such as substance abuse, is supported by a number of significant Australian studies (e.g. Stokes et al., 1998; Brookes and Milne, 1997; Holden and Dwyer, 1992) as well as international studies. Overviews of school reform programs in the search for common characteristics associated with effectiveness have pointed to one-to-one relationships between a student and an adult as an essential component of programs leading to positive outcomes (e.g. Fashola & Slavin, 1997;

Mukherjee, 1999). Fraser, Walberg et al.'s (1987) synthesis of meta-analyses of studies of school reform concluded that, in the matter of school reform, 'proximal' factors such as interactive student-teacher variables are more potent than more distal variables such as school aims and curriculum changes. They argue that the empowerment of students in interaction with teachers is empirically supported as one of the best ways to improve student outcomes. This is especially the case where students 'at risk' are concerned (Baker et al. 1997). Likewise, on the basis of a review of studies conducted within the framework of cognitive psychology, Osterman (2000) argues that that lack of 'belongingness' consequent on inadequate teacher-student relationships is associated with mental and physical illness and behavioural problems. These, in turn, lead to lack of success at school. In contrast, positive involvement with teachers is associated with engagement, well-being and achievement.

The Advocacy model of student support has been developed within this context. The Advocacy Project (1998-2003), funded by the Victorian Department of Education, trialled certain components of the model, which were found to be efficacious in promoting school engagement (Ocean, 2001; Henry et al., 2003). There are two central components of the model. Firstly, it involves a one-to-one relationship between a student and a teacher/advocate, who undertakes specific responsibilities with regard to that student. The label 'advocacy' was adopted, rather than 'advisor' or 'mentor', to emphasise a particular aspect of the relationship, in that the teacher/advocate focuses on listening to the student to ensure that the student's voice is heard within the school. If the student is in conflict with a teacher or the school administration, the advocate will take make sure that the student's perspective is taken seriously. This involves having an understanding of the student's background and motivation. Within this structure of support, the advocacy model requires the students to accept responsibility for their own progress. Secondly, the model includes an electronic Student Achievement Inventory (SAI) designed to assist the student, with the support of their advocates, to reflect on their purposes, achievements and school experience.

At its inception in 1998 the Advocacy model was designed as a means of compensating for the lack of pastoral care resources in Victorian State schools in the 1990s. The proportion of students completing year 12 in State system had declined from 85% to 65% over this period, and it was argued that this was the result of the lessening of funds to assist with individual learning difficulties. The positive impact of Advocacy was seen in the evidence that students with advocates were more likely to remain at school, were more likely to attend school consistently and were likely to have better academic outcomes than comparable students without advocates (Ocean 2000, 2001). Further experience with the model suggests that the provision of a secure and reliable relationship with a teacher/advocate who engages with the student empathically and non-judgementally has an impact on the adolescent's psychological development (McCann 2008).

The use of the electronic Student Achievement Inventory within an Advocacy framework has the potential to further support adolescent psychological development.

A number of instruments developed overseas are currently available for the recording of study attitudes and skills e.g. SAMS (Michael, Michael, & Zimmerman, 1985), PSRS (Karnes & Bean, 1990) LASSI (Weinstein & Palmer, 1990) and the SBI (Bliss and Mueller, 2002). While there have been a number of studies of the utility of such self-assessment instruments in facilitating school

achievement (Olivárez & Tallent-Runnels, 1994; Everson et al. 2000) none have focused on their use within the context of a structured supportive relationship such as Advocacy.

The SAI includes online questionnaires relating to the student's interests, learning history, learning preferences, goals, attitudes to school discipline, as well as literacy, numeracy and study skills, as perceived by the students themselves. The immediate feedback provided to students is designed to help them recognise some aspects of themselves in a profile which highlights their strengths as well as their weaknesses. The data base also allows them to compare this profile as it changes over time, or to compare it with a profile created from the aggregated student data. It also allows the school to profile the student population on a number of significant dimensions.

While these tools have been developed for students to use independently, informal trials suggest that they are also effective as triggers for students to talk more freely about themselves to the teacher/advocate. Conversely, the supportive relationship may assist the student to be honest in recognizing the things they can change, and develop the confidence to do so.

### **Reflective function and engagement**

Jean Knox (2003) argues that 'reflective function' is the root of our sense of meaning and capacity to symbolise.

It begins to become clear that the concepts of reflective function has enormous implications for our understanding of human psychological development and functioning and in particular for the development of a sense of meaning – a word that we are all intuitively understand that which a moment's reflection shows is to be rather vague and imprecise. What are the contributing factors to a sense of meaning, which is rooted in the capacity to find symbolic significance in our experience? I would suggest there are four key and interrelated elements, all of which contribute to the development of reflective function:

1. Narrative competence: the recognition of psychological cause and effect, which links events in a meaningful way and is the basis for a sense of agency.
  2. Intentionality: the capacity to pursue goals and desires, that is, to have a mental appetite.
  3. Appraisal: the capacity to evaluate the relative significance of experiences.
  4. Individuation: the awareness of one's own and other people's independent subjectivity.
- (142).

Knox bases her argument on current understandings of developmental psychology and the related field of attachment theory. She prefers the term 'reflective function' to such terms as 'metacognitive monitoring' and 'mentalization', which have been used by other writers to describe the awareness of oneself and others as independent psychological and emotional beings. On the one hand she proposes that the reflective function begins to emerge in children in their second year. On the other she argues that not everybody manages to develop an adequate reflective function, and hence they 'lack the capacity to empathize with other people or place their own emotions in a meaningful context, to reflect on them and so experience them in a safe way'(139). They habitually treat themselves and others as objects, and are unable to give a reflective and coherent account of their lives. She makes the case that this is a consequence of their failure to develop secure attachment as infants.

Insecure attachment as infants leads to insecure attachment as adolescents and adults. This is manifested in specific 'attachment styles' which attachment theorists identify as secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. (Bartholomew et al. 1991; Fonagy et al. 2005) However, insecure attachment styles are not set in stone from infancy. Knox herself is a Jungian analyst, and clearly believes, like Fonagy and his co-authors, in the capacity of the analytical process to counteract the effects of early destructive relationships. Working within a very different framework, Carl Rogers (1951, 1961) argued that the therapist's provision of a relationship characterized by empathy, acceptance and congruence was of itself efficacious in giving the client the freedom to abandon self-destructive habits of mind and behaviour.

Some adolescents will have 'attachment issues', grounded in infantile trauma or inadequate parenting, and can be helped to overcome them through the offering of secure relationships with adults and peers in a school setting. Others will be confidently secure in their relationships. Regardless of their starting point, both groups will be assisted in the development of the reflective function, and consequently of their capacity to construct a meaningful experience of schooling, if provided with a secure and reliable relationship with a committed teacher-advocate. Developmental psychologists since Piaget have argued that the attainment of reflective function (variously described and labeled) is a particular developmental task of adolescence (See Kegan, 1997; Egan, 1983, 1998)

### **Promoting a Sense of Meaning**

It can be argued that promoting a sense of meaning is the major focus of schooling, however that "sense of meaning" may be interpreted by schools. We will not be capable of engaging and continuing to engage students in their education if schooling is for them a meaningless activity.

What is the significance of an education? Why am I here? Where am I going? What am I doing? When does it have to be done? These are questions that adolescents ask as they progress through the education system. Schools which operate within a strong narrative, religious or secular, may be able to provide answers which satisfy some, at least, of their students. However, the education system seems largely unable to assist students toward a vision of life. The demands of a consumerist culture are not an adequate substitute for meaningful intention. As Knox points out:

There are many people who simply do not seem to know what they want, what interests them or excites their attention. They seem trapped in a passive prison in which they are doomed to respond endlessly to other people's demands on them, because the alternative is a terrifying emptiness and aimlessness born out of the absence of desire (2003:150).

In the schooling we provide we make constant demands on students regarding their behaviour and their achievement. We tend to prefer a mindless compliance to an authentic resistance. We offer little opportunity for students to gain meaning from the daily activities, the trials and the tribulations of participation in the education system. We offer little opportunity to engage in reflection on who they are as learners, develop intentions or reflect with a significant other upon achievement and what it might mean.

## The Advocacy Relationship

If we are to engage young people in schooling there needs to be an active and systematic approach to the development of meaning. This requires a degree of understanding of the symbolic significance of the adolescents' experience — schooling, job, money, lifestyle, problem solving, peer culture. With this in view, teacher/advocates are provided with professional development in a Rogerian, 'person-centred' approach to interpersonal communication. Evaluations of earlier experiments with the Advocacy model (Ocean, 2001; Henry, 2003) have indicated that the model works best when the teacher/advocate not only provides a secure and reliable relationship (which may well be provided in a conventional teacher role) but focuses specifically on listening to the student rather than on directing, evaluating and advising — functions which teachers habitually exercise but which are counter to good practice in an advocacy role.

Carl Rogers (1951) developed a theory of personality and therapeutic change within a subjectivist paradigm, arguing that 'behaviour is basically the goal-directed attempt of the organism to satisfy its needs as experienced, in the field as perceived' (491) and 'the best vantage point for understanding behaviour is from the internal frame of reference of the individual himself [sic]' (494). Within such an understanding we can argue that a particular student's self-destructive or anti-social behaviour is simply their way of dealing with 'the field as perceived'.

Rogers' research on therapeutic process led him to the conclusion that the quality of the relationship between therapist and client was critical. Only a relationship characterized by empathy, congruence (genuineness) and what he called 'unconditional positive regard' could provide the opportunity for the client to freely reflect on the nature of 'the field as perceived' and become aware of their capacity to choose their behaviour consciously rather than act out of habit or react mindlessly to their environment. Only such a relationship could provide an environment for the client's own development of empathy, genuineness and acceptance of others.

Though Rogers' thinking originally revolved around the relationship of therapist and client, he became aware that what was true of the therapeutic relationship was true of all relationships. Good relationships — between partners, between parents and children, between teachers and students — are characterized by empathy, genuineness and acceptance. This is especially critical in an explicitly supportive relationship such as advocacy.

Teachers are inclined to see counselling as involving specific professional skills, skills quite different from those in which they are themselves trained and experienced. They may be reluctant to embrace the advocate role if they see it as taking over the role of school counsellor. School counsellors, likewise, may not be inclined to look with favour on the introduction of the advocacy model if it looks as though untrained people are going to be involved in counselling students.(? necessity)

However, advocacy as understood here is not counselling, certainly not the kind of counselling which is conventionally seen as the norm in Australia: cognitive behavioural therapy. (? Appears negative: Is it better to focus on the next sentence)The focus of the advocate is on supporting the student's learning. The method of advocacy is to provide the student with a secure and reliable relationship in which an interested adult will listen non-judgementally to whatever the student has to say about their learning and the factors which affect it for better or for worse. It creates a

situation in which some one in the school knows something of the student's aims and goals (or lack of them), the difficulties she faces, and his life outside school. There is some one in the school who is able to intervene on the student's behalf when the school is reacting to 'bad behaviour' which, as far as the student is concerned is simply 'the goal directed attempt to satisfy [their] needs as experienced in the field as perceived'.

Neither is advocacy teaching. Teachers instruct, advise, evaluate and, where necessary, reprimand or control the students in their classes. The role of advocate differs from this in significant ways. The advocate restrains the urge to direct, judge or reprimand, and concentrates on the attempt to understand how the student perceives the world of learning, and how he or she may be helped to connect with it. She even restrains her urge to give advice, acknowledging that the aim of helping students to become an independent learner may be hindered by an over-eagerness to tell them what they should be doing. It is desirable to keep the roles of teacher and advocate separate, avoiding a situation where teachers are acting as advocates for students who are in their own classes.

### **Advocacy and Reflective Function**

The opportunity exists in the Advocacy model to provide students with the opportunity to construct meaning for their participation in the education system and to discover how they might best use it to achieve personal goals. The Advocacy model provides an approach whereby the students are given the chance to develop their reflective function and hence gain a greater sense of meaning from their experience at school. Essential to this is the teacher/advocates' success in developing positive relationships with the students for whom they take responsibility.

Within the advocacy model as described by Ocean (2001), Neville and Schmidt (2001), Henry (2003) and McCann (2008), the central role played by the advocate is to link the personal attributes of the young person to the education and community systems in a meaningful way. However, unless a student and teacher have a common language it is difficult for either the advocate or the student to develop a strong personal educational narrative. If students are to take responsibility for their own progress, it incumbent upon us to engage the learner in dialogue around the meaning of their experiences at school, and to hold this dialogue within the phenomenal world of the student.

Knox's notion of 'reflective function', which she develops within the framework of attachment theory, provides a key to understanding the interaction between the teacher-advocate and the student within the advocacy model. The advocacy framework, on its part, provides an approach to developing reflective function within the student. Within a secure and reliable relationship the adolescent is able to develop psychologically within in the four dimensions listed by Knox: narrative competence, intentionality, appraisal and individuation.

### **Narrative competence**

In attachment theory as developed by Fonagy (2005) and Knox (2003) narrative competence is perceived to be the basis for the development of a sense of agency. If this is so, it will be a key focus

in the work of schools, and therefore of the advocate, to provide the opportunity for the sense of agency to develop in the students with whom they have a responsibility. Within an educational setting the key issue is the development of a sense of personal agency in the task of learning. The teacher-advocate has a significant role in this.

In the Advocacy model the advocate is given a set of tools to assist in developing a productive relationship with a student with a focus on the student's sense of agency.

The Student Achievement Inventory provides students with instant feedback, giving them a language in which to reflect on and discuss their personal learning history, interest, likes, dislikes, hobbies, learning styles and difficulties, their intentions and their achievements. Questionnaires included in the SAI provide a basis for dialogue around a range of issues related to the construction of a personal narrative. Feedback provides profiles of the following:

- Home/family context
- Personal interests and hobbies
- Roles from family, work, school, community, sporting clubs
- Responsibilities
- Preferred learning style
- Attitudes to authority
- Attitude to responsibility
- A personal curriculum vitae

These questionnaires provide a rich background for discussion around the theme of personal agency....What am I doing? Why am I here? What am I good at?

The SAI provides the symbolic language enabling a discussion around the development of the student's personal narrative.

In developing a personal narrative for each student the advocate takes care to build an accurate profile of the student's successes and difficulties. The underlying assumptions on which the students build their sense of success and failure are noted and examined. These assumptions can come from previous schooling experiences, the home and wider social influences. Early experiences are powerful in shaping our stance towards our world, and by the time the student has reached adolescence the student has developed 'working models' (Bowlby 1979) of relationships with adults and of his or her identity as a participant in the school culture. Whether they are functional or dysfunctional, such working models are extremely resilient. Adolescents whose experience has taught them that adults are uncaring or untrustworthy and whose personal narratives proclaim that they are 'losers' will tend to stick to this story regardless of evidence that may contradict it.

Through dialogue around the SAI the teacher-advocate and the student can develop a shared understanding of who this student is and how he or she learns, against a backdrop of the ways others might prefer to learn. Students construct meaning through learning to reflect on their experience within the safe container of a one-to-one relationship with a trustworthy adult.

The narrative competence of the student can be progressed by the linking of the information gained from the SAI with the student's schooling and experience of the wider world. By more clearly defining what they have done, what they have achieved, an enhanced sense of agency can be developed.

### **Intentionality**

The SAI questionnaires look also to the future, raising such issues as .... What do I want? Where am I going? How will I get there?

This second aspect of reflective function Knox describes as the 'capacity to pursue goals and desires, that is, to have a mental appetite' (Knox, 2003: 142). With adequately secure attachment the child learns both to acknowledge and understand the intentions of others and to protect and explain their own behaviour, a crucial developmental achievement and a central feature of theory of mind. Adequate psychological development includes a capacity to be mindful of one's own intentions and needs, and mindful also of the intentions and needs of others.

Within the advocacy relationship the concept of intentionality is highlighted in two ways. The first is the discussion around the formation of a long term plan so that the students develop a long-term goal that they have set for themselves. The second is short-term goal-setting which breaks up the more broadly based concepts into weekly actions that need to be achieved. Short-term goals, facilitated by tools in the SAI, can be set in discussion between the advocate and the student. They cover aspects of the student's life in school and community — study, sporting clubs, family, relationships and other aspects of life which are currently important to the student.

The function of the intense goal-setting is to make the student aware that by setting and achieving goals on a short-term basis a record of achievement can be developed over a short period of time. If six goals are set and achieved and appraised by the advocate as achieved, for each week, then after six weeks 36 goals will have been achieved. At this point the advocate and the student can celebrate the achievement of so many small aspects of developing 'intentionality'.

The setting of long-term goals, while important, can be ineffective unless attention is drawn to these goals on a regular basis. My (BS) experience with the Victorian Managed Individual Pathways Project, which was established following a recommendation from the Kirby review (2001), leads me to believe that many long-term plans are set in such frameworks, but far, far, fewer are regularly reviewed.

The setting of weekly goals insures that the students have a focus for the week around aspects of their life which require them to achieve or complete particular tasks. In some settings these goals include attendance, relationship with peers, relationships with teachers, family relationships, sporting achievement, learning a new hobby, learning a musical instrument, taking new roles in artistic productions, community work or a personal responsibility at school — as well as achieving higher grades on assignments and ceasing to be disruptive in a classroom. Through the discussion that takes place in the one-to-one relationship the advocate and the student are able to easily set short-term goals and monitor them with the tools available in the SAI.



If the goals are not reviewed by the advocate then the point of setting the goals may well be missed by the student. For goal-setting to become an established mode of operation for the student, constant attention must be given to this aspect of the advocacy relationship for a number of months so that the achievement can be registered with the student and his or her parents. The advocate can after some months change the review of the goal-setting from weekly to fortnightly and eventually much longer periods, as weekly goal-setting becomes habitual for the student.

The long-term plans developed with the assistance of the SAI tools can also be reviewed on a regular basis. If these plans are not reviewed then the student may well come to see that the plan has little relevance in the educational setting.

Knox argues that intentionality, the capacity to pursue goals and desires, to have a mental appetite, is an essential step in the psychological development of the child and adolescent. The appropriate use of the short-term and long-term goal-setting tools in the SAI has the potential to significantly enhance these capacities in students within an advocacy relationship.

### **Appraisal**

Appraisal is described by Knox as the capacity to evaluate the relative significance of experiences.

Appraisal requires an experience to be appraised. The advocate's stance of non-judgemental, empathic listening assists the student to evaluate the quality and meaning of both past and current experiences of schooling. The development of a realization that one has the capacity and the right to judge the meaning and significance of one's experiences, rather than simply accept the appraisals of others, is an essential part of growing up, and starts fairly early in the process. However, children and adolescents who are not supported in this process must either slip into mindless compliance or take a stance of reaction and resistance against those who tell them what they are supposed to think, feel and do. For the adolescent student, the invitation within the advocacy interaction to review and appraise experiences of schooling, work, relationships, desires, emotions, is central to their gaining a sense of how they relate to the world. We may believe that adolescents should grow up as people with minds of their own, rather than constantly defer to others' judgements as more valid than their own. However, not all classroom cultures support this process.

Knox points out that appraisal is largely an unconscious process, operating automatically on the basis of habitual 'working models' of what matters in life. However, it can become conscious, through development of the reflective function. Some adolescents are habitually and automatically dependent on the appraisals of others. Others are habitually counter-dependent, reacting with automatic resistance to the appraisals of others. The position of independence, which falls between these two reactive stances, demands a conscious sense of psychological identity, in which appraisals are made on the basis of the evidence, not on the basis of other people's expectations or one's negative reaction to them, and not through the internalizations of other people's appraisals of one as 'bad' or 'uncooperative' or 'a loser'. A student's examination of her experience of learning and schooling within a relationship with a trusted adult can make a significant contribution to the development of a sense of 'knowing one's own mind'.

It is necessary for maturing adolescents to develop a sense of meaning in how they perform and relate, and in how other people think and feel as they go about their daily tasks. Within the one-to-one relationship there is an opportunity for the student to gain a strong and realistic sense of self and gain an understanding that others have personal thoughts and feelings which need to be recognised.

In most schools students are appraised in a global fashion and few schools provide the opportunity for extensive individual appraisal which would enable students to appreciate the full meaning or significance of their schooling experiences. Students usually receive reports on their assignments and exams in a collective report issued twice a year. These reports are generally cryptic and provide a minimalist synopsis of the student's achievements in particular subjects.

The advocacy model, including the SAI, provides a methodology and the resources for students to be able to develop a sense of personal appraisal which is far more refined and developed than the appraisal systems we currently see used in schools.

If the goal-setting and planning are given focus within the advocacy relationship, we might argueable expect the productivity of individual students to increase. If this increase is achieved across a large number of students within the school, then school performance will increase. This should make system administrators pleased indeed

### **Individuation**

Individuation, as Knox define it in this context, is 'the awareness of one's own and other people's independent subjectivity' (2003: 156). The achievement of a sense of our own separateness and individuality is associated with a recognition that others have experience, thoughts, values and emotions which are different from our own. Achieving a sense of separateness enables the child or adolescent to transcend the assumption that he must either control or be controlled by others. Emotions become an expression of self instead of a tool of manipulation. Other people are perceived not only to have their own subjectivity, but are allowed to think different thoughts and feel different feelings. Though development of this aspect of reflective function can start early in childhood, not all people manage to achieve it in a lifetime.

The experience of schooling can assist adolescents in this developmental task.

Teachers cannot give adolescents individuation. However, we can construct an educational environment in which the student can be given the opportunity and a set of tools for discovering personal meaning through the development of this aspect of reflective function.

In a satisfactory advocacy relationship the student gains an understanding of who they are as a learner and as a person, and gains an understanding also that other people (including teachers) may learn differently and react differently to their experiences. It is this independent subjectivity, a personal sense of agency, action, intention and reflection against the background of others' diverse experiences that needs to be supported by teachers and is particularly reinforced within an advocacy relationship. The SAI includes tools such as the Learning Preference Questionnaire and the Personal Profile which are designed to support the student's individuation.

Schools, at their best, are concerned with the psychological and social development of their students and acknowledge that this development involves more than academic or sporting outcomes as defined by others. However, there is always some tension between the school's need for compliance and the adolescent's need to become an independent, individuated person. Within the advocacy relationship it is hoped that these issues can be addressed and the students can be supported in development of the reflective function, so that they are not only able to reflect on their own needs and behaviours, but also to acknowledge that teachers (and schools) have needs and behaviours which make sense within the school's 'field of experience'.

### **Conclusion**

When the advocacy project was first designed and piloted in 1999, it was to address a deficit in the Victorian public education system. The removal of pastoral care and counselling resources from high schools had left many students without adequate support at a critical time in their lives, with consequent disengagement from the apparently meaningless activity of education. Research on the outcomes of the project indicated clearly enough that students who were provided with the opportunity to form a relationship with a teacher-advocate were less likely to absent themselves from school and more likely to remain at school for the post-compulsory years.

We can argue that through their conversations with their teacher-advocates these students were able to find meaning in their school experience, to the extent that they could see a point in attending school and seeking further qualifications. Though the use of electronic tools in the pilot project was limited, there was some indication that the tools used played a significant part in assisting the students to reflect on their experience and develop meaningful short-term and long-term goals.

The two components of the Advocacy model as it is currently being applied in a number of Victorian schools — the one-to-one relationship and the Student Achievement Inventory — are designed to support student engagement in schooling. This is not simply because having a teacher-advocate who provides a secure and reliable relationship makes school a more comfortable place to be. (Students interviewed in evaluating the model have said things like: 'It's nice having an advocate, because now there is a teacher who knows my name and smiles at me!'). There is no doubt that the model has a very positive impact on the pastoral care of students. However, the model has an unambiguous focus on the support of students' learning. It achieves this through the student and advocate's collaboration in constructing a student's personal meaning system for the student — a meaning system in which learning and goals play a significant part. Support for the student's reflection on self, school context and future possibilities is the means to this end. Such reflection is facilitated in a relationship where the trusted adult is prepared to enter the student's world by truly listening, and brings to the conversation not only the skills of a teacher but also the attitude of an advocate.

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