

Without Prejudice

25th February 2016

Board Position Paper:

Year 7 in Secondary Schools in South Australia



Background:

During 2012 and 2013 a DECD Adolescent Learners in the Middle Years of Schooling (ALMYS) Working Party undertook a cost / benefit analysis of Year 7s in secondary schools. It concluded that there were five options.

1. Improved primary to secondary school transition processes.
 - a) That a good practice guideline for middle years transition be adopted to assist the transition processes between primary schools and secondary schools and to support curriculum links, student support, transfer of information, and child and family engagement. It was assumed that the move to Birth – 18 Partnerships would assist with developing improved practice.
 - b) Sound communication and use of student achievement data be improved between primary and secondary schools.

2. The placement of Year 7
 - a) Further investigation be undertaken with the educational jurisdictions in Queensland and Western Australia to gauge whether placing Year 7 in secondary school has made a difference to the learning and wellbeing outcomes of students.
 - b) A transparent and detailed feasibility study (including public consultation) is considered before the SA education landscape is changed, and Year 7s are moved into secondary schooling. [The 2013 indicative cost of providing additional facilities for secondary schools and special options was \$150 million for demountable classrooms and \$190 million for solid accommodation.]

3. Australian Curriculum in the middle years
 - Teaching the Australian Curriculum in the middle schooling years (i.e., 6-9) becomes a focus of professional learning within the Australian Curriculum implementation strategy.

4. Supporting adolescent learning environments
 - Professional resources for teachers and leaders are developed through collaborative processes that capture existing good practice for improved adolescent learning environments in the middle years of schooling.

5. ALMYS focus in the Office for Education
 - The DECD Office for Education should place improving outcomes for adolescent learners in the middle years of schooling on its strategic plan and funding sources be identified to support such initiatives.

SASPA's Analysis: The implementation of Birth – 18 Partnerships in 2014 has seen Option 1 become the dominant DECD approach to addressing 7 to 8 transition processes. This is not to say that there have not been pockets of good middle years practice developed within some Partnerships, but this has been a localised strategy rather than a systemic one.

Since the August 2013 report from the DECD Adolescent Learners in the Middle Years of Schooling (ALMYS) Working Party, Queensland and Western Australia have successfully transitioned Year 7 students into secondary schools across all three schooling sectors.

From a national perspective, South Australia now finds itself the only state to retain Year 7 students in primary schools.

Recent Developments (Queensland):

On 27th January 2015, approximately 60,000 Year 7 students transitioned into Queensland secondary schools. From the public education perspective, it has been described by Education Queensland officers and Queensland Secondary Principals Association (QSPA) principals as “the most effective system-wide change process in living memory”. They credit the success of this “well planned, well-resourced and well-implemented” change to the following twelve factors:

- There was a significant time-lapse between the announcement of the change to policy (2007) and the actualisation of that policy (2015).
- It was a state-wide change rather than a sectoral change.
- There was bi-partisan political support expressed through Green Paper (2010) and White Paper (2011) developments.
- There was extensive community consultation undertaken following the release of the Green Paper (i.e., 69% of Queensland parents indicated support for shifting Year 7 into secondary schools).
- A Community Engagement and Partnership Team was formed by Education Queensland and was dedicated to the transition of Year 7s into high schools.
- Education Queensland invested in a 20 school pilot program to better appreciate the impact of the Year 7 move into secondary (2012 – 2014). These schools provided experience based advice (60 hours of interviews with principals, teachers, students and parents) about how to best prepare and support students in their transition from primary to secondary schools.
- The use of a “Readiness Reflection Tool” and a “Workforce Impact Statement” enabled all school communities to successfully prepare for the 2015 change. (Milestones were reviewed annually up until 2013. In 2014, milestones were reviewed each semester.)
- The Government spent \$620 million on implementing the *Flying Start* policy. \$328 million of this was expended on infrastructure (i.e., 364 building projects in 289 schools, and the creation of 600 new classrooms and the refurbishment of 1,100 existing classrooms.)
- Probably the most influential spend was on the junior secondary professional development program for 8,200 Education Queensland teachers identified as having Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 coordination responsibilities for 2015+. Griffiths University were commissioned (along with well-known psychologists, Andrew Fuller and Michael Carr-Gregg) to deliver a comprehensive professional learning program that focussed on key aspects of adolescent development (including brain development theory) and on pastoral care and student well-being programs and systems. Essentially this produced a much needed renewal of interest in the middle years of schooling.
- As a means of informing this professional development activity and the inevitable changes to junior secondary schooling, Education Queensland commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to provide a theoretical underpinning for schooling Years 7-9.
- Education Queensland saw the needs of primary schools (who were losing Year 7 students) as being of equal importance to the secondary schools who were gaining these students.

- There was significant forethought given to the best way of managing the Human Resource implications for shifting Year 7 students into secondary. There were 719 new teachers appointed into junior secondary positions and 413 primary teachers transitioned into Year 7 and 8 positions in high schools. The primary teachers received up to 20 transition days to help develop their confidence ahead of such a significant shift.

Recent Developments (Western Australia):

On 2nd February 2015, approximately 17,672 Year 7 students transitioned into Western Australian public secondary schools along with a similar number of Year 8 students. It has been described by Education Department WA officers and Western Australia Secondary School Executives Association (WASSEA) principals as “a highly effective system-wide change process”. They credit the success of this “well planned and well-implemented” change to the adoption of a “this will be solved through a school-by-school” approach as distinct to a philosophy of “one size fits all”.

- There was a healthy time-lapse between the announcement of the change to policy (2011) and the actualisation of that policy (2015).
- Unlike Queensland, there was no pilot program in Western Australia. However, there was a migration of Year 7 students into secondary programs in the Catholic sector from 2010, and the WA Education Department leveraged intelligence from the 2011 report, “Transitioning Year 7 Primary Students to Secondary Settings in Western Australian Catholic Schools”, by Anne Coffey et al, as well as keeping an eye on Queensland.
- Although the Catholic sector moved earlier than the other sectors (2010), there was no significant drift away from the public education sector.
- A dedicated Year 7 Project Management team (consisting of a Project Director plus a primary principal, a secondary principal, a HR Director and a Facilities Officer) was created to undertake the planning and implementation of transitioning the Department of Education’s Year 7 students into secondary.
- 10 sub-projects were established to work collaboratively with the Year 7 Project Management Team including infrastructure, funding and resourcing, workforce, professional learning and communication and stakeholder management.
- There was extensive community consultation undertaken where Education Department officers visited every school principal network (i.e., 5 – 20 schools, depending on demographics and geography). Parent meetings in key regional communities were also held to address complex issues; e.g., boarding school arrangements and bus transport.
- High volume and high quality resources to support Year 7 transition into secondary were developed and made accessible from the Department’s website.
- The use of surveys provided the Project Team with a sense of a secondary school’s readiness to implement a successful Year 6 into Year 7 transition. Schools were given a “green light” upon readiness. It was significant that the Project Team had only 6 schools with an “amber light” in the last semester of 2014 in the lead up to the 2015 transition.
- The Government spent approximately \$350 million on implementing the Transition from Primary to Secondary component of the Director General’s “*Classroom First*” Strategy. Approximately \$265 million of this was expended on infrastructure; i.e., additional school buildings (i.e., 29 of the 99 WA secondary schools had major building projects), whilst others received demountable classrooms to address spatial needs. Some K-12 schools had additional specialist spaces built or created.
- A unique element of the Education Department landscape in Western Australia is their network of 8 residential colleges (i.e., Albany, Broome, City Beach, Esperance, Geraldton, Merredin, Narrogin and Northam). Six of these eight residential colleges were able to accommodate the addition of Year 7 students without a major rebuild.

- 46 additional buses were required to service the 13% increased demand from Year 7 students moving into secondary.
- Approximately \$1 million was allocated to secondary schools to implement the Year 7 transition program. The focus was on getting transition right. In most cases, secondary schools used their grant to appoint a Year 7 Coordinator as a key step in managing this program.
- There was significant forethought given to the best way of managing the Human Resource implications for shifting Year 7 students into secondary. The \$22 million Switch Program was established to support the retraining of 525 primary teachers wanting to make a transition into secondary schooling. Of the 1370 positions needed in secondary schools for 2015, 453 were filled by graduates of the Switch Retraining program.
- Secondary teachers were encouraged to take Long Service Leave in 2014 (and actively discouraged from taking it in 2015).
- Unlike Queensland, where all Year 7 students were expected to make the transition regardless of circumstance, Western Australia put in a “special consideration” arrangement for 2015 – 2017. This has provided an exemption status for those few students whose families are not accepting of having the transition from primary to secondary moved forward to Year 6 to Year 7. The primary principal has authority to grant an exemption. Whilst few cases have been reported, it was seen as an important accommodation.

Reflections on the Experiences of Queensland and WA

The Queensland and Western Australian experiences have produced some insights into the position of Year 7 in the primary / secondary nexus.

(i) *How many years should an Australian student experience primary education?*

| The 7 years of Primary Education in all Australian States and Territories (except South Australia)* | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Foundation | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 |
| 5 – 6 years | 6 – 7 years | 7 – 8 years | 8 – 9 years | 9 – 10 years | 10 – 11 years | 11 – 12 years |

*Students in South Australia typically undertake 8 years of primary education (with the 8th year occurring at the completion of Year 7). South Australia has had a single intake at Reception since 2013.

Note: Both Queensland and Western Australia indicate that 7 years of primary schooling is the optimal amount (and that the single entry to the preparatory or foundation year means that all students now experience 7 years of primary schooling by the completion of Year 6).

(ii) *How many years should an Australian student experience secondary education?*

| The 6 years of Secondary Education in all States and Territories (except South Australia)* | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 10 | Year 11 | Year 12 |
| 12 – 13 years | 13 – 14 years | 14 – 15 years | 15 – 16 years | 16 – 17 years | 17 – 18 years |

*Students in South Australia typically undertake 5 years of secondary education (with the 1st year starting at Year 8 rather than Year 7).

Note: Both Queensland and Western Australia indicate that 6 years of secondary schooling is the optimal amount. It means that all teenagers (i.e., 13 year olds) are now in a secondary education environment and are deriving benefit from learning in specialist curriculum spaces

(i.e., science laboratories, technical studies centres, home economics kitchens, and dedicated rooms for The Arts – e.g., music, dance, drama rooms and visual art) one year earlier than was previously the case. Having specialist teachers for all curriculum areas, but particularly for Mathematics and Science, is also an important feature of the improved Year 7 experiences in Queensland and Western Australia.

(iii) *The Australian Curriculum and the Banding of Year 7 and 8 Learning, Assessment and Reporting within Some Subject Frameworks.*

All of the Phase 3 implemented curriculum areas – Health and PE, LOTE, Technology and The Arts – have been banded into 2 year experiences understanding the limits of time schools have to afford these subjects by comparison to English, Mathematics and Science. The banding of the curriculum across Years 7 and 8 only becomes problematic in a jurisdiction or sector where the primary / secondary split is at Year 7. Queensland and Western Australia avoided this problem by moving Year 7s into high school from 2015. With no other option, South Australian primary and secondary schools are finding creative ways to address a problem that is unique to this State.

(iv) *An evidence-based approach to meeting the needs of students in early adolescence.*

There is much that is of interest in the Education Queensland commissioned ACER paper, “Junior Secondary – theory and practice” (2012). Its approach is to look at “age-appropriate pedagogies” in response to the identified needs of early adolescence. The paper argues that changed arrangements, such as placing Year 7 students in secondary schools, “can act as a catalyst for changing thinking and teaching practice”. The focus in Queensland was to create a new orientation towards teaching and learning in Years 7-9 based on an evidence-based approach to better meet the needs of students in early adolescence.

A key premise adopted by ACER from the OECD paper on improving lower secondary schools in Norway (2011) is that “success in key subjects in lower secondary is a prerequisite to succeed in upper secondary”. The OECD paper (2011) goes on to argue that “an attractive, relevant and high quality lower secondary education is a key vehicle for success in schooling overall”.

The ACER paper (2012) supports the Education Queensland introduction of a new junior secondary phase of education based on six key principles:

- *Distinct identity* (i.e., students feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school)
- *Quality teaching* (i.e., “The quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers,” Barber and Mourshed, 2007)
- *Student wellbeing* (i.e., “Enhanced student well-being can contribute to improved academic achievement by increasing student motivation to participate and achieve; student engagement with, and participation in, learning; student attendance; and by decreasing the incidence of problem behaviour at school,” DEEWR, 2008)
- *Parent and community involvement* (i.e., “A pedagogically engaged school has genuine dialogue occurring both within and across the school and its community about where the school is going, who it is working for, how well it is doing, and where and when it needs to refocus and restructure its priorities,” Smyth & McLnerney, 2007)
- *Leadership* (i.e., dedicated teachers experienced with teaching young adolescents will lead junior secondary supported by the principal and administration team)
- *Local decision-making* (i.e., the needs of each school community will influence how junior secondary is implemented in each school).

In Western Australia, the Coffey Report (2011) was the major piece of research. Whilst it is a study of Year 7 migration into secondary settings in the Catholic sector, the Report emphasises the importance of middle schooling concepts to address the academic and psychological functioning needs of young adolescents.

(v) What is the cost to benefit analysis of moving Year 7 into secondary?

When asked this question, the immediate Queensland response was, “What is the cost of not doing this?” Essentially what they meant by this reply was the \$620 million investment has been transformational in that it has completely rejuvenated teaching and learning in the middle years of schooling (understanding, of course, that \$328 million of this figure was spent on infrastructure).

The response from the Western Australians was similar (although the WA budget was less).

Understandings from the SA context

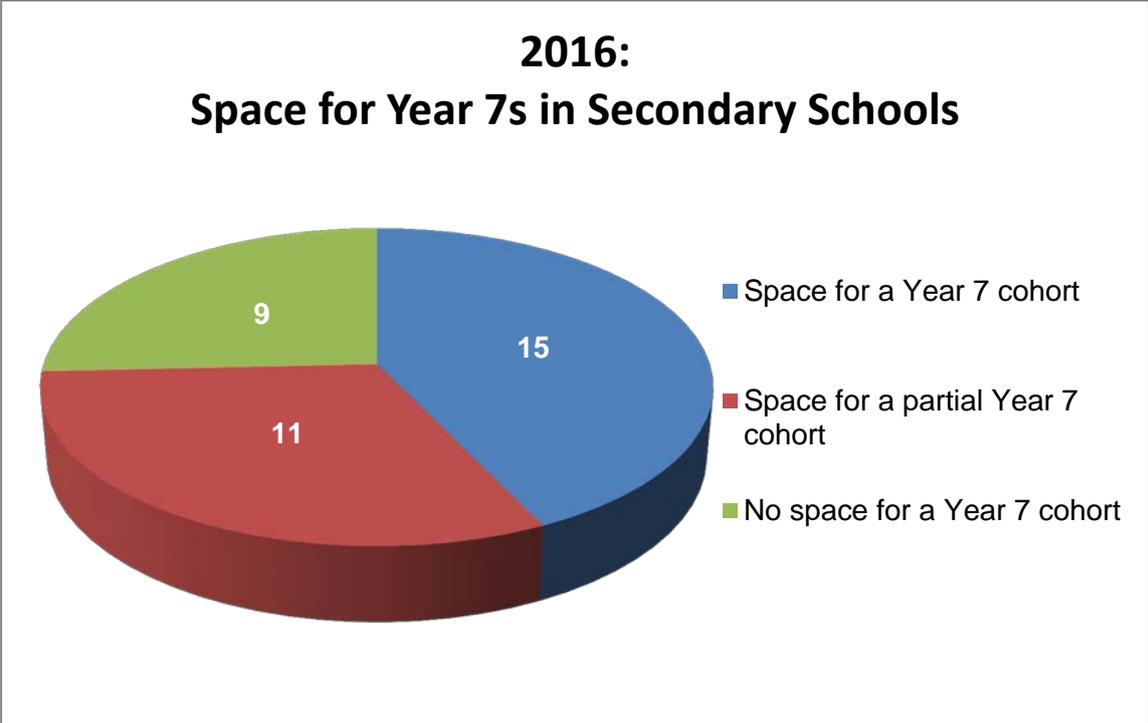
There is a sense of inevitability in South Australia that eventually Year 7 students will have a specialised secondary education experience. Realistically, it cannot happen overnight.

The success of the experiences in both Queensland and Western Australia was predicated on setting a date far enough ahead to enable effective planning for the transition. Queensland’s strategic plan included finding budget efficiencies to create the funds for specialised junior secondary professional learning and for the foreseeable school infrastructure needs to be met.

In South Australia, the 2013 indicative costings for providing additional facilities for secondary schools and special options were \$150 million for demountable classrooms and \$190 million for solid accommodation. Would such an outlay provide a similar “return” to those seen in Queensland and Western Australia?

Since the work of the 2013 DECD Adolescent Learners in the Middle Years of Schooling (ALMYS) Working Party the issue of physical space needs for our secondary schools may well have changed for the better. From the SA Government perspective, this may make the way forward an easier one than first imagined.

In December 2015 a SASPA survey of the 60 stand-alone DECD secondary schools (i.e., those without existing Year 7 enrolments) returned a response from 35 schools. Of these respondents, 15 indicated that they had space to take a complete Year 7 cohort (i.e., one of the same number as their current Year 8 cohort). There were 11 respondents who indicated that they could take a partial Year 7 cohort; that is, upwards of 50% the size of their current Year 8 cohort. The 9 respondents who indicated that they had no space for a Year 7 cohort were from those schools with existing and well-known enrolment pressures.



What we know about the development of a vibrant middle years learning program in schools is that it is more about culture, structure and pedagogy than it is about buildings. This is why the Queensland approach is so attractive to the SASPA Board: it was an approach that made junior secondary pedagogy the centre-piece of their preparations for change.

In South Australia, we are fortunate to have three Year 7-12 Schools already and twelve Combined Primary – Secondary Schools where the Year 7 experience is already more secondary oriented than it is primary oriented. Anecdotal feedback from those 2015 and 2016 SASPA Board members who have overseen Year 7 secondary education programs in their schools (as diverse as Clare High School, Paralowie School and Seaford Secondary College) indicated that their school's Year 7 students invariably performed better in Year 8 compared to students who transitioned to the school as Year 8 students (having undertaken Year 7 education in a primary setting). This comparative performance was consistent across the educational attainment data (i.e., Australian Curriculum grades – including literacy and numeracy performance) and well-being data (i.e., attendance and behaviour).

Case Study: Paralowie School (Reception – Year 12 School in Adelaide's northern suburbs)

There are five key data sets included in this case study:

- The ratios of Year 7 students at Paralowie continuing into Year 8, compared to year 7 students from feeder schools coming to Paralowie for Year 8 and (in relation to those choosing to attend other secondary schools). The data for this is from 2013 – 2016.
- The enrolment trend over the last four years.
- The NAPLAN data for the last 2 years, using a comparison of what the average mean score was for Paralowie students and Non Paralowie students in Year 7 for the five areas, and what their score was in Year 9 (and how much improvement they showed).
- The PAT data for 2015 Year 8 students and what the average scale score was for both PAT R and PAT M for those Paralowie students who had undertaken Year 7 on-site compared to those who had undertaken Year 7 elsewhere (in a primary school setting). This does not show the level of improvement (since Paralowie does not have access to the scores for its current students who were in other schools for Year 7).
- Some wellbeing data. This shows the average number of days absent in Year 8 for those students who were at Paralowie in Year 7 compared to those who went to local primary schools for Year 7, along with some behaviour data and overview of Flexible Learning Options (FLO) enrolments.

1. Year 7 – 8 Progression at Paralowie:

The following table shows Paralowie's Year 8 enrolments from 2013 – 2016, and compares the number of Paralowie students progressing from Year 7 to Year 8 compared with the number of students transitioning into Paralowie having undertaken Year 7 in a local primary school.

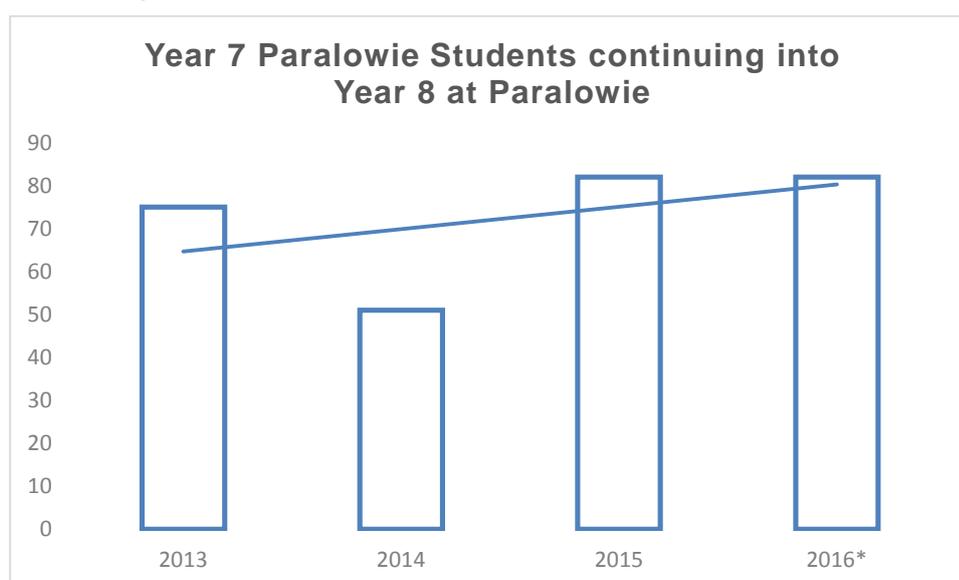
| Year | Paralowie Students | Paralowie Students who went to another school | Non Paralowie Students | Non Paralowie students who went to another school | Total Year 8 cohort |
|-------|--------------------|---|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 2013 | 75 | 6 | 87 | 21 | 162 |
| 2014 | 51 | 6 | 78 | 23 | 129 |
| 2015* | 82 | 3 | 70 | 5 | 152 |
| 2016* | 82 | 6 | 61 | 28 | 143 |

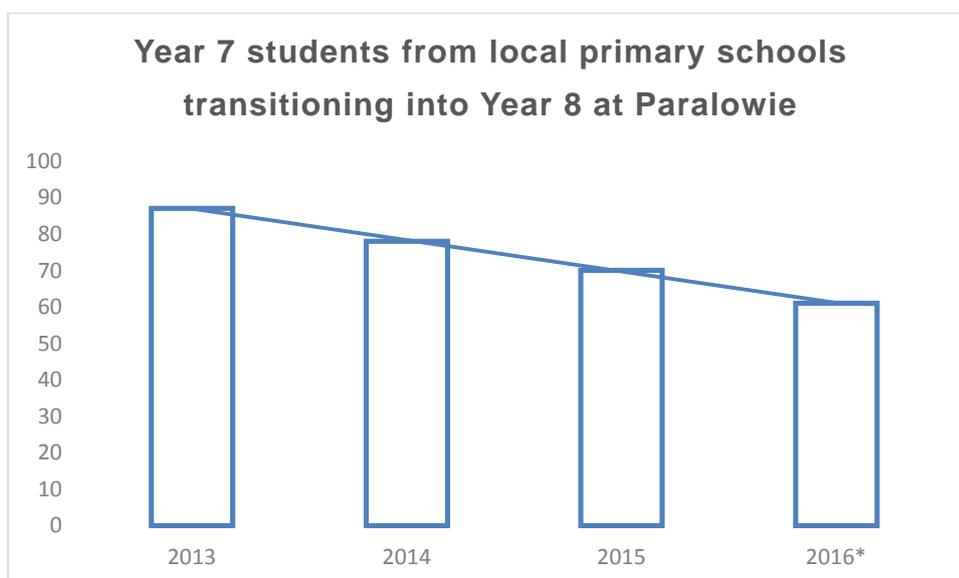
Table 1: This illustrates how students who are in the Year 7 secondary program at Paralowie predominantly remain with the school for the Year 8 program. The handful of students who do not remain, tend to be those seeking enrolment in a private school.

*The second point to be made is that, over the last couple of years, Paralowie has had a greater number of students in Year 7 (i.e., 4 classes instead of 3). A strong reason for this is that a number of parents are enrolling their children into Paralowie at the start of Year 7 as they have found this is a good way to help their children transition into secondary school compared to the traditional transition point of Year 8.

2. Enrolment trends:

The two graphs below show enrolment trends; that is, an increase in retaining Year 7 students within Paralowie and its restriction on places for students outside of Paralowie entering their Year 8 program.





These two graphs indicate that the number of students who are continuing at Paralowie from Year 7 into Year 8 has been trending upwards over the last 4 years, while the number of students who are coming to Paralowie from other Primary schools has been trending down.

3. NAPLAN Year 9 Results:

The table below shows the level of improvement that continuing Paralowie students have had in the 5 NAPLAN areas in 2015 compared to the Paralowie students who have transitioned into the school from other primary schools.

Continuing Paralowie students:

| Numeracy | Imp. | Reading | Imp. | Writing | Imp. | Grammar | Imp. | Spelling | Imp. |
|----------|-------|---------|-------|---------|------|---------|-------|----------|-------|
| 550.74 | 54.26 | 536.99 | 41.47 | 495.53 | 4.73 | 523.74 | 38.48 | 530.70 | 25.92 |

Paralowie students who have transitioned into the school from local primary schools:

| Numeracy | Imp. | Reading | Imp. | Writing | Imp. | Grammar | Imp. | Spelling | Imp. |
|----------|------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------|
| 543.71 | 57.4 | 532.54 | 49.13 | 466.60 | 13.38 | 514.41 | 49.48 | 535.59 | 36.68 |

These two tables show that in all of the five tested areas within the scope of NAPLAN, those students who transitioned into Paralowie from local primary schools had a greater level of improvement than the continuing Paralowie students (and, in the case of spelling, they registered a stronger mean score). However, if you also take the average scores away from the mean scores, Paralowie students continuing through Year 7 had a higher mean score than those students transitioning in.

Analysis of these results by Paralowie staff revealed that the most likely explanation was because of the teaching techniques used at Paralowie are used in the school's primary program as well as in its junior secondary program. Students joining Paralowie from other primary schools are often experiencing these learning methodologies for the first time in Year 8, and have a rapid lift in learning prior to Year 9 testing.

Some of these explicit teaching techniques include the use of TEEL as a writing structure.

TEEL is the acronym that represents the following scaffold for explicit teaching and learning:

- T – Topic sentence
- E – Evaluating sentence
- E – Elaborating sentence
- L – Linking sentence

This technique helps students to write stronger paragraphs.

4. Progressive Assessment Testing (PAT):

The PAT Reading and PAT Mathematics data for Paralowie’s 2015 Year 8 students was undertaken in Term 3, 2015 and shows the following:

| | Continuing Paralowie Students | Students Transitioned into Paralowie |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| PAT R | 129.8 | 125.3 |
| PAT M | 126.6 | 123.8 |

The table above shows that the Paralowie students performed better on the PAT R and PAT M tests in Year 8 compared to the students who have transitioned into the school from local primary schools.

The table below compares the Year 9 PAT data for 2015 alongside the 2014 Year 8 scores:

| | Continuing Paralowie Students | | Students Transitioned into Paralowie | |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 8 | Year 9 |
| PAT R | 123.2 | 129.7 | 121.7 | 129.1 |
| PAT M | 122.8 | 126.8 | 120.6 | 127.4 |

Whilst the results are very even in Year 9, as with the NAPLAN results discussed elsewhere, those students who have transitioned into Paralowie from local primary schools for Year 8, show a much larger improvement over a year than the Paralowie students who have continued internally having experienced Paralowie’s Year 7 secondary program. Again, this is likely to be due to the different teaching styles these transitioning students encounter at High School (that were already in evidence for those in the Paralowie Year 7 program whose lift is therefore not as pronounced).

Note: The difference between 2014 and 2015 represents an 18 month gap (since Year 8 students undertook the test at the start of Year 8 and then were tested again in Term 3 of their Year 9 program).

5. Well-being

Attendance:

After taking out public holidays and student free days over the course of the 2015 school year, there were 189 that students should have attended school. Of these 189 school days, on average, the 2015 Year 8 students who continued from the Year 7 program attended 166.9 of these days or 88.3%. By comparison, the Year 8 students who transitioned in that program having previously been Year 7 students at one of the local primary schools, attended 163.3 school days, on average, or 86.4%.

Behaviour:

In 2015 there were seven students in the Year 8 program who were excluded from the school. Of these seven students, five were students who had transitioned into the school as

Year 8s having undertaken Year 7 in a local primary school. (Coincidentally, whilst the other 2 excluded students had been part of the school's Year 7 secondary program, both had joined that program mid-year rather than at the year's commencement.)

In 2015 the recorded behavioural incidents showed a similar trend; that is, more inappropriate behaviour exhibited by students transitioning into Paralowie compared to those continuing within the school. Of the 70 students who transitioned from local primary schools into the Paralowie Year 8 program, 39 had a behavioural incident during 2015 (i.e., either withdrawal from the classroom, suspension or exclusion). This represents 55.7% of that sub-component of the Year 8 cohort. By comparison, there were 82 Year 8 students who progressed from Year 7 at Paralowie. Only 29 of these students had a behavioural incident during 2015; i.e., 35.4% of this group.

Flexible Learning Options (FLO):

The table below shows the number of students who were in FLO programs in 2015 (i.e, students in Years 9, 10 and 11) and makes a comparison between the numbers of these who were Paralowie students who had progressed from a Year 7 secondary program within the school and those who made a transition into the school at Year 8 (from a local primary school).

From the table below it is easy to see that the number of FLO enrolled students in Year 9 and 10 are heavily weighted towards students who did not have the benefit of a Year 7 secondary experience at Paralowie (i.e., transitioned into the school at Year 8), whilst in year 11 it is closer to a 50/50 split.

| 2015 FLO Programs | Total | Paralowie | Non Paralowie |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|---------------|
| Year 11 | 74 | 36 | 38 |
| Year 10 | 20 | 4 | 16 |
| Year 9 | 9 | 0 | 9 |

In 2016 the number of Year 9 students are FLO enrolled is again 9 students. Of these, 8 are students who transitioned into Paralowie for Year 8 and 1 is a Paralowie student who did experience a Year 7 secondary program at the school.

Summary:

Overall, the data and analysis provided by Paralowie School indicates that students who have the benefit of a Year 7 secondary program at the school have a more positive Year 8 experience; that is, less issues of behaviour and non-attendance, and stronger PAT R and PAT M scores.

The anecdotal experience at Paralowie (that is consistent with the feedback from SASPA Board members who have been principals at Year 7-12 schools at Clare and Seaford) is that there has been a clear increase in the number of parents wanting to enrol their children in a Year 7 secondary program.

Note: An updated version of this SASPA Board Position Paper is planned. It is intended that a section be included that discusses the evolving position being formed by the SA Catholic schooling sector. It is SASPA's understanding that the SA Catholic education perspective will be informed by the 2015 Year 12 results of the WA students in that state's Catholic system who are the first cohort to have undertaken 6 years of secondary (i.e., 2010 Year 7 cohort were the first Catholic students to undertake a Year 7 secondary program in WA).

SASPA's position on Year 7 in secondary

In June 2015, the SASPA Board indicated that it would form “an evidence-based position in relation to a Year 7 move to secondary” as one of its priority pieces of work.

Since then our Association has done what it could to learn from our colleagues in Queensland and Western Australia. The Board's position is also informed by the anecdotal evidence to emerge from discussions with the leaders (and former leaders) of schools with Year 7 cohorts in secondary environments such as Clare High School, Paralowie School and Seaford Secondary College.

The position taken by the Board is informed by our growing appreciation that having a national agreement on a national curriculum should logically extend to each member State and Territory providing the same fundamental set of conditions for the teaching and learning asked of that curriculum – *including a Year 7 specialised secondary experience* - so that all Australian students can experience 6 years at high school in preparation for their transition to tertiary education, further training or employment.

The SASPA Board is very conscious of the fact that most primary school principals are unlikely to hold the same view on Year 7 as secondary principals. The learning that has emerged out of Queensland and Western Australia provides great hope for resolving this tension. Both States stressed the importance of developing a strategic plan, and undertaking a feasibility study, so as to ensure that the outcome of a Government's decision to move Year 7 schooling into secondary provided improvements to the primary sector (i.e., schooling from Reception – Year 6) as well as to the secondary sector (i.e, Year 7 – 12 schooling).

Recommendations made by SASPA Board at its 19th February meeting:

- The SASPA Board recommends the development of a feasibility study that would see all South Australian Year 7 students in a secondary school by 2020.
- The SASPA Board recommends that this feasibility study be undertaken with bi-partisan political agreement for the State to move towards the placement of all Year 7 students into secondary schools by January 2020.
- The SASPA Board recognises that having all Year 7 students move into secondary schools by January 2020 necessitates the need for a cross sectoral agreement to be reached so that DECD, Catholic Education and Independent schools all undertake this transition process at the same time. It asks the Minister and the 3 sector heads to work together to achieve such an agreement.
- The SASPA Board appreciates that its recommendation to have all of SA's Year 7 students in a secondary school by 2020 poses a “risk and reward” dilemma for the Government. The reward is that SA's students will finally have a 6 year specialised secondary education experience (as is the case in all other Australian states and territories), and that the Year 7- 9 program in our schools will be reinvigorated by a renewed focus on specialised junior secondary education “best practice”. The risk is that this constitutes a significant change to the traditional transition point for students moving from primary education to secondary education. The SASPA Board affirms the importance of a detailed feasibility study being undertaken to address and minimise those risks. (This is consistent with the advice we have received from Queensland and Western Australia.)
- The SASPA Board sees an important opportunity to emerge from any decision by Government to have Year 7 students move into specialised secondary programs by 2020; that is, providing the Department for Education and Child Development with the time to develop a strategic overview of 21st C secondary learning in SA (consistent with having 6 years of secondary schooling, compared with the current 5 years). The SASPA Board sees such an overview as a fundamental and essential element in achieving improved secondary learning outcomes across the State.