



## **15 is too young to stop learning**

The Men's Advisory Network (MAN) is the peak body for service providers, organisations and individuals concerned with men's health, wellbeing and other issues affecting males of all ages in Western Australia. It receives financial support from the Department of Health.

The primary role that MAN plays is resourcing the sector through supporting service providers, organisations and professionals from various disciplines, who work with males of all ages. In addition, MAN provides information to individuals about appropriate services and professionals, plus provides general community education and raises awareness of the issues affecting males of all ages.

MAN is aware that boys generally are not performing as well as girls on a range of educational achievement measures, and on a range of broader social indicators as well. Boys are also less likely to finish school or attend higher education, are more likely to be excluded from school and have higher rates of suicide and motor vehicle accidents than girls.

This submission focuses on the needs of boys and adolescent males and is a response to some of the questions posed in the consultation.

It was disturbing to note that none of the analyses contained in the discussion paper looked at gender differences, given that boys are not performing as well as girls at school.

### **What do you think about the proposal to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16? What about 15 to 17?**

MAN supports the proposal to increase the school leaving age to 17 for the same reasons that were outlined in the background paper.

### **Do you support the proposal that young people who are in full-time or part-time employment or training be exempt from these changes?**

Young people should only be exempted if their employment also includes a recognised training component, such as a traineeship, that has a career-based outcome. Simply having a job should not be grounds for an exemption.

**What do you think we should do differently to encourage those young people who would typically leave school, to stay?**

The reasons for the school retention rate for boys being lower than for girls need to be examined. Some of the contributing factors are:

- Lack of relevance of the school curriculum to the interests of some boys, particularly those who are seen as under-achievers in the school system
- A perceived lack of relevance of the school curriculum to success in the various aspects of life after school
- Inappropriate teaching methods, in both primary and secondary schools, to the learning styles of boys, which are different to those of girls

Therefore, the following strategies should be adopted:

- Analyse all data for gender differences and develop strategies that take such differences into account.
- The curriculum needs to be appropriate to meet the needs, interests and learning styles of adolescent males
- The curriculum needs to cover appropriate education, training, employment and life skills for adolescent males
- The findings and recommendations of the House of Representatives enquiry into boy's education should be taken into account in re-designing secondary schooling
- The Federal Government's "Lighthouse Schools" boy's education initiative should be monitored. The Western Australian schools in which the program is operating are:
  - Margaret River Senior High School
  - Melville Senior High School
  - Merredin Senior High School
  - Moerlina School
  - Tom Price Senior High School

**What further assistance is needed by young people in considering their options for the future, including their career?**

Career Counselling

The Curriculum Council should specify that in every high school, there is allocated time for all students, but particularly boys, to get career counselling by trained, decently paid, and principal supported career counsellors.

This needs to be much more than just giving out job market information and structured workplace learning monitoring.

Although this career counselling would also help girls, it is apparent that boys have a stronger need as they are still lagging in self-analysis, expression skills, and verbal development. Also, the male identity is still largely pegged to jobs/employment status.

### Mentoring and male role models

Strategies need to include the availability of mentors and male role models for boys who would benefit from having them. The ALP has outlined a policy titled “More male role models for boys” (copy attached). A number of the suggested strategies could be implemented in schools as well as in the community. One is the need for more male teachers in both primary and secondary schools.

### **What can we do to improve coordination between all relevant sectors - school, vocational education, tertiary providers and employers?**

Two successful models that should be considered in improving co-ordination between the various stakeholders are the agricultural high schools and the Kwinana Industries Education Partnership.

### **Further Information**

MAN would be pleased to provide further information on any of the issues raised in this submission. Through its membership, MAN draws on a wide representation of organisations and individuals.

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