

Rural and Remote Education Inquiry – NSW Public Hearing in Bourke NSW – 1 March 1999

<p>Chris Sidoti, Human Rights Commissioner</p>	<p>I am Chris Sidoti from the Human Rights Commission. Barbara Flick is also from the Commission and is a Co-Commissioner for this inquiry. Kate Temby on one side is looking after the taping and the logistics. Meredith Wilkie is the fourth person from the Commission, works in the Human Rights Policy Unit and is particularly involved in this inquiry.</p> <p>Perhaps I should outline a little bit first about where this proposal came from, why we are set up so formally for this morning, what we are doing and what we'll do for the rest of the day. Today actually is day one of the inquiry that we are commencing, the National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education. It comes from work we did last year in travelling around a significant number of regional cities, smaller towns and remote communities. Since the Commission was established at the end of 1986 it has undertaken a number of significant inquiries and smaller scale projects. We found that virtually without exception when doing any of this work there were particular dimensions of human rights issues that were different in the country than they were in the city. At the beginning of 1996, soon after I started as Human Rights Commissioner, we put out a small paper dealing with human rights in rural, regional and remote Australia. It was nothing fancy but achieved a response we found quite surprising. People from country areas wrote to us saying, "Yes, you are identifying our issues. We haven't previously seen that they were human rights issues". As a result of that feedback and other discussions, at the beginning of last year we commenced a process called <i>Bush Talks</i> which took us around the country listening to what people had to say. We held many meetings, really just trying to find out what were the human rights concerns for people in country areas. We went to round about thirty communities during the course of the year ranging, as I say, from large regional cities like Wagga Wagga through to small, remote communities like Papunya in the Northern Territory and many in between. We went to each state and territory, to a number of communities in each, listening more than anything else.</p> <p>We gave two undertakings in the beginning of the process. The first was that we would report back. I have been involved too often in consultations where the model that is used is the vacuum cleaner model where the people doing the consultation arrive somewhere, suck out all the information and are never seen or heard of again. Presumably they spill out the dust somewhere else in the country but we never really know. So we promised that we would actually report back. The two parts of honouring that commitment were firstly that we would write all of our meetings and make that immediately available as quickly as possible. Secondly, at the end of the first 12 months of this program we have produced a report which is called <i>Bush Talks</i>, a small document which doesn't say very much about what we think but a great deal of what people said to us.</p> <p>The second promise we made was that we would, at the end of 12 months, develop our work program around a number of areas of concern that were identified during the year. The major issues related to health, education and access to services generally. Questions about youth suicide were prominent wherever we went, as well as issues about access to water in some of the more remote communities. <i>Bush Talks</i> actually indicates the work that the Commission will be doing this year following up on the issues that were identified to us by people in country areas.</p> <p>One of those things is the inquiry that we are engaged in this morning, the National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education. Wherever we went the question about education surfaced as being one of the primary concerns of country people, related first and foremost and most basically to what future their kids have. Without access to good education, the capacity of children from country areas to compete in the job market becomes even more limited. Yet because country communities often feel that they have no future, the sense of hopelessness amongst the kids is very high and certainly they would say to us "Well why should we bother?" The rates of school retention at Year 12 are much lower in the country than they are in the city. In some country communities it is as low as one-sixth what it is in the city. Even the rate of retention in Year 10 is very</p>
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	<p>low in country areas. So there are questions about access to education, the quality of education, the things that education can lead to, what we are educating children for, that are very important for families and communities in country areas. Of course there is also the more general issue of whether inequality between city and country education is getting worse rather than better. A lot of emphasis is placed on the possibilities opened up by new technology, for example as being able to break down issues of distance, making the resources of information systems available to the people in the country for the first time. It wasn't possible in the past for country people, for example, to have top class libraries. Now through the Internet it may be possible to get access to the same kinds of information, but that depends upon being able to access the Internet. There are large numbers of rural communities that in fact can't access the new information technology, which has the capacity to put them further behind city kids than was otherwise the case.</p> <p>So these are the sorts of issues that have been raised with us. Questions about the adequacy of distance education for children of remote properties, about what parents with children with disabilities can do in smaller country towns where support resources aren't provided for local schools to enable the kids to attend, issues, of course, of Aboriginal education. No matter what social or economic criteria we use, we inevitably find that regional people are worse off than other people in Australia.</p> <p>We decided that we would use a national inquiry format for this work rather than simply a research project. The Commission has done many national inquiries over the years and this is simply the latest. It is not going to be a broad ranging inquiry in the sense we don't have the capacity to go to an enormously large number of country towns to take evidence, to listen to what people have to say. But we will be getting to as many places as we can, with the resources we have got, both of staff and of dollars. In those places we'll be doing a number of different things to collect the information that we need to know what's going on and to form our recommendations. We will in each place have something like what we are doing this morning, a more formal process, where individuals will be invited to come forward and to state what they see the situation in the town is, or more generally is, to have us ask questions, and to have it taped so that it goes on our record. We can then make use of it more easily in the preparation of the report and forming our recommendations.</p> <p>We'll also be having meetings with students where the local schools are prepared to assist us and here they have been extremely helpful to us. We have a meeting that is for adults, primarily targeted but not exclusively towards parents: a meeting that will be much more informal, where people can have their say in a discussion group. Finally we are inviting people generally to either drop us a line or ring up to let us know what is on their minds, what views they want us to take into account. We know that we can't talk to everybody face to face, even in the communities that we can get to, and we can only get to a minority of communities nationally. So being open to letters and phone calls, tapes, if someone wants to send us a tape, or e-mail if they have got Internet. Any ways of contributing are very welcome.</p> <p>So this morning we are beginning. As I mentioned it's to the formal style of process this morning, where we will be inviting people who want to come forward and to give us their views and answer a few questions so that we can get a better appreciation of what's going on here in Bourke. There will be more informal processes later in the day.</p> <p>That's all I want to say by way of introduction, are there any things that I can clarify for anyone first?</p>
Participant	Chris, you said that this is the start of the inquiry. How many rural communities in New South Wales will you be visiting?
Chris Sidoti	In NSW we are doing four this week, here, Brewarrina, Walgett and Moree. Where we get after that is open, up in the air. We will try to do a sample in as many states and territories as we can. We head off next across Northern Australia, through the Top End of the Northern Territory and the top of Western Australia. Whether we will get back to other communities in New South Wales, I don't know at this stage.

<p>Barbara Flick, Director, Indigenous Social Justice Unit, HREOC, and NSW Co-Commissioner, National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education</p>	<p>I want to just tell you who I am. I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of Bourke. I belong to the Yawallyi nation. My grandmother was born on Angledool mission and I lived with my grandmother for a while in Brewarrina. I did my schooling in Collarenebri and did correspondence through Blackfriars. In those days Aboriginal education taught in schools was about somebody in central Australia. The way that we developed our identity and our understanding of place and responsibility was through our families. I grew up on the riverbank at Collarenebri in a tin shack that my father built, with two brothers and two sisters. I belong to the Walford and Fernando clans. I've worked in western New South Wales for many years, central Australia, the Kimberley and the Top End and I've spent the last three years in Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait before coming to the Commission. That's my background.</p>
<p>Paul Loxley, Principal, Bourke Public School</p> <p>[Literacy and numeracy]</p> <p>[Attendance]</p> <p>[ASSPA]</p> <p>[Technology]</p>	<p>Background is an important thing. Firstly, I've only ever taught in schools that have had a significant enrolment of Aboriginal kids and I could never work out when I was not the boss why things took place. That only Aboriginal kids were in IM classes and different other inequities that were actually within the system. Each time I came up with the question as to why this was so I felt frustrated. So, in an attempt to try and satisfy my own educational agenda, Bourke Primary School came up for advertisement in 1991 the first time and I didn't apply. At the end of 1991 it came up again and I did. I think under the premise that if you're looking for a big opportunity you have to find a big problem. I'd much rather not say anything more than that. It was sad that the circumstances had to be that way so that we can actually start to rebuild. Since 1992 I think that we have been fortunate enough to work along and I think I just want to say what it is now. I am very proud of Bourke Public School. I am lucky enough to work with a dedicated band of teachers who would be definitely the best staff in New South Wales, without a doubt. We set an agenda of rules and we all play by them. I think that's one of the most positive features of the school: there are no two sets of rules. The kids come first. Bourke Public School 1999 attempts to be a child-centred community school. I think it is important that what we do at school is important to the people who are responsible for the kids. This involves a need-based literacy and numeracy program, where children can work at their own developmental stage. We were fortunate enough to kick on the literacy push two years before it became a departmental agenda and it has evolved to meet the needs of our kids. One of the indicators, although I wouldn't have used it in the first place, was that last year our Year 5 Aboriginal kids were less than 1% under all our kids in literacy in BST [Basic Skills Test]. I think there are few schools that are big schools, P-2s and P-3s, that can make that claim.</p> <p>We have a current attendance rate of 92%. I think the fundamental rule is that that every child should be able to do the work. When they go home and mum and dad or nan says to them "What sort of a day did you have today, what did you learn?", those kids should be able to actually tell their parents that they have learnt something.</p> <p>Our school is supported by Country Area Program, the DSP [Disadvantaged Schools Program] and a very supportive Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness [ASSPA] committee. We would not be able to do some of the things we do at our school unless we had the support of our ASSPA Committee and I would like to publicly acknowledge that. We have an integrated School of Distance Education [DE] with approximately 30 kids and four staff. Individualised programs support each student enrolled on DE.</p> <p>The use of technology in an attempt to overcome isolation in both the mainstream and Distance Education has been our highest priority. With support from the current departmental priorities in relation to computer rollouts and assistance from Country On-line, there may be other schools that have the computer technology that we have but there wouldn't be too many that have better facilities. We have across this school eight separate Internet sites and we have a train full of computers so that each child has their own machine. We have information terminals in the library, scanning facilities and digital camera facilities. We have just established a global classroom approved as a pilot scheme where a group of 30 kids will actually work with a facilitator not a teacher. The facilitator will actually work with them on what they would like to learn, how they will learn it, how they will present it, what outcomes they will be chasing while they are doing it. To support that we have just spent \$40,000 on the latest Mac laptops so that the kids have access to them and can take them home and I think the technology will be</p>

<p>[Discipline]</p> <p>[Community relations]</p> <p>[Extra curricular activities]</p> <p>[Employment]</p> <p>[Disability]</p>	<p>fundamental to whether that program succeeds. I think one of the best things for me personally is the money that we can attract through our various equity programs with our global funding we are able to be innovative in a way that some of the schools closer to the coast are not. So there are definitely real benefits in being to a school like Bourke Public School.</p> <p>I think it is also important to work out why you go each day. Back in 1993 we undertook a process to find out what we are on about on a daily basis. The main thing that we do are our core beliefs and a few of them are that all kids can succeed, that all work should be directly correlated to each child's learning stage. One of the things I found when I first came was that kids were not cooperative in classes and different other things. I don't jump up and down about many things but I have an expectation that every child can do the work put in front of them. I think that once we got to that point 90% of our behaviour problems walked out of the door. We do work with a small percentage of kids that do take up a lot of time but they certainly don't detract from what's happening in the classroom.</p> <p>All kids and teachers have a right to feel happy and safe at school. All teachers and children should endeavour to keep the negotiated school rules. The rules that the kids have in their classroom are their rules; they are not imposed organisational rules. The kids actually make them up; they are their rules. They're common sense practical rules; they are not just put there for the sake of attempting to stifle or stop a child from doing anything. It's always good to be able to talk to a child and say look that was your rule and that way you can talk back through it and make sure there is appropriate consequences of behaviour that the kids have shown.</p> <p>Another very important thing is that members of the school community should have the opportunity to have input in the decision making processes of the school. I can't remember the last irate parent I had. I said to Chris and Barbara earlier that if I get a phone call from a parent it is the most important thing I do that day. I used to get comments when I first came here like "I am coming to punch your head in" and I am going to do this, and I am going to do that. Now I get a phone call that says "This happened on Friday, can you find out what happened and get back to me." I think in relation to credibility in the community it's the most important job and one of my most important roles and responsibilities on a daily basis.</p> <p>And the other thing that we actually push with the kids is the access to school-based extra-curricular activities. They are a privilege, not a right. I think the kids have got to work otherwise you'll have two sets of rules. Once the kids can get in that mode to think that they are privileges instead of rights, it is a much better way to work. All members of the school community should be part of the process that defines where the school is going and how we are going to get there.</p> <p>I think also you have got to look at work and at our background. It is very hard and frustrating when you have got 50% Aboriginal kids and you try to tell members of the Aboriginal community that education is important. The first thing that a few of them have said to me is: "Why, Paul, why is it important? I haven't had a job, you know, we have three generations of people [who haven't]."</p> <p>Here I'd like to acknowledge Bourke High and the work of the Joint School Council through Michael Chapman since he has been Principal of Bourke High. We have a Joint School Council which runs K-12, and involves the TAFE and the preschool. What we are attempting to do is to meet the needs of the kids who don't want to leave town. We had a meeting in July last year with 50 local employers in town and we have actually asked them for some placements. Michael will talk about that. We have got to look at where our kids are going to go from Bourke Public School. Given the change in technology we need to think about what is going to happen for kids that are in kindergarten now and what life skills they'll need and what they'll have to be able to do.</p> <p>The kids have got to be effective life long learners. They have got to be responsible and caring citizens and full participants in the decision making processes within the school. We have some wonderful kids with disabilities in our school and apart from the fact that you will see a wheelchair, that is the about the only thing that would be different. The</p>
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<p>[Resources]</p> <p>[Staffing]</p> <p>[Attendance]</p>	<p>other kids support them by helping them around the school and we attempt to meet the needs of those kids as much as we do for any other child.</p> <p>I think resource-wise there might be a school as well resourced as Bourke Public School somewhere in the state but I don't think there would be a better one. We have our own bus, which we bought. In this bus we would have best literacy set up to support our literacy delivery which is based on Reading Recovery. All the teachers are skilled up in the processes and structures of Reading Recovery and what is taught is needs-based. Our numeracy program is the same.</p> <p>I think the most important thing in a good school are caring teachers. Even though I can quote you the statistic that this year I have not got one teacher that has been teaching longer than three years, what they give the kids and what they give the community because of their flexibility is fantastic. They are not allowed to teach what they want to teach. We have actually cyclic programming and we change that all the time. What they'll actually teach is given to them because we found it was too much hit and miss with the high turnover of staff. How they teach is totally up to them and that accountability is my responsibility through the management team. We have come a long way in seven years, but we have a long way to go. When someone new comes in it's my role and responsibility to, not indoctrinate them, but tell them where we have come from, tell them how we've got there and where we would like to go.</p> <p>There was a book out in 1992 "Creating an Excellent School". I can't remember who wrote it, and I personally feel that's what we have been lucky enough to create here. This is because of the kids and their input and the excellent teaching staff as well as the support we've had from District Office particularly our District Superintendent and the staff of District Office.</p> <p>I think one of the best initiatives to come out of Bourke this year was Street Beat which addressed the perception that there were all these kids on the streets of Bourke. We have actually identified, I think, that I had four and Michael [high school principal] had five, and we looked at a few other anomalies. We broke a few myths. I would like to think that our parents see the school as user friendly and that we are doing the job that they would like us to do. I won't hold you any longer.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Thanks Paul. There are lots of things that you can tell us a bit more about if you don't mind. Disability support within the school: could you tell us what external support resources you get to provide support for kids with disabilities and whether there are special programs in the school?</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p> <p>[Disability]</p>	<p>We get above entitlement. We get a Teacher's Aide Special full-time and we get a .2 component. We are very fortunate to be supported by homecare. We are fortunate enough to have an arrangement where independent people support our kids in school. What we try to do is put the people on the ground in an effective way, so that the physical needs of the kids are met. We are again fortunate enough that the Department has supplied wonderful facilities in relation to the toilets for the kids and changerooms and what is actually in the room where they exercise. Again I am very fortunate to have a group of people that will cross the boundaries and say even though Penny is our Teacher's Aide we also have other people who will come and help when the kids need help and I think that is the case.</p> <p>This year, J has gone to high school and the current funding component means that even though J has gone to high school we didn't lose any support, so that was good. We don't have enough funding to cover the kids from 9am to 3pm but there is only a select amount of bucket and I think district committee's rather fair in how they divvy that out. We've always been looked after. I think you have to do a bit of creative thinking to meet the needs of the kids. The kids spend a fair bit of their time with other kids, which is also good for them. The allocation for 1999 is workable.</p>
<p>Barbara Flick</p>	<p>Paul if you had your way what else would you, what are the resources you would like for the school, or is there nothing?</p>

<p>Paul Loxley</p> <p>[Casual teaching staff]</p>	<p>Barbara resource-wise, nothing. We have got all the things we need. I have got a great staff, a committed staff; I've got resources. I would like some casuals and I think that the system has tried to do and provide them. Julie [Julie Nourse, the District Superintendent] has even got to the point of actually giving us mobiles and things like that. The Department has really tried hard to overcome the problems, but we continually find ourselves for some reason or another without casuals. When people are sick they should be able to have a day off, and my credibility with the staff is the most important thing that I need to maintain, so if someone is crook they should be able to have the day off.</p> <p>It is a hard one; it is not an easy one. It is not as simplistic as the front page of the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> last Wednesday and there are a lot of issues about that and middle management and it is a multi-gambit thing, but that would be the only thing that I would request.</p>
<p>Barbara Flick</p>	<p>What is the hardest thing at the school whether it is social or structural, that you have to deal with?</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p> <p>[Community relations]</p>	<p>I think the most important thing we do on a daily basis is to make sure no kid misses out because of their background and that involves things like taking kids down the street on pay day to make sure they don't miss out on some money. It involves - it doesn't matter who they are - if they forget their swimmers they can ring up; if they haven't got the phone on, we take them home. No child should suffer in any way because of the factors that they aren't in control of. Sometimes that gets a little bit demoralising, but on the other side it can be uplifting, that kids are quite happy to walk into your room and say "Will you take me home to get some swimmers". So you know you are doing something right if the kid will walk into your room and say look I forgot my swimmers. And I get a big kick out of that personally plus I think people in the community see that you or someone else in the school cares enough about that individual child to actually go and get the swimmers. It is the caring that is the difference.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Can you tell us more about this Street Beat?</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p> <p>[Attendance]</p>	<p>We were continually being told about all the kids that walk the streets of Bourke and I knew that some of them were mine. I openly said that there were four kids that were mine. We have put a lot of time into them for one reason or another and they are all back at school now. There's two at the high school and they are all back.</p> <p>People were saying, "When are you going to get these kids off the street?" A couple of years ago when Murray Jones was the Principal of Bourke High School we used to go on a bus run every day around town and see if there were kids who had missed the bus or for some reason weren't there, which worked well. Last year when this problem existed, we were all getting the blame for all these kids being on the street. We kept saying they are not our kids, but no one would believe us. So I had a meeting with Julie [Nourse] and with Alan Varley the General Manager of the Shire. Julie gave permission for this to happen, so the District Office Support Team would come up to allow Kevin and Victor [Aboriginal Education Workers] to actually stay on the streets for two weeks and identify on a daily basis those kids walking the street. I think the finding was that a lot of the kids were not from our town. I had four, Michael had five and I think there were a few others. So there were 13 kids who actually lived in Bourke who for one reason or another weren't at school over this two-week period. The reason that we had a lot of other kids on the street was that kids that were coming in for funerals and for other reasons. We also had kids who were over 15 and had left school. A lot of people look at kids in a group and think they should be at school. In fact they are of legal age to leave school or have left school.</p>

<p>Michael Chapman, Principal, Bourke High School</p> <p>[Attendance]</p> <p>[Mobility program]</p>	<p>There were kids who would come up for the holiday period and that would then drag other kids out of school to be with their relatives. This happens to everyone; when their relatives came these kids would stay out of school. Some of these kids would stay for two or three weeks, which would cause a lot of problems with some other absentees. Some of these kids would come up here aged close to 15 and not enrol in the school. But they were very obvious around the street.</p> <p>There is also a mobility project, which we're trialing at the moment, which is a way of passing information on when kids leave the area. If a kid leaves Bourke and you think they're going to Mt Druitt, Orange, Newcastle or Dubbo, we have a form we fill in and pass on. But not just to notify that the kid is going there. It has information on the kid's literacy and numeracy and a whole range of things like that. So when the kid gets there not only do the home school liaison people have a look for them if they aren't in school, but they've got this information so that we are cutting down the impact of the movement of kids. As someone who went through seven schools during my education I know the impact of moving frequently. You're always behind the eight ball, especially if you're crossing state systems or overseas as I did. I can see a great deal of benefit from that.</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p>	<p>There is a contact number on that sheet. It is basically a child at a glance, a contact number for the person who knows our kids the best. What we have all agreed is that when the kid walks in for enrolment today, we give them all the information and fill in the form. Then we ask them to come back tomorrow, so that we can make that call to find out about the kid, so the kid isn't in a limbo for the day. Then we can meet their literacy and numeracy needs or make sure they are placed in the right place. If they have any special needs they can also be met. It should work really well.</p>
<p>Allyson Adderley, Student Welfare Consultant, Dubbo District Education Office</p> <p>[Attendance]</p>	<p>When we kicked off Street Beat I thought it was really good because it wasn't saying that it's education's problem or health's problem, it was actually the community that drove it. Alan Varley was the convenor and all the departments came to the party. I think the council was the pivot and I think that was the key because it was a link into all levels of the community. We had great feedback from shop-keepers, just general people coming up to us and say hey what are you doing, this sounds great, good support for the kids. The place was really buzzing, wasn't it Paul? It wasn't a negative thing. It was really a very positive thing and everybody was really keen. I think the shopkeepers were really happy for us to assist. Some of the kids were very up-front, very honest, and they didn't mind going back to school. It was fine for them to walk home to get their stuff and get back to school. The police were really good with us also in assisting and they actually had the same brief we did for that two-week period.</p> <p>The long-term trends coming out of Street Beat – we are still collecting information daily and weekly – are that there has been a marked drop in the kids, the visible kids on the street, a marked drop.</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p>	<p>Crime dropped by an incredible rate and break-ins.</p>
<p>Allyson Adderley</p>	<p>The month before Street Beat there were 26 juvenile related break-ins, between the hours of nine and three. This dropped to four in the next month.</p> <p>Our stats basically go on kids on the street. We tracked where they all go and that's also changed too. They've moved to different parts of Bourke. With Victor and Kevin's help we're actually supporting those kids to go back to school as well.</p>
<p>Paul Loxley</p>	<p>The other spin-off from the police's involvement in a proactive way is that now they are supporting us. A kid may be in town and we are trying to locate them and we have heard from mobility project that this child might be on their way. It is good, sharing positive things and I think that the other thing is too that the police realised that they had powers we did not have. The other issue was that the people in the community want the old truant officer back – we explained that under Education Reform Act of 1990 none of us had any powers. The only ones who had any powers were the police. What's good now is that most of our kids are back at school. I don't think this year I have got one kid that is a chronic truant.</p> <p>Some days when kids might want a ride back the police will pick them up and drop them off, and we will make sure that they've got a feed. If they are in the right frame of mind</p>

	and they are okay, we keep them, but usually they take the kid home and ask the parent if they want the child at school, and if they say yes, the kid comes back to school. It's a long way between the other end of town and school. On a nice summer's day when the river looks pretty inviting sometimes it gets the vote.
Barbara Flick	Paul, two things that interest me. I know that the New South Wales Education Department has an Aboriginal Education Curriculum. I'd like you to talk about that and how that is implemented locally. And the other thing is does the school teach any local history about early explorers, pastoral industry, about the interrelationship between the pastoral industry and the Indigenous people?
Paul Loxley [Aboriginal education]	<p>To answer the first question, before I came to Bourke, Bourke Public School was recognised as a centre of excellence for Aboriginal education. At the time when I came there was a three-page policy in relation to how that was done, and when I arrived it wasn't being practised in the classrooms. What happened then was that we started to re-build, to turn it upside down and rebuild it, and that's what we virtually did. When the new Aboriginal Education Policy was being talked about and formalised we actually had a bit of an input in relation to that. At the moment we use that document across the board because when it came out it was basically saying what we are doing anyway, we are recognising kids' backgrounds and the issues that surround that, as well as that we are all Australians. If there has ever been any issue in relation to the historical context of anything that has ever been brought up the truth is told, what happened is told, without being judgemental in any way.</p> <p>The main thing we try to do with any kid is make sure we look after their self-esteem. But with our Aboriginal kids we have always attempted to let kids know that it is great to be a Koori kid. We push the history and the civilisation and the Dreamtime and all aspects of the civilisation of the Aboriginal culture to the kid. We promote the positive benefits of the extended family, that it's really nice to be a blackfella.</p> <p>It was interesting that when I first arrived before I even started I flew the Aboriginal flag and I got a guy to put it in before school started in 1992. I only had one person who asked me why I put the flag up. I said all it does is to tell people there are Aboriginal kids in the school. I think that all we have attempted to do is to meet the needs of individual kids acknowledging and accepting their cultural background, and that we're all Aussies at the end of the day.</p> <p>To answer your second question, I couldn't tell you Barb, because what is really hard in Bourke is we are lucky enough to have our language program called Yandruwandha but it wasn't the local language that was spoken here.</p>
Barbara Flick	Is the tourist industry promoting the history of Bourke as a steam boat place and its meaning to everybody out here?
Paul Loxley	It is interesting you mentioned that. I'll put my Council hat on. The Bourke community is attempting to build a project called "Back o' Bourke" and it is the story of the river for the last 500 years acknowledging Aboriginal prior settlement, the story about Aboriginal people, the first settlers, the literary history, the whole gambit, something to perhaps outdo Longreach. That's something that members of the community are working at and establishing. I think that we are lucky in Bourke in relation to some of the programs that are being run. There was an attempt to start an alternate program for those kids that have missed out on education last year through TAFE. Then we have got 2CUS radio which is run by Greg and a few of the guys down at Mitchell Street. I mention the radio because I think people listen to the radio as they travel the long miles up. I think there have been some attempts to do a lot of things, and from where I sit I don't think there are too many people in this town that have a lot of problems with that. I think that by building "Back o' Bourke" we'll acknowledge what's been happening here for 500 years.
Chris Sidoti	Can you tell us a bit about the food programs you mentioned?
Paul Loxley [Breakfast program]	One of the excellent things that our Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committee [ASSPA] provides is breakfast. The teachers take it in turns, once a term, in pairs, to have breakfast. Breakfast is a proper sit down meal where the kids come in and they have juice or milk. Doesn't matter, Aboriginal non-Aboriginal, anyone who wants a feed can come and have a feed. It's done with the kids taking it in turns to prepare it, to help eat it and then clean up. On top of that we are lucky enough to have two very good Aboriginal Educational Assistants, Margaret Gilby and Margo Grimes, who if kids need a lunch they go to. That lunch and recess is made for them and dropped into the cycle as

	<p>if the kids have bought it from the canteen so that the kids don't miss out on anything.</p> <p>So it's an issue that we work on all the time. We try and get families to accept the responsibility of feeding the kids, but that doesn't always happen and no child should miss out. If the child obviously needs sleep the main priority of the day is sleep, then education, because mostly they only just take a classroom apart. Again we are only able to do that because of the excellent ASSPA committee and the way they perceive those funds should be spent.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Who makes up the ASSPA Committee?
Paul Loxley	Well, at the moment, we just have a meeting at school and the interested people and teachers come in. Danny Fernando is the current Chairperson of that and we try and get as many parents that we can get to come in. Sometimes we get heaps, (not very often) sometimes we get a few.
Chris Sidoti	Come up Michael. Thank you very much for joining us.
Michael Chapman, Principal, Bourke High School	<p>I haven't got anywhere near the length of service in Bourke that Paul has. I only came here last year. So I can really only talk with a great deal of authority about what's happened last year and this year and where we are hoping to go. A bit of personal background. Most of my high school years and my teenage years I grew up in the centre of Sydney, living in Redfern and Surry Hills. So I am basically a city boy who has gradually been moving out. I don't know if I can get much further out of this. I have been Principal at a couple of central schools before I came here.</p>
[Retention]	<p>Basically what I will do is give you a snapshot of Bourke High School at the moment and then try to fill any gaps or answer any questions you might have. The school at the moment has got approximately 51% Aboriginal students. We have got 175 kids at the school. We do have a leakage of kids that you talked about. Our retention rate from Year 7 through to Year 12 is only running at 36%. There are a number of reasons for that. We have a leakage of students at Year 8 and Year 10 who go away to school in larger centres, for a variety of reasons. Some people claim that it's educational standards but I can give you some figures that will soon blow that one out of the water.</p>
[Vocational education]	<p>So that causes a big disruption. We do have a big problem. A lot of kids when they reach 15 years of age, they drop out of school. As Paul mentioned we try to work on a slightly different approach with some of those kids through the Joint School Council. We've incorporated a fairly large vocational educational program in our curriculum. It starts off with kids 15 years of age or just under 15 years of age, who re students at risk of leaving school.</p> <p>They actually go on a program of work placement for a couple of days. Actually Maxine (the Director of the preschool) has had people in the past and has got some at the moment. Those kids go out and work on a program where they are getting work skills and life skills. They come back to school and the curriculum that they study at school is driven by the needs of that so that their literacy and their numeracy is actually work-based literacy and work-based numeracy. So hopefully we can give them the skills to go on and do something when they leave.</p>
[TAFE]	<p>With other kids the program goes through right to Years 11 and 12 with courses that are credited up to HSC and university entrance standard with some vocational education.</p> <p>We have got a very large component of Joint Secondary Schools TAFE courses running. As Garry Brown can probably tell you, it's largely due to his efforts that we have got a lot of them. We take 16% of the entire district budget for our Joint Secondary Schools TAFE. We have only got a very small number of kids in the school but we take a huge amount of that bucket. It is one way these kids can get skills which they are interested in, they can do. They are not things that we can do at the school and it is giving them a far broader education, a more relevant education.</p> <p>What I've tried to do in the time that I have been here is to acknowledge the fact that okay typically high schools are very structured places. They provide a fairly narrow education. We need to provide that narrow academic based education for our kids and we have a group of kids who want to go through tertiary education, into university, and we need to provide that. We've also attempted to broaden that out so that we are</p>

<p>[Curriculum]</p>	<p>covering the needs of all the kids. A lot of kids drop out of high school because the courses they are doing are not relevant. Part of my job as I see it is to make the courses in the school relevant so that the kids can stay there and get something meaningful out of it. As I said, we have only got a very small number of kids in the school, but we teach – I have exact figures here – we have got 23 courses that we teach in Years 7 to 10. That includes a couple of different levels of maths and things but that is a fairly broad offering.</p> <p>In Year 11 and Year 12 we are talking about working with a group here of about 31 students in Year 11 and Year 12 combined this year. We're offering those students 14 courses within the school, which is a broad enough range to allow those kids a full range of academic subjects. There was no kid in school in Year 11 who did not get a subject they wanted this year. There was one last year, and thanks to Dubbo Distance Ed that student is able to do that subject and is performing very well in it. So we have got a broad curriculum covering both of those areas.</p>
<p>[Year 12 results]</p>	<p>As far as the success rate of our students goes, and this is something I am very, very proud of, in 1996 and again in 1998 this school, Bourke High School, had two students in the top 10% of the State as far as their tertiary entrance rate for the University Admission Index went. In 1996, 1997 and 1998 all the students who finished Year 12 of this school who wanted to go to university got an offer of a place in the course that they were after. So the people who say that kids go away from this school because they can't get a successful education is a load of rot.</p>
<p>[Literacy]</p>	<p>As far as meeting the needs of all our kids, like the Public School, we have a very, very strong literacy need. We have a literacy program in the school. It is just something that we can't get away from in this community. We have daily lessons in literacy from Year 7 to Year 12. We start off the day at school with every kid in the school from Year 7 through to Year 12 taking part in a literacy program. We have Year 7 and Year 8 withdrawal classes and in-school support. In Year 9 and Year 10 we have work-based literacy and work-based numeracy. In Year 7 and 8 and we work on the premise that we need to get the kids as early as possible to work on their specific needs. So we have an extra three 50-minute periods a week in Year 7 and Year 8 on literacy.</p> <p>Computer literacy is an area we concentrate on right across the board. With our Year 11 and Year 12 students our literacy focus has a lot to do with essay writing, exam skills and that type of thing. So we try to target the needs of the kids at different levels. At the moment, actually tomorrow, the students do the Year 7 English literacy and language tests. The school has been targeted as a marking school for that. What's particularly good about that is that it's not just the high school teachers who are going to be involved in that marking. There's going to be teachers from Brewarrina Central School and from Bourke Public School, which is going to give a lot more unified focus on that. So we are getting information and we are talking to each other about these things all the time.</p> <p>Yes we teach the Yandruwandha language as a language elective in Year 7 and Year 8. With our vocational education we have formed some very strong links with the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in Bourke, with the Shire Council, with the Cotton Growers Association and with the Job Placement Education and Training (JPET), which is a division of Centacare. We have formed strong links with all of those groups to try to assist us with where we are going with our kids and what we are going to do with them.</p>
<p>[Tertiary education]</p>	<p>We are taking our Year 11 and Year 12 students, and again we combined with Brewarrina Central School for this, on a two-week tour of universities and TAFEs around the State. You've probably heard the term the levy-bank syndrome. A lot of the kids from this community will not move outside or are very unfamiliar with what is outside the community. So we have booked UNE, Charles Sturt University (CSU) Bathurst, Dubbo TAFE, CSU Wagga and CSU again in Dubbo and Newcastle Uni which are the traditional tertiary destinations for our kids. They are going on a two week tour of those. At each of the places the kids will be staying on campus, they will be introduced to people from similar backgrounds who are students. We've asked universities to hold people back to talk to them because it is university vacation period. Each of the universities we are going to where there is an Aboriginal Services Unit is going to have</p>

<p>[Information technology]</p>	<p>people there to talk to the kids. A number of kids we are sending are Aboriginal.</p> <p>What we are trying to do is to get the kids out, show them what's there and acquaint them with the support services before they get there, because a lot of the kids get there, reach crisis and don't know who to turn to. If we can acquaint them with that before they get there then it's going to stop a lot of the drift back before the kids complete their courses.</p> <p>The Joint Schools Council that Paul mentioned I think has been a great initiative. It has brought together virtually everyone involved in education in Bourke: Maxine from the pre-school, there are people from the TAFE, and the principal of St Ignatius has been to some of the meetings. Our stated aim is for every kid who leaves school in Bourke to go to some sort of work placement or specific training that they're interested in.</p> <p>It's a fairly steep call. I don't know that we are going to achieve it every year, but we do have employers on side. The Cotton Growers Association has actually got five of our students working there. They took some of our kids who were going to university this year over the holidays to give them work so that they had money to take away with them. There is some support and things developing there which I am really proud of.</p> <p>Reduction in truancy has been fairly marked in the place. We are probably about 15% lower with our truancy rate this year that we were at the beginning of last year.</p> <p>As far as computers and computer usage go at the school, the school is fully networked. We have a couple of file servers through the place; we have a full range of scanning services and those sorts of things. We have had a bit of trouble with our Internet, but that's not the school's fault; that has been Telstra's fault: lines dropping out and that sort of thing. We are just about to go onto the Country On-Line program which is going to give us additional file server capability mixed through to the ISDN lines and a great deal of speed with that.</p>
<p>[Teacher experience]</p>	<p>Hopefully we are going to have a link between Bourke, Cobar, Nyngan, Narromine and Gilgandra High Schools, and Warren and Dunedoo Central Schools – the idea of this being because we are all small schools, we have fairly small cohorts in some subjects. We'll be able to pool those so we get a much larger group of students to work with. It will further enhance the spread of our curriculum and it will enhance our teacher expertise.</p> <p>The teachers that I have at Bourke High School – very, very similar to the Public School – are nearly all in their first years of service. The members of my executive are all in the first years of their service. The amount of time and effort those people put into the work they do with the kids at school is fantastic. If you drive past the school carpark on any Saturday or Sunday, you see at least half a dozen cars there with people working. They come in at weekends and they work in here after school. The age of the young teachers we have got is great because it gives the students of the school really relevant role models.</p>
<p>[Nutrition]</p>	<p>The thing is, a lot of these people are very early in their teaching service and are teaching HSC examination courses. We have to support those people to do that. There are a couple of district initiatives that are doing that too. If we can do that directly ourselves in the school, it's going to be lot more beneficial.</p>
<p>[ASSPA]</p>	<p>We have nutrition programs and things like that that we run for the kids. We do take the kids home. We acknowledge it's a fact of live living in Bourke that on Tuesday and Wednesday a number of kids have to leave school at recess and access their money, to get their money, which is fine. That is just an accepted part of life in a community. We run along with that.</p>
<p>[ASSPA]</p>	<p>The ASSPA Committee a number of years ago fitted out our Aboriginal Resource Room with some bunks and beds and things like that for the kids who do come in and need somewhere to sleep. We have kids who come in who for one reason or another haven't been home and need somewhere to sleep, so we provide it for them. If the immediate need of the kid is food, we provide that. If the immediate need of the kid is rest, we</p>

<p>[Disability]</p> <p>[Aboriginal staff]</p> <p>[Parent involvement]</p>	<p>provide that. Unless the kids have these things, education is not going to happen any way. If we can provide that safe welcoming place for them, the kids are likely to come back, so that's what we try and do.</p> <p>As far as the availability of education to children with disabilities, Indigenous children and children from diverse backgrounds, we have an IM class in progress which is for moderate intellectual disadvantage or disability. We have an ISIO class (Severe and Moderate Intellectual Disability) on our establishment that wasn't approved until the end of last year. It is coming, but it has not yet arrived, so the one student with a wheelchair that we have is still located at the public (primary) school, and that is not a satisfactory situation. It is purely and simply because the facility hasn't been built to the required standard to go into, and there are lots and lots of reasons for that. It was approved very late in the year, then there were the holidays and there was a change of personnel. For a whole range of reasons, it hasn't been in place. The wheelchair access and everything like that is in place. Hopefully, we will have the teacher and the personnel to get that class going very soon.</p> <p>The school employs a number of Aboriginal people as role models for our students. As an acknowledgment of the community we actually employ two Teacher Aides out of our own funds to provide role models for people to work in class.</p> <p>The biggest area of need that I have in the school is parent involvement and it is not just Bourke High School. In every high school I have been in there are parents who are really involved in the public school and the primary school situation. As soon as it gets to high school, they just drop off. Whether they are scared of the subjects or the depth of study or what, I don't know, but a lot of people drop off that support as soon as kids hit high school. That is the biggest area, I can see, that we have need for.</p> <p>Our ASSPA Committee is a small hardworking group and, again, the more parents we get in there the better. They do a great deal of work; they provide a great deal of help and guidance for us. The AECG [Aboriginal Education Consultative Group] who also have a place on the Joint School Council provides some advice for us also. So that's hopefully a snapshot of Bourke High School at the moment.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Thanks. If you can leave us the documents.</p>
<p>Barbara Flick</p>	<p>How realistic is it, what with all the students at the school, to equip them to work in the local community? Is it realistic that there's enough employment? Is there an opportunity to develop employment opportunities?</p>
<p>Michael Chapman</p>	<p>I don't know that we are ever going to satisfy every kid's need, no. I don't know that we could do that.</p>
<p>Barbara Flick</p>	<p>What percentage would you guess?</p>
<p>Michael Chapman</p> <p>[Post-school options]</p>	<p>On one year's experience I find that very hard. I do know that all of the Year 12 students who left have all gone into either some sort of training or work. Of the Year 10 students who have left, we haven't been anywhere near as successful with those kids. I think, of the Year 10 students, there's probably four or five who aren't. Whether they have got into TAFE I don't know yet because the TAFE enrolments only concluded last week and their program started last week. The idea is to get the employers on side, which we have got largely. An example of one of the programs I've been looking at with the Joint School Council is in viticulture in North Bourke. At the moment there are a lot of people who come in and do seasonal work who are transient people. We have a pool of people in town that we can train to be able to do that. There are three or four different skill areas in that and at the moment the employers have different teams of people who come in and do the different areas. There is a viticulture course that is coming out of Murrumbidgee which is being trialed at Cowra High School, which I am hoping we can adapt ourselves. It has modules with the leaf canopy which is the pruning, the tending of the fruit, the harvesting and the work on it in the period when there are no leaves.</p> <p>So there are four different sections there. If we can train kids to have those four sets of skills, they won't have a full time job that goes over 365 days in the year but they will have a job that goes over about 215 days a year. People won't have to come in from outside and takes resources out of the town and take the money and things out of the town. So if could get those sorts of programs going then I think that our target becomes a lot more realistic.</p>

Barbara Flick	What about housing construction?
Michael Chapman	Yeah, there is a CDEP who have got a program going there. They have actually divided into teams and they just hired two weeks ago a guy with a Master Builder's licence and they are setting up a team which is going to start off doing repairs and renovations. There is another group operating which does house building as well. I know that one at CDEP because we have actually got students accessing that on our work placement program. So there are areas like that here. I think people see an opportunity with the maintenance of houses in particular that they can get into.
Barbara Flick	Can you give us some figures later, Paul, through the Shire about the number of people employed with Main Roads?
Paul Loxley	There is a lot of information down there if you let me know what you'd like.
Barbara Flick	What services in town have been cut? Have there been bank closures, or post office services that have been cut? Or is Bourke fairly intact?
Paul Loxley	We've lost one bank.
Roslyn Walsh	Westpac and State Colonial.
Barbara Flick	Is it fair to say that the Aboriginal organisations in town are the biggest employees of the Aboriginal people?
Michael Chapman	I'd say yes.
Barbara Flick	So what opportunities are there outside Aboriginal organisations for Aboriginal people being employed? Do they work on the Shire or in shops?
Michael Chapman	I know that the cotton growers are developing a program specifically targeting Aboriginal youth. Not for cotton chipping type jobs, but jobs with skills, so that the kids can actually develop in that job and get some sort of career path through it. That's what we've been looking for. When we are talking about kids going into jobs, we're looking at jobs that have a skill base to them. Now one of the cotton growers we talked with actually mentioned the cotton chipping and they said, well look, the team leader of the chipping team is actually quite a skilled job. It's coordinating 10 to 15 people. If they can get people locally that can do that then that is a skill base and then, because they want to keep them, they would find other work for them.
Barbara Flick	What do the non-Aboriginal kids do when they finish high school?
Michael Chapman	Much the same as a lot of the Aboriginal kids.
Barbara Flick	So a lot of them are unemployed?
Michael Chapman	A number are unemployed. Unfortunately more of the non-Aboriginal kids go through Year 12 and HSC and head off to uni and that sort of thing. That's one of the reasons why we are trying this uni tour which is being funded through the Country Areas Program, to try and show some of these kids that there are support services there. We have had a couple of Aboriginal people from Bourke, who have gone away and been successful at uni, come back and talk to the kids. For me to stand there and say to a kid that you can do this is nowhere near as successful as someone they know talking to them or going and seeing.
Barbara Flick	Do those kids come back? Those non-Aboriginal kids, who get away higher education, do they come back and give it to the community?
Michael Chapman	I don't think that it would be fair to say that, would it? Most of them will stay away. A lot of them it's because there's not the intellectual skills base in the employment.
Paul Loxley	The occasional ones come back teaching. It just depends on circumstances.
Michael Chapman	If they are doing something specific like agronomy or something like that where there is the employment, then yes okay they may well do. A lot of them will pick up a scholarship or something, but unless it is targeted in that way, no.
Barbara Flick	What percentage of the non-Aboriginal kids who go away for higher would come back?
Michael Chapman	Very small. I'm speaking very sketchily, but very small.
Chris Sidoti	Michael, you just mentioned retention rates to Year 12. What is the difference between retention for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal?

Michael Chapman [Retention]	Through to Year 12 the retention rate for Aboriginal students is probably 5%. Historically. We are little bit over this year, in Year 11 and Year 12 it would probably be about 15%. Very small.
Barbara Flick	What about young women? How many?
Michael Chapman	It's nearly all girls that go through.
Barbara Flick	Nearly all girls that go through?
Michael Chapman	We have got only one Aboriginal boy in Year 12. One in Year 11. Three Aboriginal girls in Year 12. Five in Year 11. So we are considerably up on our norm this year.
Chris Sidoti	What about non-Aboriginal kids?
Michael Chapman	About 36%.
Barbara Flick	What do those girls do? The non-Aboriginal girls who complete high school?
Michael Chapman	A lot of them, the ones from last year have all gone away to university. The ones in Year 12 this year are all intending to go away. There is one from last year who deferred university for one year. She will be going away.
Barbara Flick	What effect do you think this has on the town of Bourke that these children who have reached this high level of education go away and don't come back?
Michael Chapman	Huge, huge. There aren't the role models. The impact of a positive role model on a kid, you can't beat it, just can't.
Maxine Mackay	Particularly the males.
Michael Chapman	Yeah.
Barbara Flick	That's the saddest thing in the Aboriginal community is that lack of Aboriginal role models for kids. There's a lack of respect for females.
Michael Chapman [Role models]	You can see it in the Year 7 and Year 8 kids when they play, the incidental violence and pushing and shoving and things like that. It is quite amazing. We employ two Aboriginal males in the school as teacher's aides to provide in-class support and role models. We are also lucky enough to have Victor there as well. So the kids actually see black faces in the school doing something. Not just parents coming in and complaining because someone has been suspended or something like that. But again if these kids go away those role models are being drained out of the community and particularly the more achieving Aborigines.
Chris Sidoti	The only other one on the list is Steve Middleton, Executive Officer, NSW Sport and Recreation – Far West Academy of Sport.
Steve Middleton, Director, Far West Academy of Sport [Sport]	<p>Everyone seems to be giving a small background of themselves, so I'll do the same. I know fewer people in the room, so bear with me. I was a teacher in a school for nine years, a PE teacher in the Green Valley area. I then took over as Regional Sports Organiser for North Parramatta for the Metropolitan West Region. I served there for six years, then took up the post of Chief Executive Officer for NSW for Little Athletics, did that for three years and then back into the school system as Regional Sports Organiser, North Coast, based in Lismore. After three years there I took up the position of Executive Officer for the Far West Academy of Sport. I changed departments from Education to Sport and Rec.</p> <p>The principal reason for which the Far West Academy of Sport was developed or placed was the fact that up to that point in time the services that were offered for people living in this area were stemming from Orange or Tamworth. In development programs with talented athletes it was coming from Bathurst or Armidale. So essentially people in this area really didn't get serviced at all. There were certainly some fringe programs, sport and rec type programs. In terms of the athletes, however, the reality of trying to travel from Bourke or Cobar or Wilcannia or wherever else it may be in our broad area to participate in something in Bathurst or Armidale, didn't really happen. So unfortunately kids just simply missed out.</p> <p>The Far West Academy's area now principally goes from about Warren/Nyngan right through to include Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Goodooga; we then go straight across to the border, so we have Tiboorra, Broken Hill, Wilcannia and very recently we picked up Wentworth. So the new Murray Darling electorate is pretty much our stamping ground and then we've also got to look a little bit east of that. So we have got a fairly large geographic area to cover.</p>

People have absolutely no idea what a Regional Academy is. I'll explain what an Academy of Sport is. They select a certain number of sports; we've currently got six. They select squads of about 20 athletes. It's usually teenage athletes between 13 and 16 years of age. They give them the opportunity to participate in talent development programs so they are athletes who have a strong aptitude and talent in their particular sport. Top coaches are brought in and they become what we call academy coaches. They offer these athletes programs in the form of weekend camps in some situations or home training programs. We then link that to an opportunity to participate in high level competition. That may be against another Academy or maybe against a top team from one of the sporting clubs. The state sporting organisations are the driving force behind the reasons why any Academy takes on a particular sport. Academies aren't stand-alone; they work in conjunction with state sporting organisations. So if rugby league wanted to become a Far West Academy of Sport they would firstly have to have a commitment to supply personnel, in some cases money, or it may be participation opportunities. So it is not the fact that Far West Academy decides we are going to take on particular sports.

We actually had a launch back in October 1997 and at that launch we had 10 sports, state sports, present. We then sent letters of invitation to each of those sports to formally apply to become an Academy Sport. We had five that did, so they were the first five sports and they promised all sorts of things. For some of them it was in-kind support, with others it was the supply of the head coach, others it was money, and for some others it was a combination of those things.

So as I said the Academies don't do a stand-alone, they work in conjunction with. The Far West Academy of Sport though is unique in the sense that we are not only an Academy of Sport we are also an office of the Department of Sport and Recreation. That means that we can offer community programs, we can offer coaching programs, officials' programs, and club administration programs. So if we come into an area like Bourke and people say to us that we have got this whole group of people that desperately want to know how to run a club, can you help us, the answer is yes, we can.

We run the programs right here in town. In the past if you wanted to become a qualified coach in a particular sport, the chances were that you would have had to travel, possibly to Dubbo, to obtain that qualification. Obviously the time, the cost and, I guess, the general inconvenience to the participator put a lot of people off. So we have tried to bring the delivery of those programs a little closer to the home centre.

The regional Academies per se are unique to NSW in so far as that no other States have them. There are currently nine Academies of Sport. They are based in the North Coast, the northern inland which is Armidale, the Hunter based in Newcastle, Western Sydney at Parramatta, Sydney South West at Liverpool, Illawarra, the Riverina, the Western which is based at Bathurst and now the Far West Academy of Sport.

We have two other big Academies: the Winter Academy of Sport at Jindabyne and the Sydney Academy. They are principally specialist facilities which really don't go out any further than their own boundaries. They don't actually offer services outside of that. If you wished to go skiing, obviously you have got to go to Jindabyne. They can't really come to Cobar and do an effective ski lesson.

The Sydney Academy of Sport is probably a little different insofar as it has something like 50 full-time specialist personnel, the facilities there are getting better all the time and they do put on what we call travelling roadshows. They actually bring out sport science specialists and they come out and do testing of athletes, they go into schools and do talent programs and things like that. So they are a little different but they are not as mobile as we probably would like. Essentially, most of their operation happens at Narrabeen. So they are a little bit tied to their home base.

The reason Academies generally were developed in NSW was because we felt that particularly kids in country areas didn't have the opportunity to participate in talent programs. The pathway if you like for them to be identified, developed and then given the opportunities to be selective in higher competitions wasn't as prevalent. We often hear the story of people like Glen McGrath who, when he went to Sydney, was called 'Millard' because he lived in the caravan all the time. There aren't too many people like

Glen McGrath who had the determination to go out and stick it out. We firmly believe that there are a lot of athletes in country areas who didn't have that same drive. It may be the Aboriginal communities are involved in that too, but we also believe that there are a lot of non-Aboriginal athletes for whom it simply became too difficult and so they just fell by the wayside.

We offer each of our athletes a scholarship program. The scholarships are based around the fact that we give them individual training programs with appointed coaches and further exposure to highly experienced and accredited coaches who may not necessarily be living within the Far West, but brought into the local area. We do scientifically administered speed and strength programs, so we find out exactly the states of their particular situation. We give them advice on nutrition, sport psychology, sports medicine and drug education.

They are also exposed to public speaking courses, media awareness and personal development. We also give them a chance to participate in high level competition and I'll talk a little about that later. They are each given a personalised logbook where they can monitor their own particular progress and they have an overseer coach who checks on them, usually every other week, just to see how they are going.

We are also offering them some tours to top training venues like the NSW and the Australian Institutes of Sport. They also get a chance to meet some of their stars in terms of high profile sports people, and they also get a chance to bring talented teams into the Far West so they can act as hosts as well.

The two programs that I was very closely tied to in 1998 were Rugby League and Soccer, and the Rugby League Program which I think was probably one of our most successful. We had 20 athletes and of the 20 athletes, eight were selected to higher representative honours and three in fact were contracted to Sydney Rugby League Clubs. I think that was fairly exciting. One of those athletes was invited to the Australian Institute of Sport to undergo a very advanced Rugby League Program, he was only one of eight in the whole of NSW who were identified.

We were able to secure Penrith Rugby League to come to Wagga first thing and then to Cobar to bring their whole development squad with them. They played the Far West Academy in each of those venues. The first game we got beaten fairly substantially but we did manage to score a try. The second game the Penrith Boys came in their flashy uniforms and bus like celebrities for the day and by about half time we were down about 14 - nil. But our Academy boys through their program and the fact that they had been together for about a 6-month period were starting to meld as a unit and they came back and we were just pipped 14-12 in the end.

Subsequent to that the Rugby League was invited to play the curtain raisers at NRL pre season games in Dubbo and they played before the Newcastle and Canberra game. They played the combined Parkes-Dubbo combination, and they fairly substantially won that one. All of a sudden all of the gurus around the Rugby League said who are all these kids and what's this No.8 and No.5 and so forth. They were quickly informed that those kids had already been contracted, so bad luck.

As a result of that good performance they were invited to play two weeks later prior to the Western Suburbs and South Sydney game, and whilst it was never officially said I was a bit concerned because the game previous to that was actually at the end of our program. We had a very nice luncheon. Warren Ryan was there from the Newcastle Knights and spoke to the boys and it was just a terrific day. And then of course they went out and won, which was even better.

So two weeks later we had a fair bit to lose and I was suspecting that they were going to put on a better than average team. I said to Steve Hall who was our head coach and who is also the Rugby League Development Officer in this area, I said "Steve they have grown a lot in two weeks haven't they?" "Oh no, they're pretty much the same boys you know." Well they weren't the same boys, they were pretty much the full strength Western Division Side, and our boys won 10-9.

They were pretty excited about it and as a result of that four of the Academy boys then

were invited to be part of the Western Division Side and they played against Parramatta the following week and they are going to play in Manly in a few weeks time.

So it's pretty exciting for these kids to participate in these events and I think the good thing is that we have been able to mould a very good coaching panel. As a result of those two outings I picked up two more Level 2 coaches: one chap from Warren, one from Gilgandra. The head coach of the Rugby League Program is Steve Hall who is Aboriginal and one of the assistant coaches is a chap you'll probably know, Ronny Gibbs, born and bred in Bourke. A more enthusiastic guy I don't think you'll ever see. I just can't believe how crazy keen Ronny is. The two extra people who we've got on board are both Aboriginal: a bloke called Artie Miller out of Warren and Paul Allen from Gilgandra. I used to think that Ronny was physically pretty fit looking but Paul makes Ronny look a bit small. So we are pretty excited that we have got such quality people. In terms of the Aboriginal participation in the Rugby League Program: out of the 20 athletes, 11 are of Aboriginal descent, so 55% of that team is in fact Aboriginal.

One of the big difficulties we find with these kids out here, particularly the kids from Bourke and Brewarrina and places like that, is they don't have any weekend competition. It's very difficult for them to play at standard and that's why they I think they took a little while to hit their straps. They are not even now at their full strength but the fact of the matter is that they are a much better side 6 or 7 months on.

Another significant program in the Academy in terms of the Aboriginal kids would be netball. We originally had a squad of 19 and nine of the squad members were Aboriginal, 47%. We were invited to put in a full Koori netball team at the games in Newcastle. Megan, the development officer there, who was actually in charge of the netball program rang around and we of course we had such a strong nucleus anyway within our Academy, that all those girls went. We only had to find another 3 or 4 more to make up the squad. And through a lot of support from the Aboriginal community, with respect to the buses, transport and accommodation, we took that squad to Newcastle. They were a pretty good side. I think they ended up as runners up in the competition which upset a lot of people because they were new kids on the block. I guess the most significant thing is that two of the girls there were invited to play in the NSW Koori Netball Team. They played in Cairns or somewhere like that, and then one of the girls was picked in the Australian Koori Netball Team and they played in Fiji only last month.

So those are some of the things that the Regional Academies can do. We have picked up tennis as our next sport. Mostly because tennis, we feel, has a high participation in this area, but also NSW tennis have started to embark upon a fairly strong development program.

The other sports, basketball and softball, have had sort of different success. We have found that basketball isn't quite as prominent in certain areas, and so we are having problems maintaining our numbers there. With softball we essentially have now gone back to full development mode whereby we are not going to have talent squads this year. We are going to do a development program and, I believe, I think it is in Bourke or Bree in a few weeks time. We are doing a softball carnival and we are inviting schools to participate.

Our focus is predominantly in that age group in terms of talent programs. We are looking 13 to 16 years. It is determined by the State Sporting Organisation whichever one it happens to be. They do vary. Basketball is 12 to 14. Netball is about 15 to 17 and rugby league is 15 to 16. So it just depends on the particular sport as to which way they go in terms of the age groups.

The other component of the Academy is in fact the fact that we have sport and recreation programs. So we come into an area and we want to develop that area in a particular sport and we have to have the support of the community to do it. Then we can actually bring in personnel and run those particular programs. Most of the day I am at Cobar, I am in the Western Plains zone for Soccer, junior soccer there. That embraces Trangie, Nyngan, Warren, Tottenham and Cobar. Essentially we wanted to run some soccer programs there because the local soccer scene was starting to teeter a bit. You know whilst they had all those clubs, they seemed to be lacking a little bit of direction.

So we brought in a fellow called Doug Rennie last year who was the NSW Soccer Referee's development personnel. He is actually a former NSL's referee in his own right, and he accredited 17 referees in Nyngan one Saturday afternoon during August. The feedback was fantastic, that not only was he an outstanding presenter but also that we had 17 accredited referees in our midst. Whilst we are conscious that we need to develop our coaches, we also need to ensure that the game has been played in the right way. I have already had an inquiry to run another program but we are currently advertising for a coaching Level 1 which we are going to do in Cobar at the end of the school holidays.

Also in netball we have Sharon Finnane who is a current Australian netball player. She is our head coach. And Kim Hardy who is based at Brewarrina. They are very strong role models within the Aboriginal community. We also have some other very outstanding people involved in the netball program as well and we are very excited that we can blend the two groups together.

Whilst the focus seems a little bit today on the Aboriginal communities, we are also very conscious of the fact that living in remote areas of the state can be a disadvantage for everyone, and our Academy is trying to overcome that by delivering home programs or localised programs within the community. We encourage people to give us a call to ask us to assist them in any aspect regarding sport, in terms of the development of coaches, of referees, of the local club or for general advice. We have a fairly strong lot of specialists living in North Sydney, but they allow us to deliver the good word out in the country areas.

I was sitting down and making some notes and I was trying to think of some of the things that we've identified as what we need or our concerns or problems, if you like. Whilst we've only been happening for about 18 months, these are some of the things that we've observed that present difficulties for the delivery of sport, not only for the elite kids but also for local community level.

The cost of travel is something that we find somewhat inhibiting and also in some cases the availability and frequency. We had the Soccer Academy Squad concluding its program two weeks ago in Lithgow and we had eight athletes and two coaches from Broken Hill. It took them 15 hours to come by train and bus from Broken Hill down to Lithgow and then likewise for the return journey. The Academy covered most of the costs for those particular athletes, so it wasn't the dollars and cents component, but it was a very, very long trip. So there is no real solution around this, these are just some of the problems that we have. In some cases because we travel east-west and north-south, because we do Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, Walgett down that way and we also do Broken Hill through to Dubbo, we have some problems sometimes linking through the two lots of transport. We rely on goodwill from the people to assist us.

The facilities generally are reasonable but there are some sports which are very poor. Probably the one sport we've had most inquiries about in terms of bringing it into this Academy of Sport is track and field. But quite frankly west of the Blue Mountains there are no synthetic tracks at all and generally speaking the standard grass track is pretty poor. So as a consequence of that there aren't that many qualified coaches and the offerings for track and field in schools, particularly in the Far West and all the western area generally, seem to be fairly ordinary.

I got a copy of the western school sports journal and it had all the rules and regulations on how to enter the track and field carnival for this year both in primary and secondary and it seems that the participation opportunities are limited by comparison to most areas that I have been associated with in both metropolitan and country. This seems to cut down the incentive for the kids to go to the regional carnival. Essentially if the kid isn't somewhere about the qualifying standard that they've specified, which is not too far off the State qualifying standard, then they basically say stay away, don't come along to our carnival. That is of great concern because what I have discovered over my 15 years' involvement with representative sport is that quite often athletes become somewhat overawed when they first arrive at a particular event or a particular sport, but that exposure will certainly contribute to improve their particular performance. Unless you go there and see what the standard is and see how enthusiastic some of the other

	<p>competitors are, then that enthusiasm unfortunately doesn't rub off and therefore you don't get to see the need to apply yourself to training or to get a coach.</p> <p>So I think that as far as possible those sorts of disincentives should be removed and that the athlete should be encouraged to go along and participate. If the cold hard reality is that when they make it to the State level and they happen to be five laps behind the leader, then that is life. They also need to know that they are five laps behind the leader and that they need to improve that much more to get closer to the leader.</p> <p>We also have a fairly limited amount of qualified and experienced personnel. The Academy is trying in a small way to overcome this by actually financially assisting people to gain qualifications and it is not only the fact that they get a piece of paper, it's the chance they get to work with top coaches. They also see top kids and they realise that in the Far West we have got top athletes in their particular sport which in itself is exciting and encouraging. They may have only ever seen one good athlete in their particular town or their school of that standard. When they work with the Academy they see 15, 16, 20 kids who are really keen and really able. That certainly is an incentive and I know that Michael in his past life had the great pleasure of working with top baseball players. It really is an incentive to work with those sort of athletes, and not only the athletes but also coaches and the people that support them.</p> <p>My last point is that the participation by adults in the community, particularly Aboriginal adults, seems to be fairly low. I know that in places like Bree and Bourke, and to a certain extent in places like Walgett and Goodooga, it is the adult population that seems to be needing incentives to be part of that development. I spoke with Ewett Wyman down in Moama just prior to Christmas. He is the chairperson of the Binaalbillia Regional Council and I raised this particular point. Ewett was fairly keen to encourage the teenage kids, but I said to him that in my opinion if we can get the Aboriginal adults to be part of the delivery of sport in the communities that will ensure that that will happen. At the moment it is not happening a great deal and I think that is a problem. If we can somehow or other find a magic formula to get the adults to be part of the development process then all of a sudden we are going to find that all the things that Michael and Paul were talking about in terms of free time will dissipate.</p> <p>As I said we need to have that support within the community. We ran about six weeks of meetings when we first started the Academy back in about November 1997. We went to every town that we were going to service. We met with schools, we met with Councils, we met with sporting clubs, we met with media, and we met with all sorts of people. It was fairly exhausting tour. And then we used to have a public meeting at night. We ran one actually at Bourke High School and we had two people come along. Both the people who came along we had spoken to already that day. It was disappointing to have that sort of response. So I don't know what we can do to encourage these people to come out and I am not talking Aboriginal, I am talking about all people in these sort of areas to come out and hear the word.</p> <p>I know that the local Soccer Group in Cobar last year ran a Gala Day for the Junior Soccer and the secretary came to me because she had to do the drill. So we sat down for about half an hour or so and worked through it and I explained all the organisation of the day and the things they needed to do in terms of management within the carnival. She reported back that it all went really well and she was going to have a team, she was going to be the carnival organiser and she was going to do this and she was going to do that. Those are the sort of things that the Department or the Academy based in Cobar can help the communities with and we certainly encourage people to inquire and ask and whatever we can do we try to.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Thanks Steve, that's very full.
Paul Loxley [Sport]	Chris, I agree with nearly all that Steve said. In relation to my experience of Bourke Public School, I have got to go into bat for our local extended PSSA [Primary Schools Sports Association] network. The way things work here is that we usually work with Bree and us and the small schools. We have three lanes because we have more kids than Bree. We have three lanes, they have two and we put the small schools in the other one. We let the first three kids go to Dubbo or to Bathurst or wherever they've got to go. There are some people that stipulate they've got to be somewhere near the qualifying

	<p>time, but one of our main priorities is giving kids the experience in relation to the same things Steve is talking about. We take our kids hell west and crooked. Our kids are getting a lot of opportunities. I agree with the other aspects of what Steve said. We join every PWSA competition we can, so our kids get experience in all the different types of sport and our bus is seen quite regularly all over the state.</p> <p>When we go to play other teams, we honour that. Sometimes when they're drawn to play Bourke or Bree, they won't come out. What we've actually done is that we've agreed that if they did that they didn't get to play in the competition the following week.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Has that made a difference?
Paul Loxley	You get some people they know what it's like. Des O'Malley, who's the boss of Dubbo South, when his kids are drawn to play Bourke or Bree he comes out himself and brings his cricketers, his girls' softball team. People like that we need. It is just unfortunate to see, and again what Steve says is true. You've got to find a bus, you've got to pay for the bus, you've got to get the kids away, and you've got to find accommodation.
Steve Middleton	Our office is in Cobar High School and they have exactly the same problem. Mark Smith, the principal, said they can get to rounds four and five without playing a team because everyone just forfeits. They are drawn to play in Cobar and they go "No, it's too far", and they don't turn up. So it's not very good in terms of what we were saying that they need the exposure and experience. They are not getting it. They get into round five and play a pretty hot team and well...
Paul Loxley	What we are trying to do is to give the kids every opportunity, equity and access. But there are two sets of rules. When it suits you, you do what you want, you play by the rules and when it doesn't you just forfeit.
Chris Sidoti	So how big is the drawing area, in what you are saying it goes to Dubbo? Does it go east of Dubbo?
Paul Loxley	We went to Wilcannia last year to play a round of rugby league, to Dubbo sometimes – it depends on the staff. Because of the way they run the competition, we might play Bree first and the winner plays Nyngan. They try and group the teams.
Michael Chapman	The girls' soccer team from the high school made it through to the association finals last year. They played Brewarrina up here and then, because the manager of the area team came to Bathurst, the next two lots of games were played in Bathurst and Dubbo. So my girls from school had to go down to Dubbo, spend two days in Dubbo, a day down, two days there and a day back. They won those two games, quite simply, absolutely flogged them. They then had to turn around a week later and go to Bathurst. So these girls, and some of them are in Year 11 and Year 12, missed virtually three weeks straight of school.
Michael Cavanagh, Principal, Dubbo School of Distance Education	In answer to your question, Chris, of how big is the drawing area, sporting regions are still in terms of the old regions school divisions. So this is the old Western Region.
Paul Loxley [Travelling]	Our kids are the best bus travellers in the State. Seriously they are. Every time our kids go somewhere, it's hours in the car. Isolation out here on the ground is hours in a car. Our kids get up at five o'clock sometimes, and we have to take them the day before so they miss out on half a day of school again. Our kids are going tomorrow for swimming. They will leave at eleven o'clock on Thursday, so they are down in time to combine the trip to Macca's maybe and a game of ten-pin bowling, we do as much as we can so they enjoy it. Then they get up the next day, they go to the carnival, and they finish at four o'clock, and if things go well then they get away at half past four. They are brought back and they are delivered home. So they might be home anywhere from half past eight to half past nine, depending on the trip they've had. So you know our kids are four unit travellers.
Chris Sidoti	Steve, going back to your area, is the Academy doing anything for kids with disabilities?
Steve Middleton [Disability]	Not specifically at this stage. We've got a Disabilities Unit that's just started within the Department only late last year and they had a conference to sort of seek out what sort of things were required within the State. I haven't heard much since then actually.
Chris Sidoti	Are there any Academies that you know of doing anything in the disability area?
Steve Middleton	Yes I believe Riverina Academy. Riverina and Illawarra. I believe they have both got disabled sports of some description there.
Chris Sidoti	We might follow that up.

Steve Middleton	Just in terms of trying to make it as easy for the kids to be identified, we are actually running our selection trials this month in most of our sports and literally tomorrow the soccer is starting and it is all school based. They are going to Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Bree and then Bourke and Cobar, Nyngan, Warren and Trangie. They are going to run selection trials right the way through there. They will identify kids with the appropriate talent and they will be invited to come into Cobar last week of the school holidays for the final trial. And the rugby league is doing the same thing except Steve Hall is starting at Broken Hill. He is going to Menindee and Wilcannia and down that way. So we are trying to, as I say, deliver the sport as close to the town as we possibly can to overcome the sort of problems the kids may have had by not being able to come along. Or even being aware that the trials are happening. So we will be working that way and see how it goes.
Chris Sidoti	What physical plant have you got in Cobar?
Steve Middleton	All we have got is an office about the size of this little room here I suppose, not quite as big. We are a little different to the other Academies in that I have a full time Development Officer and we have just received approval to fund a second Development Officer who will be an Aboriginal Sports Development Officer. So we'll have two full time Development Officers plus a clerical and myself. So we are a fairly small operation but we do have the access to the Department and, as I mentioned, the Sydney Academy that has a fairly extensive range of resources that we can tap into.
Barbara Flick	What zone football competitions are there in this region?
Steve Middleton	Like weekend type ones? We have got the Group 14 out here which, in terms of junior sport, Bourke and Bree and Cobar are not participating in. There was a meeting I understand in December 1997 which tried to overcome that but it didn't eventuate. The senior team in Cobar participates in the Group 11, which is a Dubbo based competition, so they do a fair bit of travelling. And I think for two reasons they probably don't want them in the competition, one is they keep winning and the second is it's a long way for people in Dubbo to come out to Cobar each time. They have been in the premiers for the last two years and they are the first and second grades, so I suppose they can't say they are not up to standard. In the Junior Sport it's very limited. Rugby league in Cobar is played within Cobar.
Barbara Flick	Why did they close this Group that was out here?
Steve Middleton	There was some pretty substantial behaviour problems at one of the fixtures and essentially they were not welcome to play in the competition, as I understand it. I was not here at the time but I have heard stories. There were cases that were put up for reinclusion and it seemed to be pretty strong. Country Rugby League supported it pretty heavily but unfortunately when it came to the vote the numbers didn't come through. But what we are doing this year is that Steve Hall has asked us to try to stimulate more rugby league in schools and he has asked us to help administer the Ronny Gibbs shield. In the past it was one round only. This year it will be three rounds. The first one is toward the end of March. We have got another one in June, another one in August. So Steve is encouraging us to do that. There also the Rickie Walford Shield, which is a primary school based competition that was always played at Walgett. This year we're setting up another, which will be called the Far West Primary Challenge, and that will be run at Cobar during August as well.
Barbara Flick	What is the participation rate of young women in sport compared to boys?
Steve Middleton	In terms of our Academy squads we've got 42% female in our Academy squads and 58% male. I can give you a breakdown, you can actually have this if you like, it has got a breakdown of sport. Basketball is 47% female, netball 100% naturally, none in rugby league, soccer 13% and softball 50%. The tennis was only just taken on, and we've got about 34 athletes that have been identified thus far and they tend to be a bit younger than our normal group. I think they are down to about nine and ten years of age. So it will be interesting to see what happens there, and I am not sure what the male and female break up is, as we've only just taken those on. These are 1998 figures I might add. The 1999 squads are in the process of being selected now. But I expect that the numbers will be similar.

Paul Loxley	<p>Chris, I made every one of those trips to the rugby league in 1997 and 1998 and I put my Council hat on, also secretary of the Bourke Koori Football Club.</p> <p>The premiers of Group 11, their kids can't get a game of football. In late 1997 Wally Mitchell, who's the Mayor of Bourke and myself, we did a tour of all the clubs, and to our faces, apart from Coonamble, they were quite welcome to have us, they had falling numbers and they needed teams.</p> <p>It was just interesting the behind scenes work that went on at Senior League Level after we put a Council endorsed submission to them that had a players' code of conduct, a spectators' code of conduct, support from the local networks in relation to what would happen, and the door is closed. What was more upsetting was that for some reason the politics behind the scene stopping our kids from getting a game of football. The thing that I couldn't rationalise was that the Cobar Roosters were the premiers, the current reigning premiers, and their kids, they weren't given the opportunity to play field football, to promote football in their own town.</p> <p>On a positive note there was a meeting in Brewarrina last weekend that Alan Lamb from Goodooga called and we are trying to again re-establish minor League and senior League. It won't be in traditional format but we'll get a game of football somehow.</p> <p>The problem is that, although country rugby league was supportive and the Boundaries Committee said that we would play, it was interesting that when it came to the point that we were going to play they would much rather kill the competition as they did last year. Then this year they have taken the point of view that they would much rather have six teams playing football than seven teams not. Now, I've lived here for eight years. 1992 was the last time we had formal football set up. We had five home games and didn't have one incident in Bourke.</p> <p>I played football for Nyngan years ago when I used to come up here. There was one incident, but those sorts of things happen any way. We have been kicked around on perception, on allegation and unsubstantiated innuendo. There are people I think that have gone to court for murder, that haven't got sentenced, that Bourke rugby league has got.</p> <p>It is frustrating when we have done everything we can to try to get our kids playing football and the positive impact football will be on this town will be incredible. We have every door shut down in our face.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Do you reckon it is because of distance or is it because of the reputation and prejudice?
Paul Loxley	Bit of both.
Chris Sidoti	It's all too hard?
Paul Loxley	Well I think at the end of the day that the people who have got to make the decision are the Boundaries Committee. There are a lot of teams crossing NSW to play football. I mean that Cobar goes to Forbes and then on to Wellington. And the groups who were set up traditionally have changed because of people coming in and going out. At the end of the day all we want is for our kids to be able to play football.
Barbara Flick	So this group of young men now has no recreational opportunities in this town and hasn't had for some years? The Rugby League or the men who played Rugby League they are not doing anything there? Any organised sport?
Paul Loxley	<p>There are limited opportunities apart from swimming club. We have swimming club, and in winter we have hockey, in summer we have cricket, we have squash courts. The kids haven't got the opportunity to train because they haven't got a regular competition to play. Then we get back to the same things that Steve was talking about: due to lack of access and lack of training, the skill levels have decreased. The other side of the coin yes it does impact on what they do after school and what they get up to. You know we would be fools to say otherwise.</p> <p>We are talking about kids here, and politics by adults are discriminating against our kids getting a game of football.</p>
Barbara Flick	So it is country rugby league group.

[Health]	<p>We have a high percentage of kids with glue ear; it is a big problem, particularly in the Aboriginal community. We liaise a lot with the auditory monitoring nurse based in Brewarrina.</p> <p>We have an ASSPA Committee. We lack management training. A lot of our management committee are unskilled and I think that is a big problem for our school. So we have approached places like Community Child Care to come up to do inservicing with our management committee. We have untrained staff. Again Community Management can do that or Lady Gowrie and when we organise anything like that we invite all the other early childhood centres in the area. We have made invitations to Goodooga, Walgett.</p> <p>We also visit – we try to network a lot. We have a wonderful network group with all the kinder staff plus preschool childcare and mobile. We try and meet once a term.</p> <p>Half of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) funding requires that we show how we address the National Targets with regard to literacy and numeracy expectations on entry to primary school, so I liaise with all the kindergarten teachers. We have got Koinonia, we've got Pera Bore, the Public School, St Ignatius, child-care and mobile and preschool.</p> <p>It takes a lot of work being involved in a community like this. We have an early childhood early intervention group and Ross has just informed me that we have got some funding for interventions. It is very frustrating when a child can go right through pre-school and not have access to professional assessments.</p> <p>We liaise a lot with Jo Pender who is at the Aboriginal Early Childhood Services Support Unit in Sydney. We haven't actually been informed yet but apparently we have been split. So part of the State is with Jo and I think Armidale under contract.</p> <p>The type of service we offer is what the community wants, and certainly we'd know if they were not happy. We are very formal, and we are structured. I think there is a need for - I haven't discussed this with anybody else, so this is me as a person talking, not as a preschool worker - maybe the three year olds need more time. I am not sure how. We don't have the facilities, but that's down the track.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Are there other pre-schools and long day care centres in town?
Maxine Mackay	There is long day care, and they offer occasional care.
Chris Sidoti	How many places do they have?
Maxine Mackay	<p>Forty, but their children don't come every day. It's on a needs basis. I think we are a pretty good preschool. We are very active in the community and we have credibility in the community. It takes a lot of work to reach a certain level and to maintain it. If people were unhappy I would certainly like to know. We maintain an open house policy where parents are very welcome to come in, and we do get a lot of parents who will come in and make conversation. We are trying to use Community Health Care bit as well, in regards to having sessions on immunisation, child development, so you get parents there on a social pretext and have a session organised. The parents are very comfortable to come to preschool, it's very personal, and it's an old home that's actually been converted. The shire own the premises; they are very supportive with maintenance. We do Aboriginal programming. We are wanting to get Joe Pender to come up and do more work on putting an Indigenous perspective through out the program. I mean we do it but we haven't got anything to form it.</p>
Barbara Flick	In terms of the demographics of Bourke what percentage of the population is zero to five?
Maxine Mackay	I don't know.
Barbara Flick	Paul, do you know?
Paul Loxley	That information will be available in the social plan. It was all gathered last year.
Maxine Mackay	<p>Most of the Aboriginal kids that are old enough to go to preschool are at our preschool. We send our home liaison worker or I sometimes go out to do the enrolments with the family, so it's done one on one. Then they might know somebody else who has moved to</p>

	town so it's bush telegraph work. So they are given the opportunity to come. Priority access is given to Aboriginal kids
Chris Sidoti	That's not exclusive though?
Maxine Mackay	No, it's whoever wants to come, but those kids need our language program most.
Chris Sidoti	What's the break-up in actual numbers?
Maxine Mackay	At the moment we have got 25 out of 47.
Chris Sidoti	Aboriginal kids?
Maxine Mackay	<p>Yes. We have a new management committee every year. We do have people who stay which gives us good continuity. It's very frustrating, you know, because after the first couple of months when they have learnt the ropes it is time to leave.</p> <p>We do a lot of work in regards to transition from pre-school into primary. That is a very important area. Another area is Year 6 to Year 7, that's going to be a focus as well.</p>
Chris Sidoti	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Thanks for all very much for coming along. For those who came forward and spoke to us, I greatly appreciate it.</p>