

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF STATE  
SCHOOL COUNCILS: A PROPOSAL FOR  
GOVERNANCE OF THE SCHOOLS IN THE  
DARLING DOWNS REGION.

by

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## ABSTRACT

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF STATE SCHOOL BOARDS:

A PROPOSAL FOR THE DARLING DOWNS REGION

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In recent years in Australia increasing demands have been made to involve the employee in decision making at the level of management. Education systems have not been excluded from this movement to involve the community, teachers and in some cases even students in the management of their schools. To date no formal proposals similar to those made in New South Wales in 1973 have been suggested for Queensland. It is the intention of this thesis therefore, to examine existing proposals in other systems to determine the preferences for the composition and functions of school governing bodies in one region in Queensland and to propose a model based on the findings of this study for school councils in the state schools of the Darling Downs Region.

An examination of proposals in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales reveals many similarities in composition and function of school governing bodies while at the same time allowing for variations in local geographic and socio-economic conditions. The main two principles underlying all proposals are the decentralization of decision making and the participation of teachers in decision making. In line with these principles an opinion survey was conducted in all state schools in the Darling Downs Region of Queensland to determine the type of structure that the community, principals and teachers would prefer if school governing bodies were introduced into the Queensland education system. Because no similar surveys have been conducted in Australia the data collected could not be statistically compared to determine levels of significance of responses. Therefore data are presented in terms of the percentage of people responding in favour of, or against, suggested functions and composition.

Based on the results of this information a model for school councils in the Darling Downs Region is proposed. These councils would consist of nine

members selected from the community, teachers, principal and the Department of Education, but with a majority of professional educators. The functions of the council would include determination of school policy and objectives, budgeting, maintenance and minor extension of buildings and the preparation of staffing requirements for the Department of Education. In the case of the small primary schools that do not have separate classes in all grades it is proposed that up to four schools in close proximity would combine to form a council.

Because such a change in structure would encounter barriers such as lack of community participation, the fear of a threat to the professional status of teachers and structural impediments, suggestions are made as to how these might be overcome when implementing the proposal.

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