‘Little people’ have problems and they need to talk with other people besides those at home. Grandmother.

‘Little People’ Have Problems:

A research report into the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home and marginalised students who attend Catholic primary schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese.

Rev Wally Dethlefs
On behalf of Brisbane Catholic Education
2004
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Foreword

In 2003, Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) conducted research into the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students attending Catholic primary schools and secondary colleges in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The findings from that research are contained in the report, *Making Room for Us*.

Since the findings from the primary schools were disturbing because of the numbers of out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students they revealed, and since only thirty-four percent of schools returned the survey forms, BCE decided to re-commission the research in 2004. The hope was to obtain a higher rate of return, thus giving a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the situation of marginalised students in Catholic primary schools than that found in the 2003 research. Additionally, BCE wanted schools to identify what support provision was available in their schools, as well as what community services they accessed to support marginalised students and their families. A number of grandparents parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis were also interviewed to ascertain their support needs and to canvass their recommendations.

This report documents the numbers of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged primary school students. It also records the excellent work being carried out by dedicated, committed and competent staff in Catholic primary schools and BCE to assist these students and their families. The report notes the recommendations from schools about how they themselves and BCE can best assist this cohort of children and young people and their families.

It is the ardent wish of the author that this report will provide both practical assistance as well as inspiration to school and BCE staff in their endeavors to assist these children and their families.

In peace,

Wally Dethlefs
January 2005
Acknowledgements

The Leadership Team of Brisbane Catholic Education has publicly acknowledged their commitment to the Church’s teaching on a preferential option for people who are marginalised. In order to enact this teaching, the Leadership Team had to know who these young people were the nature of their needs, what was being done for them and their parents through the schools, and how the schools and BCE could further assist them. To this end, the Team commissioned research in 2003. To obtain a clearer and more comprehensive picture, the Team commissioned further research in 2004. The Leadership Team through the Director – Schools Supervision and Equity has given strong and unwavering support to the project.

A Task Force ably supported and assisted the research work and made themselves available to advise and assist the researcher. Dr Jeff Kemp, the Task Force chair, was always available for consultation, and it is due to his efforts that such a high return has been received from the schools.

The members of this Task Force were:
Ms Lyn Albury - Principal, St Francis Xavier, Goodna
Mr Paul Blundell - Principal, St John’s College, Nambour
Mr Christopher Bradley - Primary School Guidance Counsellor
Ms Clare Doyle - Participation Officer – Indigenous Education, Ngutana-lui
Mr Trevor Doyle - Area Supervisor (BCEC)
Dr Jeff Kemp - Principal Education Officer, Equity Services (BCEC)
Ms Lesley Lavercombe - Education Officer, Counsellor Supervision (BCEC)
Ms Maria Leebeek - Policy and Development Officer, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
Ms Maree Rose - Counsellor, Carmel College, Thornlands
Ms Rachel Sexton - Education Officer, Child Protection
Sister Lyn Stabler - School Pastoral Worker, St Paul’s, Woodridge
Ms Maxine Thompson - Special Education Consultant, Clairvaux/McKillop College
Mr Paul Toon, Coordinator - Albert Park Community Flexi School

Principals, deputy principals, counsellors and many other school staff made time in their overloaded schedules to complete the survey. Ms Tracey Niven set up data entry and retrieval systems and entered survey data, a massive and exacting task.

I am grateful to Ms Sandra Sewell who made invaluable editorial suggestions to the text. Many friends and colleagues encouraged me in this work, and made themselves available to talk through particular aspects of the work.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to the dedicated and generous grandparents who answered my questions and spoke to me of their experiences in raising their grandchildren. They are an unforgettable inspiration.
Executive Summary

The Old and New Testaments emphasize the centrality of marginalized people in the eyes of Yahweh and in the vision, mission and actions of Jesus. Brisbane Catholic Education in its policy documents and renewal frameworks embrace marginalized students in a ‘community of care’, and seek to meet their needs in the challenge of adhering to the vision and mission of Jesus and the Church’s teaching of preferential option for people who are poor.

Survey forms were sent to all Catholic primary schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. One hundred and four out of one hundred and nine schools completed the survey.

Most primary schools reported out-of-home students during 2004, at an average yearly rate of **14 students per 1000**. Almost all reported marginalised students in their schools at an average yearly rate of **79 students per 1000**. Primary schools reported disengaged students, at an average yearly rate of **27 students per 1000**. The researcher was unable to identify similar national research.

Primary school respondents identified the necessary components of ‘what is working’ as: team work; supporting parents including foster parents and grandparents; children’s and parents’ programs; partnerships with community agencies; the work of guidance counsellors, learning support teachers and school pastoral workers; parents helping parents and children in need; student peer support; accommodation support which the school is able to provide or access.

Schools identified in-school support as: staff support; provision of meals; financial support; parent and family support; and before and after school services.

Schools identified the following community services which assist them with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students and their families: parish networks, especially St Vincent de Paul Society; Brisbane Catholic Education Centre Support and Equity services; student and parent support programs; counselling services; Government agencies and services; family support services; and non-government youth support services.

School respondents indicated that the capacity of the school to respond to out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students would be enhanced by assisting school personnel, especially teachers, with professional development in such areas as pastoral care techniques, at risk signs and opportunities to share responses, interventions and strategies, increased guidance counsellors hours, more pastoral care workers, flexible curriculum, respite accommodation, before and after school care, and an overall and clearly enunciated policy on out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students.

While appreciating the employment of more guidance officers in July 2004, most respondents wanted to further increase their school’s capacity to include and assist marginalised students. They recommended they could do this work better with increased
assistance from professional personnel. Furthermore, they believed that BCE should continually place before government the increasing numbers and needs of marginalised students and their families and lobby the government for the resources needed to assist them.

**Recommendations from Grandparents**

Grandparents recommended: professional development for teachers on such issues as understanding children with problems; integration of grandparents in the school community through eg., support groups; financial assistance, for instance, waiving school fees for needy grandparents; and advocacy by BCE with government departments on such issues as foster care payments, custody etc.
Recommendations

While Brisbane Catholic Education explicitly mentions marginalized students in some of its policy documents, it needs to formulate a policy statement for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

Recommendation 1

That Brisbane Catholic Education formulates a specific and comprehensive policy statement on out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

Recommendation 2

That BCE target with an early intervention pilot program one of the three regions with the highest numbers of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students and that this pilot be conducted over a five year period and be evaluated.

Recommendation 3

That schools formulate a documented pastoral policy and strategy based on the Church’s teaching on a preferential option for people who are poor and that this policy and strategy be included in their renewal plan.

Recommendation 4

That BCE establish a system based research unit to collect and analyse data regularly for the purposes of appropriate and effective resourcing.

Recommendation 5

Grandparents recommended that:

1. Professional development be offered for teachers on such issues as understanding children with problems
2. Staff treat grandparents who are full time carers as they would parents
3. Grandparents be integrated into the school community
4. BCE have a policy on inclusion of grandparents which includes waiving school fees for needy grandparents
5. Schools establish support groups for grandparents parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis
6. BCEC personnel and school staff assist grandparents in organising respite care for their grandchildren
7. Brisbane Catholic Education advocate with and on behalf of grandparents with government departments on such issues as foster care payments, custody etc.

Recommendations Arising from the Research

The Task Force and the researcher recommend that:

- the research report is made available to all primary schools, key staff at BCEC, parish priests of parish primary schools, presidents of Parents and Friends Associations, and Executive Directors of Catholic Education in all Queensland dioceses;
• a small Task Force be established by the Executive Director, through the Director of Schools Supervision and Equity, to compare and contrast the recommendations from this report with those of Making Room for Us with the aim of adding to the report of the Implementation Task Force;
• a Task Force be established by late March 2005;
• the Task Force report to the Executive Director of BCE, through the Director Schools Supervision and Equity;
• suggested Task Force membership be: system based and school based people, as well as some continuing involvement of the researcher and the project’s 2004 Implementation Task Force group;
• the Terms of reference be: examine the research report; compare its recommendations with those of Making Room for Us; modify and/or expand, if necessary, Implementation Task Force report on Making Room for Us.

The Task Force and the researcher recommends that ongoing research be undertaken every five years to determine the nature, extent and needs of marginalized students and to ascertain to what extent progress has been made in implementing the recommendations from Making Room for Us and this report.
Chapter 1 Methodology

In 2003, Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) commissioned research into the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students attending primary schools and secondary colleges in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The results of that research were published in Making Room for Us: Improving responses to the emotional and physical well-being of students.

Since the research showed alarming figures for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students in the primary school area and because only thirty-four percent of primary schools responded to the survey, BCE commissioned further research in 2004.

Terms of Reference

To research and make recommendations on the following issues:

- the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged young people in primary schooling in the Archdiocese; and
- clarify and detail Brisbane Catholic Education’s current support for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

Research Design

The research design encompassed the following elements:

- examining the use and meaning of ‘orphan’ in the Old Testament and ‘children’ in the New Testament;
- examining BCE policy and other documentation to ascertain BCE’s position on out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students;
- undertaking a limited literature search on the issues facing grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis;
- working in concert with a Task Force to support and guide the work.

Information Sources

Quantitative

BCE has jurisdiction over one hundred and nine primary schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese. A questionnaire was sent to all schools (Appendix A). The schools were asked to specify the numbers of out-of-home, and marginalized students attending their school during the week they filled out the survey, as well as during the year 2004. They were also asked to nominate the number of out-of-home and marginalized students who were unable to engage with the curriculum.

The schools were requested to write a story about an out-of-home or marginalized student, documenting what response, intervention, or strategy worked and why it worked. They were also asked to list what support was available in the school for marginalized students and their parents, and what supports they accessed from the community.
Finally, schools were asked to recommend how school based and system based approaches, interventions and/or strategies could be improved.

One hundred and four (95%) out of one hundred and nine primary schools completed the survey forms. Two of the five schools who failed to complete the survey reported that they did not have out-of-home, marginalized or disengaged students in their schools.

Seventy-one principals completed the survey forms while an additional fifteen teams of people including the principal, assistant to the principal-administration, assistant to the principal-religious education, guidance counselor, and the learning support teacher indicated that they had completed the survey forms. Five assistants to the principal-religious education, three learning support teachers, one pastoral worker and three teachers signed off on the survey. Six survey forms were completed by unidentified personnel.

**Qualitative**

Nine interviews were conducted with grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis (Appendix B). Student pastoral workers arranged the interviews. The interviews took place in the homes of the grandparents or in the schools their grandchildren attended. Notes were taken at the time of the interview and written up in full soon after the completion of the interview. A home/school liaison worker was interviewed about the grandparents’ group she had established in her secondary college.

**Explanation of Terms**

“Out-of-home” students are those students who are not literally without a roof over their heads, but who are not living with their parents on a permanent basis. Out-of-home students encompass students who are in the care of the state, in foster care, in group homes, living in temporary accommodation (e.g., in women’s refuges), unaccompanied migrant or refugee children, living with extended family, (e.g., grandparents), or staying with the families of friends or neighbors. Some students are settled and living permanently with foster parents, while others are regularly moving from foster parent to foster parent (see Dethlefs pp17 & 18).

Students may be “marginalized” for some of the following reasons: subjected to violence (physical, sexual, emotional) at home; parents have addictions; mental health problems; parents have mental health problems; they are parentless, in the sense that they do not have parents who care for them; they have significant learning difficulties; they have severe behavioral problems.

“Disengaged” students refers to those students who are not able to engage actively and confidently with the curriculum.
Chapter 2  Orphans and Children

Old Testament
The word ‘orphan’ is significant in the Old Testament. In fact, it is found forty-two times in the Old Testament and only twice in the New Testament. ‘Orphan’ is most often found in conjunction with ‘widow’ or in the phrase “stranger, orphan and widow.” The Old Testament meaning of the word ‘orphan’ would encompass what today we describe as out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged children and young people.

In the Old Testament, especially in the prophetic writings, faith and acting with justice are inextricably linked. For the prophets doing justice means taking care of the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. Yahweh judged a nation by the way it took care of people who were powerless and lived on the margins of society. Loving God and coming to the aid of the stranger, the widow and the orphan were one and the same thing for Old Testament prophets.

Beginning some eight hundred years before Christ, virtually all the Jewish prophets begin to affirm, over and over again, one singular truth which, ultimately, encapsulates and focuses in practical life the principles laid down at the dawn of creation: The quality of our faith depends upon the character of justice in the land and the character of justice is to be measured by how we treat three groups – widows, orphans, and foreigners (those with the least status in society). Thus, for the Jewish prophets, our standing with God depends upon where we stand with the poor and no private faith and piety, be they ever so pure and sincere, can soften that edict (Rolheiser, p 165).

Yahweh not only heeds their cry but commands that orphans be not abused. Orphans had special access to Yahweh (Brown, Raymond E, et al, p54).

You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry  (Exodus 22: 22-23).

The Book of Deuteronomy under the title “The Essence of the Law” makes clear that Yahweh requires that justice be done for the orphan and the widow.

So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? ... For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:12, 17-18).
Later in the book of Deuteronomy Yahweh is said to bless those who at harvest time leave produce for the orphan. Indeed, the harvester who acts in this way will be blessed in all his or her undertakings. The compassionate Yahweh commands people to make allowance for the basic needs of the stranger, the orphan and the widow.

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; see also Deut. 14:28-29 and Deut. 16: 10-11).

Those people who deprive orphans of justice are cursed in Deuteronomy.

“Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.” All the people shall say, “Amen!” (Deuteronomy 27:19).

The Book of Job makes specific mention of how Yahweh wants orphans to be treated. When Job complains of violence on the earth, he particularly mentions the violence done to orphans, widows and needy people. Wicked people, he says, drive away the donkey of the orphan, and snatch the orphan child from the breast (Job 24: 3 & 9).

In a later chapter, Job finishes his defense of his conduct by stating that he cared for orphans, looking after them as though he was their father. Caring for and being in solidarity with the orphan and widow was, for Job, living in a just and righteous way before Yahweh.

I delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper.
The blessing of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.
I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.
I was a father to the needy,
and I championed the cause of the stranger (Job 29:12-16).

Job is convinced that Yahweh will judge him positively for the way he cared for the orphan and the widow. He is certain that, in Yahweh’s eyes, there is no difference between himself and the orphan and the widow.

If I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves,
when they brought a complaint against me;
what then shall I do when God rises up?
When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?
Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?
If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
or have eaten my morsel alone,
   and the orphan has not eaten from it—
   for from my youth I reared the orphan like a father,
   and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow (Job 31:13-18).

In the Book of Psalms Yahweh is said to be concerned that justice be done to the orphan, noting that wicked people deprive orphans of life. Yahweh is a God who is on the side of the orphan. Indeed, Yahweh is the father/mother of orphans.

   But you [Yahweh] do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief,
   that you may take it into your hands;
   the helpless commit themselves to you;
   you have been the helper of the orphan.
   ... O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek;
   you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear
to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,
so that those from earth may strike terror no more (Psalm 10: 14-18).

And

   Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
God gives the desolate a home to live in (Psalm 68: 5-6).

In Psalm 82, the psalmist pleads to Yahweh for justice for the orphan, the lowly and the destitute.

   Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
   Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82: 3-4).

The psalmist knows Yahweh has a special care for the widow, the stranger and the orphan and will punish those who do not treat them with respect.

   They crush your people, O LORD,
   and afflict your heritage.
They kill the widow and the stranger,
they murder the orphan,
and they say, “The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob does not perceive.”

Understand, O dullest of the people;
fools, when will you be wise?
He who planted the ear, does he not hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not see?
He who disciplines the nations,
He who teaches knowledge to humankind,
does he not chastise? (Psalm 94: 5-10).

Finally, the psalmist praises Yahweh for looking after the stranger, the orphan and the widow.

The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin (Psalm 146: 9).

The prophets are explicit in their understanding of Yahweh as a defender of the orphan and widow. Doing good for Isaiah means to seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1: 16-17). Conversely, for Isaiah the degenerate city is one whose citizens have no interest in the rights of orphans or widows.

Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not defend the orphan,
and the widow’s cause does not come before them (Isaiah 1:23).

Jeremiah also takes up the cause of the orphan. He says, in pejorative language, that his people and the nation are corrupt because they are unjust in their treatment of the orphan and the widow.

They [the scoundrels] know no limits in deeds of wickedness;
they do not judge with justice
the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper,
and they do not defend the rights of the needy.
Shall I not punish them for these things?
says the LORD,
and shall I not bring retribution
on a nation such as this? (Jeremiah 5:28-29; see also Isaiah 10:1-3).

Jeremiah, like all the prophets, addresses his words to the whole nation. He tells them if they are to amend their ways, then they must treat the orphan with equity. Indeed, if they do treat the orphan with justice, Yahweh will dwell with them.
For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever (Jeremiah 7:5-7).

Jeremiah does not hesitate to call on the king, the people and the nation to repent. Repentance includes treating the stranger, the orphan and the widow in a respectful way. Conversely, not treating them, that is, marginalised people, with justice will lead to misery for the king and the nation.

Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation (Jeremiah 22:3-5; see also Lamentations 3:1-3).

**New Testament**

While the word ‘orphan’ occurs frequently in the Jewish Bible, it occurs only twice and in its plural form in the New Testament. However, by word and example, Jesus affirmed the dignity of those who, like children, had no status in society. He saw his mission as bringing good news to the poor ... setting free the oppressed etc (Luke 4: 16-17). He identified with people who were thirsty, hungry, strangers, sick or in prison, and said that people would be judged on the way in which they treated these groups of people.

Like the Jewish prophets, he [Jesus] too affirms that our standing with God depends upon how we stand in relationship to the weakest members within society. Indeed, Jesus takes this further. He teaches that, in the end, when we stand before God in judgment, we will indeed be judged on the basis of how we treated the poor in this life. He makes the practice of justice the very criterion for salvation (Matt 25:31-46). Moreover, he identifies God’s presence with that of the poor. In Jesus’s view, if you wish to find God, go look among the poor (Rolheiser, p165-166).

Jesus often refers to children. He tells his disciples that they must become like little children, and even refers affectionately to the disciples as little children. Jesus welcomes children, blesses them and embraces them.

The New Testament begins with the horrifying story of the killing of the children two years old and younger in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2: 16-18). In the Sermon on
the Mount, peacemakers are called *children of God* (Matthew 5: 9); while if you *love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*, you will be *children of your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5: 44-45).

**Matthew’s Jesus** tells his disciples that true greatness means becoming humble like a little child. Furthermore, welcoming a child is welcoming Jesus.

> At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18: 1-5).

When he blessed little children, Jesus said that *the kingdom of God belongs* to little children (Matthew 19:13-15). Children praised Jesus in the temple, causing Jesus to incur the wrath of the chief priests and the scribes (Matthew 21: 14-16).

**John’s Jesus** exhorts his followers to believe *in the light, so that you may become children of light* (John 12: 35-36). Jesus uses the word *children* as a term of affection or endearment in a post-resurrection manifestation of himself.

> Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some” (John 21: 5-6).

**Saint Paul** in his letters often describes people who have embraced Christianity as *children of God*.

> When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8: 15-17).

Like Jesus, Paul spells out how new Christians ought to live: put away falsehood, give up stealing, work honestly, no evil talk, put away all bitterness, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you etc. He calls upon the adults to emulate God, as children copy what others do and say.

> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5: 1-2).

Paul, while exhorting children to obey their parents, calls on parents not to provoke their children to anger, lest the children lose heart (Ephesians 6: 1-4; and Colossians 3: 20-21).
While Paul had been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, and experienced great opposition at Thessalonica, these experiences did not embitter him. He uses homely analogies to describe his attitude.

*But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us* (1 Thessalonians 2: 7, 8).

*As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory* (1 Thessalonians 2: 11).

The author of the letter to the Hebrews gives three reasons for remaining steadfast under testing: *think about Jesus and his sufferings, think about the communion of saints, that is to say, the mysterious bonds uniting all believers, and think of the trial as a test coming from the Father* (Christian Community Bible p409).

*Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?* (Hebrews 12: 7).

For James the core qualities of religion must be aptly applied to the practice of external works of charity. *… No complete definition of religion is attempted here, but only an emphasis on certain aspects without which the practice of religion has no meaning* (Brown, Raymond E, et al pp 911 & 912).

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world* (James 1: 27).

**Brisbane Catholic Education**

In its vision statement, Brisbane Catholic Education sees itself as exercising a preferential option for the poor and marginalized (Brisbane Catholic Education p 1). This vision has seen expression in a number of BCE policy documents.

In 1993, the Priests’ Council and the Executive of Brisbane Catholic Education commissioned The Pastor and the Parish School. The document begins with a section called Context of the Catholic School and, in the first paragraphs on general principles, quotes from the Synod on Catholic Education (Vatican 11, n. 9) to point out that Catholic schools must be especially concerned for people who are poor and who are without the help and affection of family (Archdiocese of Brisbane, p 9).

In 1998, Brisbane Catholic Education published a document for teachers in Catholic schools, Celebration and Challenge: The Teacher in a Catholic School. This document called upon teachers to witness to the Person and Gospel of Jesus by engaging in the
pastoral care of students and promoting the values of justice and peace (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1998, p 8). It also required that teachers contribute to the development of the school as an authentically Catholic community as well as contributing to an atmosphere of warmth and welcome through courtesy and friendliness (ibid, p10). Finally, it called teachers to be committed to justice and equity for all students (ibid, p16).

While the document made no specific mention of out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students, by calling on teachers to embrace all students in an inclusive community of care, it challenged teachers to be just and equitable, warm and friendly in their dealings with all students.

In November 1998, Brisbane Catholic Education produced a policy statement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Education. The statement spelt out, as a consequence of implementation of this policy, redressing the unacceptable social and educational disadvantage of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with schooling (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1998, p 4). The policy points to the marginalization of many indigenous students and is intent on overcoming their alienation, especially within an educational setting.

In June 1999, Brisbane Catholic Education published a policy statement on special education. Drawing on the Vision Statement of the Archdiocese, the policy stated that the Archdiocese seeks to build and sustain a Catholic Christian community for all, especially the marginalized. The document also acknowledged the right of every child or adolescent with special educational needs to an education that is as complete and appropriate as possible; and the need to support parents in attaining an appropriate education for their child or adolescent with special educational needs (Brisbane Catholic Education, 1999, p 3).

In May 2002, Brisbane Catholic Education disseminated a revised policy statement on justice education. The policy stated that Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane will integrate justice education into all areas of the curriculum. The rationale for the policy included the need for people to witness to Christ’s call to be just when, as individuals and community, they act fairly, share freely, and willingly repair any harm that has been done (May, 2002, p3). While out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students are not specifically mentioned, they are indirectly encompassed in its application.

In July 2002, Brisbane Catholic Education published a revised policy statement on student protection, stating that Brisbane Catholic Education upholds the dignity of the human person, strives to develop the whole person and is committed to ensuring that support is provided in cases of abuse of students or where such abuse is suspected or alleged (Brisbane Catholic Education July, 2002, p3). The rationale for the policy states that no one was excluded from his [Jesus’] love. In fact, by word and deed He showed a special preference for the poor, the powerless and the vulnerable, those often relegated to the margins of society. He especially loved children for ‘of such is the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 19: 14) (ibid, p 3).
The policy affirms the dignity of the human person, and commits Catholic Education personnel to provide support in cases of abuse, whether suspected or alleged. The policy statement is grounded in the words and actions of Jesus.

In 2002, Brisbane Catholic Education published *Strategic Renewal Framework 2002 – 2006 For Catholic Schooling in the Archdiocese of Brisbane (SRF)*. With a strong emphasis on the school as a community of care (SRF, p 11 & 32), where pastoral care and support is provided for students and their families (Priority 3) as well as staff (Priority 4), the SRF is intent on enhancing the capacity of schools by strengthening partnerships and relationships within and beyond school communities (Priority 5). The SRF specifically mentions students ‘at risk’ (ibid, p 16), and expects that these students will have improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, that the school community will demonstrate the Catholic commitment to justice and option for the poor (ibid, p18), and that schools will have a documented pastoral care strategy (ibid, p20). The continuing implementation and review of the SRF will ensure that out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students and their parents are supported, included and welcomed in the school community.

In June 2004, Brisbane Catholic Education produced a policy statement entitled *Enrolment of Students in Catholic Schools*. The policy states that the process of enrollment is to be guided by principles of justice and equity that support Catholic ethos and vision (Brisbane Catholic Education, 2004, p 3). The introduction and rationale stresses reaching out to those who are poor and marginalized and providing access for those who are poor and marginalized (ibid, p 3). A shortcoming is that, in the section on consequences, there is no specific mention of poor and marginalized students.

In 2004, the Executive Director of Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane prepared a document entitled *Terms of Reference for a Renewal Process for the Brisbane Catholic Education Centre 2005*. The document is based on the new vision, arising from a recent Synod, for the Archdiocese of Brisbane to embrace the person and vision of Jesus; build communion with God and others; and engage in Christ’s Mission to our world (Brisbane Catholic Education, 2004, p 2). It is also based on the nine priorities arising from the recent Synod, in particular, that Catholics recognize and value the impact of their everyday Christian living on building a better world and that a deep awareness of and commitment to social justice and social welfare be characteristic of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese (ibid p 3). One of the key issues to be considered in the renewal process is the question: Is a genuine commitment to the poor and marginalized evidenced in BCEC’s operations? (ibid, p 6). The renewal process is to be completed and a report finalized by July 2005.

**Conclusion**

The Old Testament, in particular the prophets and the psalmists, emphasize that the stranger, the orphan and the widow are especially close to the heart of Yahweh, that Yahweh hears their cries and that Yahweh will judge the people and the nation on the
way they deal with marginalized and powerless people. Jesus, in the New Testament, blesses, embraces and holds children up to adults and his disciples as models. James concludes that caring for orphans and widows is what genuine religion is about.

In policy documents and the renewal framework, Brisbane Catholic Education has progressed its understanding of its mission to out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students and their families. BCE embraces them in a community of care and seeks to meet their needs, adhering to the vision and mission of Jesus. While Brisbane Catholic Education explicitly mentions marginalized students in some policy documents, BCE needs to formulate a specific policy statement for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

The Task Force therefore makes the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 1**

*That Brisbane Catholic Education formulates a comprehensive policy statement on out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.*
Chapter 3 Statistics for Primary Schools

Out-of-Home Primary School Students
Seventy-six primary schools returned surveys with numbers of out-of-home students on a weekly and a yearly basis.

Weekly
Seventy-five (75) out of one hundred and four (104) primary schools reported out-of-home students for question 2[a] of the survey (Appendix A). These schools had out-of-home students attending their school at the time they completed the survey.

The average number of weekly out-of-home students for BCE schools (2004): 11 students per 1000. (In 2003, the corresponding average number of weekly out-of-home students was 8 students per 1000, while the corresponding figure for secondary colleges was 10 students per 1000). Four schools reported out-of-home students above the weekly average rate, the highest being twenty-six out-of-home students.

The schools who responded to the survey were in the following regions:
**Beenleigh & Logan:** Regents Park, Daisy Hill, Jimboomba, Cornubia, Beenleigh, Crestmead, Kingston, Woodridge
**Ipswich:** Booval, North Ipswich, Springfield, Goodna
**Metro South:** Yeronga, Coorparoo (St James), Coorparoo (Mt Carmel), Wishart, Cannon Hill, Sunnybank, Corinda, Salisbury, Dutton Park, Moorooka, Carina, Bulimba, Darra, Annerley, Acacia Ridge
**Metro North:** Clayfield, Sandgate, Wavell Heights, Hendra, Nundah, Indooroopilly, Mitchelton, Kenmore, Bardon, Geebung, Stafford, Banyo, Grovely, Windsor
**North Coast:** Nambour, Caloundra, Sunshine Beach and Maroochydore
**Outer Metropolitan:** Petrie, Albany Creek, Birkdale, Manly, Rochedale, Brighton, Bracken Ridge, Capalaba, Zillmere North, Victoria Point, Alexandra Hills, Wynnum and Inala
**Rural:** Laidley, Boonah, Gympie, Beaudesert, Nanango, Torquay, Kingaroy, Murgon and Maryborough
**Redcliffe and Caboolture:** Burpengary, Bray Park, Kippa Ring, Woody Point, Deception Bay, Caboolture
**South Coast:** Clear Island Waters, Currumbin Waters, Ashmore and Nerang

**Note.** Primary schools have been placed in the above nine regions rather than the eight regions overseen by the Area Supervisors. The nine regions, while in some sense an arbitrary arrangement, serve to identify local government areas, e.g., Beenleigh and Logan, Redcliffe and Caboolture, contiguous geographical areas and, for straightforward comparison, between North and South Coasts and Rural and Metropolitan areas.

The following regions recorded the highest weekly numbers of out-of-home students:
- **Beenleigh and Logan** 17 students per 1000
- **Rural** 17 students per 1000
- **Metro North** 15 students per 1000
Metro South 13 students per 1000
Redcliffe and Caboolture 10 students per 1000
Ipswich 8 students per 1000
Outer Metro 7 students per 1000
South Coast 7 students per 1000
North Coast 4 students per 1000

**Yearly**
Seventy-six (76) out of one hundred and four (104) primary schools reported out-of-home students in answer to question 2[b] of the survey (Appendix A), that is, these schools reported out-of-home students during the year 2004.

The average number of yearly out-of-home students for BCE schools (2004): 14 students per 1000. (In 2003, the corresponding average number of yearly out-of-home students was 10 per 1000, while the corresponding figure for secondary colleges was 14 students per 1000). Five schools reported higher yearly out-of-home students than the average figure with the highest being thirty-three students.

The nine regions recorded the following yearly numbers:
Beenleigh and Logan 25 students per 1000
Metro North 21 students per 1000
Rural 17 students per 1000
Metro South 17 students per 1000
Redcliffe and Caboolture 11 students per 1000
Ipswich 10 students per 1000
Outer Metro 10 students per 1000
South Coast 7 students per 1000
North Coast 4 students per 1000

There were an equal number of females (202) and males (202) in the yearly statistics for out-of-home students. The highest numbers were in Year 3, with females numbering thirty-three and males numbering thirty-six.

**Why are some students living in out-of-home situations?**
A family history of domestic violence; father left home and mother does not provide emotional or financial support; mother has a mental illness; parents with drug/alcohol problems and/or depression; sexual abuse; parents live out of town; conflict with stepfather; mother abusive; in the care of the State; adopted; mother is in a new relationship.

**Where are they living now?**
Out-of-home students were living in the following situations: in a stable fostering arrangement; multiple foster placements; with neighbours; with grandparents; with extended family; and with the parents of a friend.
Marginalised Primary School Students
Students may be marginalised for some of the following reasons: subjected to violence (physical, sexual, emotional) at home; parents have addictions; mental health problems; parents have mental health problems; they are parentless, in the sense that they do not have parents who care for them; they have significant learning difficulties; they have severe behavioural problems.

Weekly
Ninety-nine (99) out of one hundred and four (104) primary schools reported marginalised students in responses to the survey.

The average number of weekly marginalised students for BCE schools (2004): 75 students per 1000. (In 2003, the average weekly number was 69 marginalised students per 1000), while the corresponding figures for secondary colleges was 96 students per 1000). Ten schools reported weekly numbers of marginalised students at higher than the weekly average with the highest having one hundred and sixty-nine students.

The regions recorded the following weekly numbers of marginalised students:
- Ipswich: 177 students per 1000
- Beenleigh and Logan: 135 students per 1000
- Metro South: 87 students per 1000
- Redcliffe and Caboolture: 81 students per 1000
- Rural: 73 students per 1000
- South Coast: 64 students per 1000
- North Coast: 54 students per 1000
- Metro North: 54 students per 1000
- Outer Metro: 44 students per 1000

Yearly
One hundred and one (101) out of one hundred and four (104) primary schools reported marginalised students in response to the survey.

The average number of yearly marginalised students for BCE schools (2004): 79 students per 1000. (In 2003, the average yearly number was 69 students per 1000, while the corresponding figure for secondary colleges was 129 students per 1000). Ten schools reported numbers of marginalised students at higher than the yearly average with the highest having one hundred and seventy-two students.

The regions reported the following yearly numbers of marginalised students:
- Ipswich: 179 students per 1000
- Beenleigh and Logan: 145 students per 1000
- Metro South: 91 students per 1000
- Redcliffe and Caboolture: 85 students per 1000
- Rural: 76 students per 1000
- South Coast: 73 students per 1000
- Metro North: 59 students per 1000
Regional gender breakdown shows marginalised males consistently outnumbered marginalised females:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro South</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beenleigh and Logan</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro North</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Metro</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redcliffe and Caboolture</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disengaged Primary School Students**

Primary schools were asked, *How many out-of-home and marginalised students are not able to engage with the curriculum as it is offered by your school?* (Appendix A, question 4).

Seventy-nine (79) out of one hundred and four (104) primary schools reported disengaged students.

The average number for BCE schools (2004): 27 students per 1000
(In 2003, the average number for disengaged students was 25 per 1000, while the corresponding figures for secondary colleges was 15 students per 1000). Fourteen schools reported numbers of disengaged students at higher than the yearly average with the highest having eighty-six students

The regions reported the following numbers of disengaged students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Students per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beenleigh and Logan</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro South</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redcliffe and Caboolture</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Metro</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro North</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional gender breakdown shows disengaged males consistently outnumbered disengaged females:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beenleigh and Logan</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro South</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Out-of-home</td>
<td>Marginalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro North</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Metro</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redcliffe and Caboolture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

The figures for 2004 show a marked increase in out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students when compared to the figures of 2003.

The three highest regions in each category are:
- Out-of-home students: Beenleigh and Logan, Metro North and Rural
- Marginalised students: Ipswich, Beenleigh and Logan and Metro South
- Disengaged students: Beenleigh and Logan, Metro South and Ipswich

The Beenleigh and Logan region is in the top three regions in all three categories.

There were almost equal numbers of females and males in the yearly statistics for out-of-home students, the highest numbers being in Year 3 with females numbering thirty-three and males numbering thirty-six. Regional gender breakdown shows marginalised males consistently outnumbered marginalised females. Regional gender breakdown shows disengaged males consistently outnumbered disengaged.
Chapter 4   Stories of What is working in Primary Schools

Survey questions invited respondents to write a story of what has worked and why the intervention worked (Appendix A, questions 5[a] and 5[b]). Seventy-five (75) schools responded with examples of what they were doing to assist out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged children.

These stories record how school personnel have worked with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students and their parents. Some of the students in these stories have been subjected to physical, emotional and sexual violence (15), others have drug/alcohol addicted parents (10), a few have a parent or parents in prison. Some have parents with mental health issues, while some students themselves have diagnosed mental health issues. A number are migrant and/or refugee children. Twelve of the students mentioned in the stories were in the full time care of their grandparents, while one was being cared for by an aunt. Nine students were living in foster care arrangements.

The school personnel who care for these children were identified in the stories as teachers, principals, guidance officers, pastoral workers, learning support teachers, indigenous teacher aides, English as a second language teachers, other parents and peers.

The non-school based personnel and agencies who have assisted these children were identified as BCE specialist support staff, community agencies such as Child and Youth Mental Health Services, Department of Child Safety, Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Centacare, Adopt-a-Cop program and indigenous agencies.

Of the seventy-five examples of what is working to assist marginalised students, the following characteristics were identified (the number of mentions are in brackets): team work (48); supporting parents including foster parents and grandparents and/or parent programs (35); partnerships with community agencies (27); guidance counsellors (20); learning support teachers (17); school pastoral workers (8); parents helping parents and children in need (5); student peer support (4); and accommodation support the school was able to provide or access (3).

Nine (9) respondents noted the importance of the school being a safe haven for these children, while another nine (9) mentioned the financial assistance the school and/or the community was able to provide for the children and/or their families.

1: Feeling valued and safe

*Being valued and in a safe environment is an antidote to domestic violence.* [The student lives in an environment where there is regular violence. [The Department of] Family Services have intervened. Student was well below academic levels expected, acting out, non-compliant, aggressive. Regular meetings were held with the student pastoral worker. One person worked with the student one-on-one on various academic areas. In other words, we constructed an alternative ‘hands on’ programme.*
Why do you think it worked?
[The] student felt valued and safe in the school environment. Student’s self esteem and sense of self improved. Good relationships were formed between the student and significant adults. Strategies for coping with emotions were developed.

2: A strong school community
During a disputed separation, a child disclosed to Mum that he had been sexually abused by Dad. Mum came to school looking for advice and I referred her to the Child Protection officer. An appropriate response followed: the father was informed and Mum was scared to stay overnight at home. Through school resources, temporary shelter up the coast was found providing safe and unknown accommodation and a holiday for Mum and her two children.

Why do you think it worked?
The Child Protection officer’s response was immediate and effective. Mother had confidence in school personnel. The school community was strong enough to take on the issues and find solutions. Individuals took initiative appropriately.

3: Taking control
Time Out – Cool Off Time. For one of our ADD children we have set up a space in the office where he can cool off after interaction which causes stress. Often the child will bring himself to this area and sit until he is calm enough to talk through incidents or situations.

Why do you think it worked?
The child was able to take control of his own situation, and was allowed time to cool down and respond in his own time after the emotional build up had subsided.

4: With trust has come security
The most significant change we have experienced has been with a girl currently in Year 6 who was scared and angry most days about eighteen months ago. She is now engaged in her learning and very settled at school, enjoying friendships. The change has occurred through teachers taking a strong interest in her family situation, giving her time and space and creating as much security for her as is possible.

Why do you think it worked?
This little girl trusted no one until recently. Because she has learned over time that her teachers really care about her and she now experiences the school’s protection of her, that trust has developed. With the trust has come security. As a result she enjoys being at school and learns.

5: Having the best interests of the child at heart
This story relates to a large family in our school. We give some of the younger ones food in the morning which helps with concentration. We keep them for a brief period after school so homework can be completed under a teacher’s supervision as there is little chance of homework being completed at home. To get forms signed etc. we will go to the
house – so that the children can participate in excursions etc. We keep in constant contact with parent/carers and endeavour to keep up with what is going on at home. The curriculum is adjusted where necessary. We also enlisted the help of the Department of Families.

**Why do you think it worked?**
The family is aware that we have the best interests of the children at heart. The children also are probably aware of this. We monitor their behaviour closely as there is a tendency for violent behaviour. The interventions are all geared to ensuring that the children can participate in school life as much as possible, both in and out of the classroom.

**6: Unconditional positive regard**
We set up a teacher mentoring program for a student with behavioural problems. The student was assigned a teacher whose role was to build a relationship with the child, encourage and affirm the child’s strengths, involve the child in helping activities before and after school.

**Why do you think it worked?**
The student wanted and needed unconditional positive regard, felt valued, had something to look forward to each day. He wanted to please the teacher who showed care, concern and who spoke positively about him and to him. His self-respect and confidence returned.

**7: A whole of school approach**
A Case Management Committee was set up consisting of Principal, Assistant to the Principal-Religious Education, Learning Support Teacher, Behaviour Management person, Student Pastoral Worker. This group met once a week for two hours and monitored every child in the school who was receiving or was being considered for any support from any person beyond the classroom teacher.

Classroom teachers couldn’t be released for these meetings, but could book a time before school to meet with the team to bounce ideas etc for managing/supporting a child. Once a classroom teacher spoke with any support person about a child (even for a few minutes) then that child automatically became part of the review system. At the meetings, information was exchanged, support people were able to develop a coordinated plan, then a liaison person was appointed for the class teacher as a support and mentor, and a support person was chosen for the child and parent – not always the same person (rule of thumb being that the person as the support person tended to be the person with the best relationship with the person they were supporting).

This process allowed for quick reaction time for staff, child and family, and created holistic support in that priorities could be determined and addressed rather than four people all trying to deliver the same support from their perspective. It also created time for the support people, as their case loads became more manageable.
Why do you think it worked?
Children’s needs were being addressed at their critical point of intervention. Coordination across support services within the school was achieved so that duplication became a non-issue. Support staff were being supported through the sharing of the problem – no longer my problem but our problem. This also spread to classroom teachers. Over time, they came to realise that their role was the face-to-face interaction, but that they were supported by a group of people around them.

All issues that children present with are multifaceted. Being able to look at the big picture, then offer assistance to deal with issues systematically allowed the children to feel successful. This in turn made the parents feel successful.

Parents having a support person assisted in them not feeling threatened by school staff who were dealing with some quite complicated issues for their children. This over time has led to many issues that were quite out of control some four years ago being at a point where they are being dealt with as a team comprising school staff and parents for the best attainable position for the child.

8: Personalising the support
Truancy was a major issue for one child. Along with the class teacher and school counsellor, our Assistant Principal-Admin worked with the mother and child in order to reduce the number of days absent. Over the course of a semester his attendance improved markedly. The student has taken an interest in his schoolwork and has commented upon being able to achieve success. He acknowledges that being at school is a major factor in his improvement.

Why do you think it worked?
We personalised the support given to the child and to the mother. We attempted to break down the barrier between home and school through discussion and support.

9: Positive relationships
This story involves an Autistic Spectrum Disorder student with extremely high level needs on entry to Year 1, 2001. Explosions occurred on a regular basis where he would scream, use abusive language, kick, punch, bite, throw objects etc. The behaviour was addressed in wrap-around meetings. Strategies were designed viz, the student came to the office each morning to review school rules, student goals and appropriate behaviours, and returning at the end of the day to debrief. A class step process was developed identifying consequences for inappropriate behaviours, with the final step being sent home. A red/green card cue system was implemented to encourage appropriate behaviours. This student did not attend school on Wednesdays. Significant support was allocated on the other four days. A communication booklet was sent home every day. Regular wrap-around meetings were held. The whole school supported both the teacher and the student in the endeavour to provide a needs-satisfying environment.
Why do you think it worked?
Positive relationships were maintained among all stakeholders. All were committed to making the plan work. Daily communication kept all stakeholders informed. Action was taken immediately to respond to inappropriate behaviour. All staff genuinely tried to support the student gently but firmly, insisting that rules and standards be maintained.

Consequences were followed through on a consistent basis. Encouragement was provided that acknowledged student effort, strengths and successes. The student was encouraged to reflect on his own strengths and areas needing to improve. Assistance/strategies were given to help the student manage his own behaviour. The curriculum provided was interesting and responded to the student’s interests, ability, experience and needs (there was some room for negotiation/choice). The plan was reviewed and modified to accommodate change in progress/needs.

10: Responding to emergency situations
Having a pastoral care worker on site has meant that the school can respond to emergency situations and work with all parties. For example, recently an upper school student was told to move out of her mother’s home virtually overnight. The pastoral care worker, reporting to the learning support teacher and admin, was able to work with grandparents, the child and the Department of Family Services to assist the child to settle into her new environment and to successfully continue at school without severe disruption. The pastoral care worker was able to tap into the sources needed and coordinated the process.

Why do you think it worked?
Pastoral care worker had the skills, contacts necessary.

11: Peer support
A Year 6 boy was in a separation/divorce/new relationship situation at home, where he felt not wanted and was resentful, and jealous of siblings. His pent-up anger was shown in an aggressive rude manner to peers and teachers, non-cooperation and non-involvement. Inclusion (reluctantly) in a group of Year 6/7 girls and boys in the Seasons Program turned him around.

Why do you think it worked?
Small group situation with peers; open non-judgemental atmosphere; realisation that peers understood, shared and related to his situation; realisation that he could change how he felt; the leader of the group was compassionate yet structured and well trained, using the well planned activities.

12: Student support teams
At this school we use student support teams to assist students at risk. These involve, as appropriate, class teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Officer, Principal or delegate initially, and then include parents or others who are stakeholders or who have expertise. A case involving a Year 5 boy who has Attention Deficit Disorder, poor school
performance and behaviour and a family history of harsh physical treatment showed marked improvement using this wrap around model.

**Why do you think it worked?**
Building a relationship with parents so that they believe they are a part of the solution rather than part of the problem is important. Ability to access appropriate resources is important.

**13: A team effort by all stakeholders**
[This story is about a] female upper school student: school refusal resulting in aggressive behaviour toward mother and teachers. This behaviour escalated in Year 5 resulting in School Guidance Counsellor working in conjunction with Assistant Principal-Admin, mother and student to develop coping strategies to deal with this situation. Despite this intervention, the tantrums and aggressive behaviour continued for at least another eighteen months, during which time the School Guidance Counsellor referred the mother and child to a psychiatrist and, from this, a partnership between school personnel and the psychiatrist developed to enable everyone to work towards the same outcomes. This has resulted in the child this year being more compliant in attending school and an absence of tantrums and aggressive behaviour.

**Why do you think it worked?**
It worked because of a commitment by school personnel, including School Guidance Counsellor, Assistant Principal-Admin, Assistant Principal-Religious Education, Support Teacher-Inclusive Education, Class Teacher, parent and the outside agencies to bring it to a favourable outcome, despite the time frame involved and the child’s reluctance and sabotaging tactics to thwart any success being achieved. It was a team effort by all stakeholders.

**14: Community spirit**
[A] Family [was] at great risk after single mum passed away. [We] established a small group of parents to quietly work to support the family in practical ways.

**Why do you think it worked?**
It worked because it was a personal approach based around the community spirit in the school.

**15: Supporting mother and relaxing attendance requirements**
Our child who was a ‘school refuser’ and frequently ran away from his mother and had to be physically carried into the office and, on occasions, restrained until his mother left the school has now reached a stage where such behaviour is (a) very infrequent (b) less severe when it does occur and (c) his attendance is more regular and consistent.

**Why do you think it worked?**
Personally, because the mother (a sole supporting parent) was given the emotional support she needed to cope with her son’s behaviour and for the emotional impact that it
had on her. As well, attendance requirements were relaxed and made flexible enough to further reduce stress on both child and mother.

16: Supportive trusting relationships
To assist in the care and learning needs of one boy, we utilised our Adopt-a-Grandma program. We have the services of two older parishioners who have been ‘adopted’ by our school, specifically to assist in our Library, read to students who need someone to take an interest in them etc. Each week our student and our ‘Grandma’ would spend time together, reading, talking etc. The student built a very happy relationship with the lady. As well, the two school secretaries became involved in the student’s behaviour program – taking an exceptional interest in supporting him, talking with him etc. The student was also supported by our Pastoral Care Support Teacher – support structures were put in place to assist with behaviour changes; regular meetings were held with parents etc.

Why do you think it worked?
This combination of strategies worked because members of this school community went out of their way and gave much personal time to take an interest in the student and give him the type of support he required. The student was able to build some supportive, trusting relationships in a community where he felt safe and loved and knew if he made some mistakes along the way that people were still here to step in – no one gave up on him.

17: Partnerships with community agencies
One of our families had the situation where the parents were continually fighting – physically and verbally in front of two school aged children. This eventually led to the break up of the marriage. Both parents sought assistance from me. I was able to refer them to Centacare for counselling for themselves and the children. Both parents said it was very helpful – however, it didn’t resolve the marriage break up, but has made it easier for the parents to work more amicably for the sake of the children who at first suffered badly. The children also participated in our school run Seasons for Growth program which has helped them learn that the break up and arguments had not been their fault.

Why do you think it worked?
The third party influence for the parents was good. The program for the children showed them that people still care for them and helped them with ways to express their feelings in a non-threatening way.

18: A welcoming culture
Two boys and their younger siblings who were toddlers and preschool aged came from the Northern Territory to live with their aunt in Brisbane. The boys attended our school for the nine months that they were in Brisbane. The school gave the family financial support via fees, books, uniforms. Counselling was provided by the Guidance Officer to the boys as we were aware that they had had traumatic experiences. A school family friend also gave support to the aunt. St Vincent de Paul members and school staff
provided support by supplying clothing and food at times. Eventually after nine to ten months, the boys returned to their mother.

**Why do you think it worked?**

At school the boys were settled, secure and happily involved. Their aunt, with the support of another family, ensured a structured environment. The older boy found this difficult as he was used to freedoms, but his aunt provided a safe/disciplined environment. It worked because the aunt was able to and felt free to approach the school to work together and to seek assistance. We were able to provide the services of a Guidance Officer due to the roll out of staff in that area. We worked closely with St Vincent de Paul members and our staff have created a welcoming and included culture and are attuned to the needs of students and their well being.

**19: Financial support**

This particular student actually finished at our school at the end of 2003, but stands out in our minds. He lived with his elderly grandparents, and his drug addicted father lived on and off in the same premises. This student became well known to our staff as he progressed through the school, and we believe that he felt supported within the school setting. The school provided financially in terms of full-fee concession and the purchase of his uniforms and books etc. In terms of the school budget, each year we would set aside money to support this individual child under the banner of ‘Pastoral Care.’ I believe that the school became really in tune with this student’s needs because he also presented with ascertainable learning needs. Through our wrap around or team support meetings, time was allowed and dedicated to supporting this student in our school.

**Why do you think it worked?**

It was important for the student that he not be seen as physically ‘different’ to any of the others in his class or year level. The financial support allowed this to happen. The time dedicated to regular review meetings for this student also assisted us in knowing him and his needs.

**20: Refugee children**

Marginalised children include refugee children who have been in Australia for twelve months or less. These children require first arrival/significant ESL support. The bilingual aide officer is used extensively with these children and their parents. Parent liaison is one of her major roles. She is used for both oral and written interpretation as well as classroom and individual support. This support is paramount in our school.

**Why do you think it worked?**

Parents build up a good rapport with the bilingual aide – although this is mainly with the women. Being able to communicate in their own language – express their desires or concerns – allows them to feel more a part of the community. Due to cultural factors, some of the men do not like to liaise with women (including the Principal). The Red Cross Interpreter has been most helpful here.
21: Indigenous support
We have experienced a situation where a student returned after the Christmas holidays and had experienced significant turmoil in the family, with separation of the father and the death of the maternal grandmother. The child had been abused by the father and felt extremely insecure at school and could not be confined to the classroom. We were able to involve the Indigenous Education Participation Officer for some additional emergency teacher aide support through our Area Supervisor.

Why do you think it worked?
I think it was successful in part because we were able to provide one-on-one support for the student to settle into the school environment.

22: Foster children
We had three students in foster care this year whose biological mother died of a drug overdose. The students have since been separated from the one foster family and are now in three separate foster families. At the time of the mother’s death, we had a staff meeting run by our guidance officer to discuss our support for the children (and for one another). The students had access to the guidance officer whenever they needed her. We were in contact with the two foster families who keep the children at our school.

Why do you think it worked?
The children know that we cared and that they could go to any staff member when they needed.

23: Follow through
One girl is in foster care and the change of school has had dramatic effects on her behaviour. Regular meetings are held to discuss her progress and to formulate her Individual Education Program (she had level 5 ADD). The strategy and details are broken into small bits. A social skills program to build social interaction skills has had a significant impact.

Why do you think it worked?
It worked perhaps because our school caters for a large number of special needs students and children like the girl mentioned are well nurtured and well understood by staff and students. It works well because our school is small, and she feels comfortable, and because we implement specific interventions and follow them through.

24: A comprehensive approach
Over several years this school has developed a partnership with Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS). At the end of last year, the doctor at CYMHS asked the Principal to consider enrolling a seven year old boy who lives in community care in a house with other children staffed by carers. She felt he would benefit from being in a small supportive environment. The child had established patterns of violent behaviour but also possessed positive personal qualities. He had been excluded in Year 1 and had never been in fulltime schooling, having spent five terms in a behaviour unit. This support was coming to an end. Our Student Support Team wanted to provide the boy
with an opportunity for success and so his enrolment proceeded. The first two months were extremely turbulent and challenging, with daily expressions of unsafe and noncompliant behaviour. The school has invested a significant level of support during the last four months and the boy has made steady progress and is making the transition to full time schooling.

**Why do you think it worked?**

It worked because of a combination of the following: school culture of inclusion and welcoming those in need; perseverance and experimentation until we found strategies that worked; staff who are creative, professional, compassionate, flexible; team work – shared communication, problem solving and ownership; all staff involved in relationship building with the boy; communication with the residential carers, parent, CYMHS and child’s counsellor; medication; ascertainment (social emotional) has meant we have been able to employ a school officer to work with him for a portion of each day and supervise/teach skills in the playground; flexibility of timetable – involvement of several staff members meant the boy had one-on-one for nearly a term with gradual regulated access to the classroom; adjustments to the curriculum; Individual Behaviour Plan – organic and responsive to make this possible (Principal, Student Pastoral Worker, Learning Support Teacher, Teacher Librarian, School Officer); flexibility of funding enables flexible staff; classroom teacher with patience and willing to work with a school team.

25: Whole community response

A Year 6 boy and his Year 3 sister were taken in by their very frail, ill and aged grandfather (their mother has a number of children by different partners). The boy displayed anti-social behaviour and lack of motivation to learn. What has worked?

Close, open and frequent communication, partnership and support for the children and granddad (whether it’s a home or school related issue). The class teacher has provided regular and extensive additional learning support after school which has helped the boy feel a real sense of achievement. Staff members also make sure he is taken care of when transportation is needed for school events. We also pay his camp fees and various other expenses. We have also involved our Adopt-a-Cop who had established a relationship of trust with the boy. Various families within the school community also support the family by paying fees for weekend sport, providing transport and generally including the boy as part of their extended family network. All of these strategies provide the boy with caring, supervision and guidance. Recently, granddad was hospitalised – not only did one of our families drive him to hospital and make sure he had good care, they also provided a home for the two children for over a week.

**Why do you think it worked?**

It is a whole community response which supports the child at all times. He knows there is a whole network of people who love him and care about him. He also knows we are all in communication with each other and that not much ‘slips through the cracks’. It is working so far.
Chapter 5  Available Support Services

A survey question invited respondents to *Detail or list the current support provision available to out-of-home and marginalized students both within your school as well as in the community* (Appendix A (6)).

School Based Support Services

Ninety schools responded to the first part of questions 6, namely, *Detail or list the current support provision available to out-of-home and marginalized students within your school* (Appendix A (6)). The responses have been assembled in the following categories: staff support, nutrition/meals, financial support, parent and family support, and before and after school services. The number in brackets identifies the number of times the support service was listed.

**Staff**

Schools identified the following staff members as being support people to out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students and their families: guidance counsellor (79); learning support teacher (37); class teacher (28); principal (20); school officers (19); support teacher-inclusive education (16); assistant to the principal religious education (11); office staff (11); student pastoral worker (10); English as a second language teacher (3); and new arrivals teacher (1).

*Our school* guidance counsellor is very approachable and supportive.

*Office staff are usually the first port of call along with the Principal. These office staff have been very caring and supportive of parents and students.*

Other staff team support services were identified as: student support team (14); wrap around process (3); teacher mentor program (1); learning enhancement centre (1); play and pray room (1); and the school community hospitality program (1).

**Nutrition/Meals**

Twenty-one (21) schools reported that they provided food for marginalised students as a part of their student support. Schools provided the following services: lunches (9); lunch club (1); breakfast (8); breakfast club (1); safe space lunchtime program (1); and lunch time activities, e.g., chess & computer club (1).

**Financial Support**

Forty-two (42) schools reported providing financial support. These schools identified the financial support they gave to families as follows: unspecified financial support to families in need (18); reduced fees (5); total waiving of fees (3); and paying for excursions/camps, as well as providing new or second-hand uniforms (3).

Nine (9) schools acknowledged that their Parent and Friends Association executive members were very supportive of needy families. Three (3) schools reported that their Uniform Shop provided uniforms to marginalised students, and one (1) reported that their
school’s Pastoral Care Group provided crisis support for families in terms of meals and assistance with transport.

**Parent and Family Support**

Many schools reported that they provided support services to families, identifying these support services as: Pastoral Care Mothers Support group; Parent Support group; Families in Need of Support group (FINS); Parent Skills Program; Families Helping Families Program; Individual Parent Support; Buddy Families; Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committee (ASSPA), (also providing uniforms, breakfast club, books); and Adopt a Grandma.

[Our school has an] *open door policy for parents – they feel welcome to share feelings and problems with the principal, school pastoral worker, APRE and guidance counsellor.*

[Our school provides] *morning tea for parents on a regular basis in the pastoral care rooms.*

**Before and After School Services**

Six (6) schools reported they used their before and after school facility to support marginalised students, while two (2) provided a homework centre. Finally, one (1) school identified participating in a Healthy Schools Project as a support to its marginalised students.

**Community Based Support Services**

Seventy-six (76) schools responded to the second half of survey question (6), namely, *Detail or list the current support provision available to out-of-home and marginalized students within the community* (Appendix A (6)).

Schools identified the following services as assisting them with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students and their families: parish networks; Brisbane Catholic Education Centre; Parent and Children’s programs; counselling services; government services; family support services; and non-government youth support services.

**Parish Networks**

Schools made ready use of local Church community personnel and resources. They identified these as: Care and Concern group (15); parish priest (9); parish worker (7); Religious Sisters (2); Family Groups (1); Parish Family Support Centre (1); and the Parish Social Justice group (1).

Fifty-one (51) schools reported that the local St Vincent de Paul conference supported marginalised students and their families. One school reported that it had made use of a child and family program established by the St Vincent de Paul Society.
Brisbane Catholic Education Centre
Fourteen (14) schools named student support services operated from BCEC as of assistance to their marginalised students and their families. They named these services as: Indigenous Participation Officer (4); Consultant Special Needs (4); Child Protection Officers (3); and Speech Pathologist (3).

Parent and Children’s Programs
Student and parent support programs were acknowledged by many schools as assisting them with marginalised students and their families. They identified these programs as: Triple P Parenting Courses and Resources (6); Seasons for Growth program (5); Family and Friends program (4); Social Skills program (4); Rainbows program (3); Behaviour Teaching program (2); Pathways (1); You Can Do It Education program (1); ATAS: in school tutor program (1); Virtues Program (1); and Families Now (1).

Counselling Services
Twenty-four (24) schools said they were using external counselling services for marginalised students and their families. The following counselling services were named: Centacare (14); Lifeline (3); Salvation Army (2); and Uniting Church (1). Another four schools used unnamed counselling services.

Government Services
Thirty-two (32) schools used services provided by Government departments. The following departments and/or services were listed: Child and Youth Mental Health Services (17); Department of Child Safety (6); Community Health Centre (5); Police-Juvenile Aid Bureau (1); Adopt-a-Cop (1); Education Queensland (1); Disability Services (1).

Family Support Services
Five (5) schools listed family support services: Domestic Violence Service (1); Pregnancy Helpline (1); and Community Centre (3).

Non-government youth support
Seven (7) schools listed non-government youth support agencies. The organisations nominated were: Paradise Kids (1); Streetsmart (1); Kids Help Line (1); Rosies (1); and Ipswich Independent Youth Service (1). Two schools listed accommodation services, nominating Youth Accommodation Program (1); and Home Stay (1).
Chapter 6       School Based Recommendations

[Our schools should aim at] maintaining a safe, happy, secure environment where students and their families feel welcome and loved, can share their needs and problems, are challenged to growth, and know their successes are recognised and celebrated. Principal

A survey question asked, How could your school better assist students who are out-of-home and/or marginalised? (Appendix A, question 6 [a]) Seventy-seven (77) schools responded to the question.

Respondents indicated that the capacity of the school to respond to out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students would be enhanced by assisting school personnel, especially teachers, with professional development in such areas as: pastoral care techniques, at risk signs, opportunities to share responses, interventions and strategies (39); increasing guidance counsellors’ hours (24); and employing more pastoral care workers (21).

Survey respondents made recommendations in the following areas: additional resources; parent/family programs; student programs; links with community resources; parish community; flexible curriculum; respite accommodation; before and after school care; and an overall and clearly enunciated pastoral care policy on out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students.

Professional Development
Thirty-nine (39) out of seventy-seven (77) respondents suggested that professional development was needed in the following areas: pastoral care techniques/strategies (17), at risk signs (10), and opportunities to share responses/interventions (12).

I believe that as a school we need to show such children the unconditional love that they may not be experiencing at home. This comes through a whole of staff approach in developing positive relationships in an atmosphere that values reconciliation and belonging.

[We need] more time to network with teachers from other schools to glean wisdom.

Other areas of professional development recommended were: promoting an accepting attitude (5); how to support out-of-home and marginalised students (5); how to support family carers (4); how to deal with abusive parents (4); and community contacts in emergencies (3).

Let the students know that they can feel safe in approaching teaching staff or administration and that their privacy will be respected.
As with children with special learning needs I believe that our out-of-home or marginalised students also need to be ‘owned’ by the entire staff of a school. We ALL need to be conscious of these students in the day to day events of school life (respondent’s emphasis).

Sometimes it is hard to identify at risk students as good cover-up occurs by children.

Additional Resources
Sixty-seven (67) respondents recommended enhanced resources, especially in the form of additional professionally trained staff. They specifically mentioned guidance counsellors (24), pastoral care personnel to work with the staff, students and their families (21), learning support teachers (4), support teacher-inclusive education (1), indigenous support teacher (1), and English as a second language teacher (1).

Increase the time for guidance counsellors in all schools.

[We recommend] the employment of a school guidance counsellor based on the total number of children enrolled in the school. This will give greater assurance that some children in need will not slip through undetected.

Funding [should be] linked to the number of students needing intervention.

[We need] a greater allocation of specialist services e.g., visits of speech pathologist more than ONCE in a term (respondent’s emphasis).

[We recommend] a student welfare/pastoral care officer: a person with time to invest in the wellbeing of students.

Maintain and strengthen the role of the Aboriginal Liaison officer.

Ten (10) respondents recommended enhanced financial resources to assist, e.g., smaller schools with fee exemption, uniforms and excursions, as well as for other emergency responses.

[We recommend] additional financial support for times when basic requirements are beyond the budget of a Grandparent on a pension, e.g., shoes, haircuts, provision of lunches.

Parent/Family Programs
There were seventeen (17) recommendations which specifically pertained to parents and families. Seven (7) recommended parenting skills programs, with another three (3) recommending supporting parents in crisis. Two (2) suggested enlisting the support of parents to assist parents in need, while one (1) suggested parent support groups.
The role of the school behaviour officer has developed and expanded to support school families.

Parenting programs [are needed] to assist parents who are struggling with parenting skills, are grieving and angry because of relationship breakdowns, and who need support to manage stress.

[Schools should] offer parenting programs (maybe conducted by staff from Centrecare) at the school.

Two respondents mentioned the role of the parish in assisting parents.

I think the Parish can be a huge support in this area for pastoral care and support for parents struggling with parenting.

Finally, one respondent stated:

Food and clothing are always provided through generous parents, plus we always keep a supply of extra clothing at school for these children.

**Student Programs**

Twenty-two (22) respondents recommended the need for special student programs: nine (9) recommended strength building programs; four (4) noted the need for breakfast programs; four (4) considered a consistently implemented Behaviour Development and Management Policy to be essential; three (3) recommended regular wrap around meetings, while one (1) recommended that a homework centre be established.

Continue and strengthen resilience programs giving at risk children more coping strategies.

[Schools need] assistance to design and resource effective pastoral care policies and procedures.

**Links with Community Resources**

Six (6) respondents saw linking parents/guardians/carers with community support agencies as vital in assisting out-of-home and marginalised students. They also thought it important to utilise the skills of specialist liaison officers, e.g., child protection and indigenous officers.

Stronger and more accessible connections [are needed] with community support agencies.

Our students are sometimes more ‘at risk’ at home because lack of finances can create boredom as they cannot access leisure activities. Brisbane City Council Chill Out partnerships could be strengthened with our school so that there are always leisure activities to look forward to.
Parish Community
One (1) respondent suggested that parish personnel work with families at the place and space they are at.

[We need] real parish support at the level of where the families are at. Rather than families having to conform to the conventions of what is expected by the traditional Church.

Flexible Curriculum
Six (6) respondents recommended curriculum flexibility, in terms of aligning the curriculum to students’ needs, abilities and interests.

It is also necessary to offer some forms of alternate education programs so that these [disengaged] students find school a good place to be rather than choose not to come to school on a regular basis because they are unable to connect with the curriculum. It is important that these students find people in their school with whom they can build positive, supportive relationships.

[We need to] establish a flexible, negotiated curriculum for those students who are marginalised.

Respite Accommodation
Four (4) respondents saw a need for respite accommodation for children looked after by grandparents, and, indeed, for some parents with children with complex needs. One (1) suggested that schools should have access to respite accommodation directories.

Respite care for adults and children would be helpful in times of stress.

Before and After School Care
Four (4) respondents expressed the need for before and after school care.

Pastoral Care Policy
One (1) respondent recommended that schools concentrate on their core business, with a warning that schools should not become a one stop welfare centre.

While recognising that school is an important contact point in dealing with social issues, I believe that we should be extremely cautious about making schools one stop welfare centres. We might well borrow from the commercial world the concept of core business. Where an organisation concentrates on its core business it can often do this well, adapt to changing conditions and sustain itself over time. When organisations lose this focus they often lose their way and become irrelevant. Schools are not a substitute for a family. It is not appropriate for schools to take on the role of the family except in emergency situations. For too long schools have been picking up whatever is falling through the cracks. This is unsustainable in the long run.
Four (4) respondents strongly recommended that the work with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students be grounded in the Church’s teaching of preferential option for the poor and be clearly articulated in policy and practice.

[There is a need to] establish a pastoral care policy that clearly articulates the need to support out-of-home students.

A preferential option that actually realises that some schools are POOR and that reduction in resource allocations have a major impact on the POOR! (respondent’s emphasis).

[We need] assistance to design and resource effective pastoral care policies and procedures.

**Conclusion**

By far the majority of respondents wanted to increase the school’s capacity to cater for, engage with, and assist in meaningful ways students who are out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged, as well as their parents. School personnel, while recognising the need for professional development, stated that additional resources were a key factor in a school’s ability to engage with and respond to the many complex needs of some of their students and their families. A clearly articulated pastoral policy based on our Judeo Christian heritage, especially the Church’s teaching on a preferential option for people who are poor, was recommended as essential.
Chapter 7  System Based Recommendations

We often need support for children going through difficult times, e.g., children running away from school. We need strategies put in place for dealing with such situations. We need support staff to sit with these children and ease them into the classroom environment. Some very young children are disturbed in that they do not know their own identity. ... Why do they have to go to visit this “other person”? After weekend visitations, they often come to school angry and upset. We need resources available to deal with these dilemmas. Unfortunately, unless a child is ‘labelled’ there is no funding for assistance. Principal

Schools were asked the survey question, How could the Catholic school system better assist students who are out-of-home and/or marginalised? (Appendix A, question 6 [b]). There were sixty-six (66) responses to this question. The responses have been grouped into four categories, namely: additional resources; policies, roles and responsibilities; professional development; and community agencies.

Additional Resources
Forty-two (42) out of sixty-six (66) responses advocated more resources be made available to schools: guidance counsellors (11), school/home liaison officers (8), student pastoral workers (5), protective services officers (5), as well as more frequent access to such professionals as Speech Language therapists (2), Occupational Therapists (2), psychologists (2), and a family counselling service (2). Four (4) schools expressed the need for increased assistance for emergency situations.

Guidance Counsellors
While a number of schools appreciated the roll out of more guidance counsellors at the beginning of second semester 2004 (see below), eleven (11) recommended more guidance counsellor hours for their schools. One school experienced a drop in guidance counsellor attendance, and remarked

Having been a school that has gone from having a locally based school counsellor for four days per week for many years to two days per week this year, we are really noticing a difference. The students [out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged] and the associated family concerns require time if they are to be dealt with effectively.

School/Home Liaison Officers
Eight (8) respondents believed schools needed the services of school/home liaison officers for a variety of tasks, including assisting in family emergencies, working with families in crisis, working with refugee children and their families, and communicating information from the school to the family.

[Our school needs] access to personnel (in BCEC) to advise and if necessary implement action, e.g., at the moment emergency housing is almost non-existent in many areas. Parents and kids in crisis often cannot/will not access assistance
they need to travel to find [such accommodation].  We need personnel able to work in our school communities.

[We need] trained personnel available to work with families.  [We need] support to assist refugee children and their families.

Communication with some families is a major issue.  They don’t read notes and have no phones.  Home visits are the only option.

Student Pastoral Workers
Five (5) schools noted the importance of student pastoral workers, and recommended that this program be expanded to those schools dealing with numbers of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged children.

I would like to see the role of Student Pastoral Worker expanded to more schools.  Some schools encounter situations so irregularly that it is not a major issue for them whilst other schools deal with these issues on a day to day basis.

Protective Services Officers
Five (5) respondents, while appreciating the work of existing child protection officers, recommended that the child protection service be expanded so that officers are able to respond quickly.

The Child Protection Officer role needs to be expanded.  They need to be able to respond quickly.

Perhaps this service [Child Protection Officer] needs to be broadened, but in what way I am unsure other than having access to a counsellor to come out immediately and give guidance.

Having student protection officers on call is a great resource.  Possibly extending this model of support is worth considering.

Other Professional Services
Seven (7) schools recommended increasing access to such professionals as speech language therapists, occupational therapists, phycologists and a family counselling service.

[Our school needs] more access to speech and language pathologists.  We need immediate access to psychologists (waiting time up to 2 – 3 months).  [We also need] someone to diagnose Auditory Processing Problems/Dyslexia.

Emergency Situations
Four (4) schools reported on their needs during emergency or crisis situations.  They recommended that system personnel and/or funding be readily available to assist. One suggested that a “bucket” of money be allocated to particular schools for this purpose.
[We need] system based personnel who are available to assist in emergency situations.

It would be useful to have access to additional funding to provide emergency or crisis support for students who might have need for one-on-one support for a short period of time. Currently we do this but it means having to take a person from their responsibilities to provide that support which can add significantly to the work load of others in a school where this is a common occurrence.

Policies, Roles and Responsibilities

The system needs to be more familiar at a ‘grass roots’ level with the type of issues and problems that are encountered in a school community on a day to day basis. There is a need for personnel from BCEC to be a visible presence within a school community from time to time. Principal

There were thirty-three (33) responses addressed to BCEC, nineteen (19) recommended increased funding to assist the school in catering for marginalised students, four (4) recommended articulating policies for this group of students, five (5) recommended lobbying government for more resources and three (3) recommended further research.

Increased Funding

Nineteen (19) schools recommended that schools receive adequate resourcing, through more flexible funding criteria, and support for school based projects, especially for schools outside the metropolitan area.

[Our school needs] funding for the support of teachers who are involved in Intensive Education Program writing and implementation.

Ideally [we should] have a more flexible approach to funding by way of criteria and disbursement. Broadening the criteria would allow for emergency/crisis situations and for children who don’t fit any criteria but who are marginalised.

[We recommend] provision of resources (human and material) to support school based projects for students and families in need.

Two (2) country schools pleaded for recognition of their special needs, including transport.

There needs to be increased support at the local level – especially for schools outside Brisbane.

[Some of our students need] transport to and from school to allow students to attend school more regularly and punctually.
Seven (7) schools recommended fee concessions, and even total waiving of fees, for children from a local women’s refuge and refugee families. They recommended a scholarship scheme and a special funding category for marginalised children.

Whilst we are happy to support children from the local refuge centre and do not charge them for their stay (whether it be 2 to 10 weeks) this can be a financial drain on the school. Similarly, refugee families are on very significant concessions, and so not pay anything in the first year. Generally, some can afford to pay either five or ten dollars a week after that. System support is generally through the Archdiocesan Levy concession. We enrol these children because we are a Catholic School and openly promote those Gospel values that are at the heart of our faith. However, the reality is that it does have a significant effect on our financial situation. I’m not sure how the system can support us further with this, due to funding realities.

At present our school offers remissions and concessions for fees and books for up to one-third of the school community. While we operate successfully and provide all that is essential – including maintenance – the resource enhancement fund is now a CRITICAL part of budgeting as is the AWL Cancelling. My hope is that Resource Enhancement will continue. (respondent’s emphasis)

[We recommend that] schools with a high number of marginalised students be accommodated into the staffing schedule not as “above schedule.” Schools in areas of poverty with a high percentage of marginalised students have generous and flexible fee structures which do not impose a further burden on families. [We further recommend that BCEC] establish links with the Smith Family.

[We recommend] scholarships given to needy schools with marginalised students (fee payment, uniforms, books etc).

[We recommend] establishing a funding category for these marginalised children. They don’t always fit neatly into an area, however their need for support is still great.

One school recommended consideration of the financial input of schools for these children when calculating the Pay Fund Levy.

Articulating Policy
Four (4) schools recommended that BCEC formulate pastoral care policies and procedures which deal with the many practical issues which emerge when a school enrols or caters for out-of-home and marginalised students.

[Our school needs] assistance to design and resource effective pastoral care policies and procedures.
We need assistance with policy/procedure on dealing with students living out-of-home, including sharing of reports, portfolios with non-custodial parent, involvement in parent meetings, guidelines re signing permission slips, access to guidelines/protocols for out of home students.

Lobbying Government
Five (5) respondents recommended that BCEC lobby the government for more resources on behalf of marginalised students, to increase the numbers of support people and, ultimately, lead to the eradication of poverty in society.

We recommend that BCEC lobby the government [for and on behalf of marginalised students].

One school recommended that BCEC lobby the government to expedite the use of funded grandparent support for marginalised and distressed families.

Another recommended that BCEC acquire more realistic Government funding ..., thus allowing the System to provide additional staffing schedule hours for flexible usage. Without additional funding we end up with the ‘bandaid’ approach.

Another respondent recommended more ‘on the ground’ people to support schools and small groups endeavouring to assist students. This could become a funding issue for governments to address in the systemic eradication of poverty in our community.

Finally, one school recommended political pressure.

Further Research
Three (3) schools recommended that there be research in areas such as: data collection; why some affluent children reject their families; and reviewing the structure of the school to assist it to cater for marginalised students in a more meaningful way.

I'd like to see research on children from such [affluent] backgrounds who have rejected their families/society in response to the overwhelming expectations of affluent parents. Substance abuse, suicide etc is probably just as common among these families but for very different and sometimes more secretive reasons.

We recommend proper data collection methods [on marginalised children].

BCEC needs to review the structure of schools to look at how they might cater for those students who are unable to engage in schooling as it exists for the mainstream students.

Professional Development
Nineteen (19) respondents recommended professional development: fourteen (14) recommending sharing effective interventions, while five (5) suggested training be provided on how to cope with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students.
**Sharing effective interventions**

Some schools recommended professional development on ‘at risk’ signs so as to be able to develop an early intervention strategy; others recommended sharing good strategies; another suggested a resource kit containing ideas and strategies.

One school recommended *inservicing of staff on [at risk] signs to look for as well as available services for families.*

*I would like to see some way of sharing the good strategies, interventions etc. that schools have used and found successful. We all know the constant need to come up with another plan when everything we have tried isn’t working.*

*[We recommend that] a resource kit of ideas, strategies etc could be developed for sharing with schools.*

*[We recommend that BCEC] employ someone to develop strategies based on the policy work already completed ... through exploring links with ACU – McAuley Campus at Banyo.*

**How to cope with marginalised children**

Five (5) schools recommended inservicing staff on how to deal with children with high and complex needs and that this training be funded.

One school suggested *training staff on how best to deal with relevant issues e.g., behaviours, mental disorders.*

Another recommended *more inservice and training opportunities (funded) for staff to help students, parents/carers develop resilience.*

**Community Agencies**

Nine (9) respondents recommended schools be funded to participate in community interagency networks and be supplied with a directory of community agencies.

One school recommended *providing funding and the support network which would enable schools to access outside support agencies more frequently and as required.*

Another school stated that *the best support schools can receive from the system is to provide them with the knowledge of outside agencies and support structures.*

*In times of crisis we need agencies to refer families to.*

**A Word of Thanks**

Six (6) respondents expressed gratitude for the work of BCEC support staff and for the increased presence of guidance officers in their schools.
Continue the support networks as they are a wonderful way of assisting families or students in need. Thank you for what you presently do.

One stated that *the increase in guidance counselling time in schools is a big plus.*

Another wrote *I think that the guidance roll outs have been wonderful. Any future enhancements will be a bonus.*

One respondent noted *we have just become part of the roll out for guidance [counsellors] and having one in the school regularly from this term will be invaluable to do more than reactive work.*

Finally, one school remarked that *the increased guidance has been fantastic but it is already stretched.*

**Conclusion**

While appreciating the roll out of more guidance officers in July 2004, most respondents wanted to further increase their school’s capacity to include and assist marginalised students. They recommended they could do this work better with increased assistance from professional personnel. Furthermore, they believed that BCEC should continually bring to government’s attention the increasing needs of marginalised students and their families and lobby the government for the resources needed to assist them.
Chapter 8  Interviews with Grandparents

Introduction
The researcher interviewed nine grandparents (Appendix B: Schedule of Questions) and one school/home liaison officer who had established a support group for grandparents. The researcher also conducted a limited literature research.

A Limited Literature Review
The researcher identified four Australian articles on grandparents parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis. These articles identified the main reasons that grandparents take on full-time care for their grandchildren to be substance abuse, imprisonment, mental illness, family breakdown, disability, and death or absence of one or both parents (Bugden, p9; Backhouse, p1). According to Federal Government estimates 27,700 Australian children under the age of fifteen years are living with their grandparents only (Bugden, p9). It seems from studies in the United States of America and the United Kingdom that the trend of grandparents caring for their grandchildren is increasing: It is likely that in Australia the number of grandparents raising grandchildren is growing in line with international trends (Fitzpatrick and Reeve, 2003, p54).

All four articles raise the following major issues facing grandparents caring for their grandchildren full-time: legal issues, financial issues, the parenting of a new generation, the lack of appropriate children’s and family services, grandparents’ relationships between themselves, the health of grandparents, housing, social isolation, and education.

Three of the articles stress the need for support groups for grandparents and respite care for their grandchildren. Support groups provide grandparents with practical assistance, friendship and understanding from others in the same situation, while respite care with people known to and trusted by both grandparents and grandchildren give them a break from the responsibilities of caring for their grandchildren.

One article identifies educational issues for grandchildren as: prior erratic school attendance, limited concentration in class due to stress and anxiety in their lives, changing education and school systems. It identifies educational issues for grandparents as: inability to assist with homework, feeling unwelcome at school activities amongst parents so much younger than themselves.

The same article states that grandparents often seek out private schools for their grandchildren.

Quite a few grandparents have decided that a private school may be the best choice for their grandchildren, especially smaller private schools, which can provide more individualised attention and are not so overwhelming for the children. They question who should pay in these circumstances, because they see it not as a choice but as a necessity for their grandchildren (Author unknown).
The Interviewees
Nine (9) grandparents who care for twenty grandchildren were interviewed. Two grandparents were indigenous, one set of grandparents came from a South Pacific nation and spoke little English – a member of their extended family interpreted. The numbers of grandchildren being cared for in each household ranged from one to five. Of the twenty grandchildren, four attended Catholic secondary colleges, fifteen Catholic primary schools, while one was a three year old.

Support People
To the question, *Who are the people at school who support you?* (Appendix B) grandparents nominated the following:
principal (8); student pastoral worker (7); teacher (7); learning support teacher (4); parish priest (3); assistant to principal-admin (1); school counsellor-secondary (1); admin staff (2); and librarian (1).

To the question, *What support did they offer you?* (Appendix B), the grandparents gave the following responses.

The principals were described as friendly, approachable, helpful, encouraging of culture, and ready to assist with fee reduction, books and clothing.

*We’d have a cup of tea with him and we’d sit and talk together.*

*She always makes a point in saying ‘hello’ – a very friendly person. She signed a letter to Centrelink for us.*

*She helps us out with books, clothing and fees and asks me to come and do a bit of filing or lend a bit of help around the school to make it [school fees] up in that way.*

*He helped when my grandson was in strife.*

*We speak woman to woman; we are very open to each other; her door is always open.*

*She encourages my grandson with his culture e.g., drums, didgeridoo.*

*She has told me, ‘You have taught me so much’* (Aboriginal grandparent).

The student pastoral workers were a substantial support to grandparents. They were described as friendly, approachable, and compassionate, and assisted in practical ways, including with spirituality.

*I can chat with her. If something is upsetting me I can go to her and sort it out.*
She lends a listening ear and visits home when our grandson is sick. At least I’ve got somebody to talk to.

Every time I get a problem I always ring her, I get her to sort it out straight away.

I talk over problems about the kids, their parents and the school with her.

She counsels us; she has a lot of compassion.

She rings up the doctor and explains to the doctor what is wrong and makes appointments (NESB grandparents).

She tells us what is happening in the school e.g., when there are excursions and explains what they are about (NESB grandparents).

She gives me a wider picture of the faith.

If she can’t assist us, she’ll find the person to do it.

The grandparents described teachers as friendly, accessible, and unselfish. What teachers did for their grandchildren was greatly appreciated.

They make time to talk with me; there is no need to make appointments.

They all say ‘hello’ and are friendly. Some feel sorry for me because I am old and they want to help.

They listen and encourage my grandson and me to talk to them especially when things are happening in our lives.

They are trained to give of themselves as well as teach.

The school is interested in me and my culture. They make me feel I am family (indigenous grandmother).

They are there for my granddaughter. They are really good in the way they handle her in the classroom.

Learning support teachers were supportive because of the ways in which they took an interest in and cared for the grandchildren.

She is just like another Mum to my granddaughter.

Three grandparents found their parish priests approachable and encouraging.
The secondary college **counsellor** was appreciated because of her strong advocacy, her conflict resolution skills and her willingness to explain the home situation to the teachers.

*She helped with conflict resolution when our grandson was mixed up with some girls who were into drugs.*

*We go to her when there are problems with the grandchildren at school.*

*She is a strong advocate with the principal and the staff.*

The **librarian and office staff** were described as welcoming and helpful.

*The office staff are pretty good and helpful. They pass messages on to the kids for me.*

**Unmet Needs**

When the grandparents spoke about how the school could assist them better, they mentioned such things as not being related to by school staff as parents even though they had full time custody of their grandchildren, not understanding notes and report cards from the school (especially NESB grandparents). One set of grandparents said that teachers should not be always phoning them over the smallest things. Three sets of grandparents were completely satisfied with the support they received from the school. Grandparents experienced difficulties when their grandchildren moved to secondary education in having to tell their story to strangers and in not knowing who to relate to when they needed to speak with someone.

**School Based Recommendations**

A number of grandparents recommended professional development for teachers on such issues as understanding children with problems and on treating grandparents who are full time carers as they would parents. Two sets of grandparents were conscious of an age barrier between themselves and parents. They wished younger parents would reach out to them.

*It would be wonderful if younger mothers reached out to me and were supportive and welcoming. I’m a bit hesitant myself in making the first move.*

Some suggested that schools could assist grandparents understand report cards.

*Report cards are a mystery.*

*The school needs to arrange for us [NESB grandparents] to come in with an interpreter and have the report cards explained to us.*

One set of grandparents needed someone to look after their grandchildren from time to time so they could have a little break.
If somehow we could have a baby sitter from time to time. This would mean that the children would see someone different. All the baby sitter would have to do would be to watch a bit of telly with the children while we went and enjoyed a cup of coffee together.

One indigenous grandparent had spoken to the principal about more involvement of the elders in the school, especially with the boys.

They [the boys] haven’t been taught to respect elders, their bodies or themselves.

Three sets of grandparents had no recommendations and stated that they were totally satisfied with the support the school offered them.

System Recommendations
Two sets of grandparents recommended that BCEC should have a policy on inclusion of grandparents which included waiving school fees for needy grandparents.

Four sets of grandparents care for grandchildren who are under child protection orders of the Department of Child Safety. They spoke of their isolation in dealing with government departments, e.g., the Department of Child Safety and the Queensland Police Service. They recommended that Catholic Education advocate with and on behalf of them with the government on such issues as foster care payments.

If Catholic Education could take on the government on our behalf that would be good on such issues as grandparents receiving the same payments as foster parents as is done in New South Wales.

We have lots of problems with the Department [of Child Safety], e.g., young social workers telling us how to bring up our grandchildren.

It takes the Department [of Child Safety] six weeks to approve an expense, e.g., for an excursion, and by then the activity is over.

Problems only happen [with the police] when our grandson’s dad comes out of prison or goes back in. Recently, we had police raids four or five times a day. They came early in the morning and ripped the bed clothes off our grandson. He was traumatised. They shouted even though they were only standing two or three metres away from us. We told them he was not here but it made no difference. I even told the police I would phone them if our son turned up here but they kept raiding our home. They even raided my daughter’s home and her little boy who is in Year 1 at a Catholic school wet himself. I went to the local police station and complained to the sergeant-in-charge. He said, “If we don’t get your son, we’ll send your grandson to his mother” [a drug addict]. That broke my heart. I went to the inspector of police and told him, but he said he could do nothing.
Grandparents were asked, *Would it be helpful if there was a group of grandparents who met regularly to support one another?* (Appendix B) Eight sets of grandparents were in favour of such a group.

* A group would help break down the isolation we feel; we could talk to others in a similar situation; we could hear their stories and that would make us feel good.

* A support group for grandparents and grandchildren would be good.

* Grandmothers like to sit down together and talk.

* We could swap ideas and support one another.

* We could have picnics together, go fishing, and include the granddads as well.

Grandparents were asked, *Would it be helpful if there was a place where your grandchildren could go from time to time for a weekend or a few days to give you a break?* (Appendix B) Eight grandparents favoured such a suggestion.

* That would be lovely. He loves fishing. He needs to mix with kids, especially other kids without problems.

* Our grandson would be glad to go and would be glad to get home.

* Grandparents need more help. I’ve only got one, others have four or five grandchildren.

**Conclusion**

Grandparents felt there were a number of staff to whom they could relate in schools. Most were very happy with the way the school dealt with them and their grandchildren. However, some felt they were not accepted by other parents and therefore not a part of the school community. Some whose grandchildren were still in the care of the state stated that they experienced difficulty in relating to and negotiating with these bigger systems. Most wholeheartedly endorsed the suggestion of support groups for grandparents and respite care for their grandchildren from time to time.

**A Support Group for Grandparents**

The researcher interviewed a Home/School Liaison officer from a secondary college who convenes a group of grandparents four or five times a year. The group gives grandparents an opportunity to talk together, and confidence to deal both with school structures and with their adolescent grandchildren. The grandparents support each other, as their contact details are made available to all. The junior school deputy principal, the college deputy principal and the parish priest drop in on these meetings.

The Home/School Liaison officer has asked grandparents what issues concerned them. The issues are homework, curriculum, assignments, lack of financial support, isolation
within the school community and paucity of literature on full-time grand-parenting etc. The group deals with these issues as they arise. School staff are invited to the meetings to give input on particular issues. A local government representative has advocated for the grandparents on financial issues. To mitigate the isolation grandparents felt, grandparents have been invited to attend tuckshop to meet with and relate to other parents.
Chapter 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Old Testament, in particular the prophets and the psalmists, emphasize that the stranger, the orphan and the widow are especially close to the heart of Yahweh. Out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged children and young people and their families equate to the orphans and widows of the Old Testament. Jesus, in the New Testament, blesses, embraces and holds children up to adults and his disciples as models. James concludes that caring for orphans and widows is at the core of genuine religion.

BCE embraces out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students and their families in a ‘community of care’ and seeks to meet their needs, adhering to the vision and mission of Jesus and the Church’s teaching of preferential option for people who are poor. While Brisbane Catholic Education explicitly mentions marginalized students in some policy documents, there is a need to formulate a specific policy statement for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

Recommendation 1

That Brisbane Catholic Education formulates a specific and comprehensive policy statement on out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students.

Statistics

Out-of-home Primary School Students
Seventy-six out of one hundred and four primary schools reported out-of-home students during 2004, with five schools reporting higher yearly out-of-home students than the average figure with the highest being thirty-three students.

The Beenleigh and Logan region with 25 students per 1000 and the Metro North region with 21 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of out-of-home students.

The average yearly number of out-of-home students in primary schools was 14 students per 1000. There were almost equal numbers of females and males in the yearly statistics for out-of-home students, the highest numbers being in Year 3 with females numbering thirty-three (33) and males numbering thirty-six (36).

Marginalised Primary School Students
One hundred and one out of one hundred and four primary schools reported marginalised students in their schools during 2004, with ten schools reporting numbers of marginalised students at higher than the yearly average with the highest having one hundred and seventy-two students.

The following regions recorded the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students:
The Ipswich region with 177 students per 1000 and the Beenleigh and Logan region with 135 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students.
The average yearly rate of marginalized students in primary schools was 79 students per 1000. Regional gender breakdown showed marginalized males consistently outnumbered marginalized females.

**Disengaged Primary School Students**
Seventy-nine out of one hundred and four primary schools reported disengaged students during 2004, with fourteen schools reporting numbers of disengaged students at higher than the yearly average with the highest having eighty-six students.

Beenleigh and Logan region with 86 students per 1000 and Metro South region with 36 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of disengaged students.

The average yearly rate of disengaged students in primary schools was 27 students per 1000. Regional gender breakdown showed disengaged males consistently outnumbered disengaged females.

The figures for 2004, for out-of-home, marginalized and disengaged students show a marked increase when compared to the figures of 2003.

The three highest regions in each category are:
- Out-of-home students: Beenleigh and Logan, Metro North and Rural
- Marginalised students: Ipswich, Beenleigh and Logan and Metro South
- Disengaged students: Beenleigh and Logan, Metro South and Ipswich

The Beenleigh and Logan region is in the top three regions in all three categories.

*Making Room for Us* (Dethlefs, pp 26-31) argued that early intervention as well as prevention in terms of student and family support were essential in assisting students in achieving in education.

**Recommendation 2**
That BCE target with an early intervention pilot program, one of the three regions with the highest numbers of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students, that this pilot be conducted over a five year period and be evaluated.

**What is Working**
Primary school respondents identified the necessary components of ‘what is working’ as: team work, supporting parents including foster parents and grandparents, children and parent programs, partnerships with community agencies, guidance counsellors, learning support teachers, student pastoral workers, parents helping parents and children in need, student peer support, accommodation support the school was able to provide or access.
Current Support Provision
In-school support was identified as: staff support, provision of meals, financial support, parent and family support and before and after school services.

Community services which assist schools with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students and their families were identified as: parish networks especially St Vincent de Paul Society, Brisbane Catholic Education Centre support and equity services, student and parent support programs, counselling services, Government agencies and services, family support services and non-government youth support services.

School Based Recommendations
Schools indicated that their capacity to respond to out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students would be enhanced by assisting school personnel, especially teachers with professional development in such areas as pastoral care techniques, strategies, at risk signs and opportunities to share responses, interventions and strategies, increasing guidance counsellor hours, employing more pastoral care workers, flexible curriculum, respite accommodation, before and after school care and an overall and clearly enunciated policy on out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students.

School personnel while recognising the need for professional development stated that additional resources were a key factor in a school’s ability to engage with and respond to the many and complex needs of some of their students and their families. A clearly articulated pastoral policy based on our Judeo Christian heritage especially the Church’s teaching on a preferential option for people who are poor was thought to be essential.

Recommendation 3
That schools formulate a documented pastoral policy and strategy based on the Church’s teaching on a preferential option for people who are poor and that this policy and strategy be included in their renewal plan.

System Based Recommendations
Schools recommended that additional resources be provided to them (guidance counsellors, school/home liaison officers, student pastoral workers, protective services officers etc), policies, roles and responsibilities, (increased funding to assist the school in catering for marginalised students, articulating policies for this group of students, lobbying government for more resources and further research), professional development (sharing effective interventions, training on how to cope with out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students), and community agencies (funding to be involved in community interagency networks, a directory of community agencies).

Furthermore, they believed that BCE should continually place before government the increasing needs of marginalised students and their families and lobby the government for the resources needed to assist them.
Recommendation 4
That BCE establish a system based research unit to collect and analyse data regularly for the purposes of appropriate and effective resourcing.

Grandparents
Most grandparents were very happy with the way the school dealt with them and their grandchildren. However, some felt they were not accepted by other parents and therefore not a part of the school community. Some whose grandchildren were still in the care of the state stated that they experienced difficulty in relating and negotiating with these bigger systems. Most wholeheartedly endorsed the suggestion of support groups for grandparents and respite care for their grandchildren from time to time. Grandparents experienced difficulties in the transition of their grandchildren to secondary education in having to tell their story to strangers and in not knowing who to relate to when they needed to speak with someone.

Recommendation 5
Grandparents recommended that:
1. Professional development be offered for teachers on such issues as understanding children with problems
2. Staff treat grandparents who are full time carers as they would parents
3. Grandparents be integrated into the school community
4. BCE have a policy on inclusion of grandparents which included waiving school fees for needy grandparents
5. Schools establish support groups for grandparents parenting their grandchildren on a full-time basis
6. BCEC personnel and school staff assist grandparents in organising respite care for their grandchildren
7. Brisbane Catholic Education advocate with and on behalf of grandparents with government departments on such issues as foster care payments, custody etc.
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Appendix A

Primary Schools 2004

BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION
ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Research Project

into

the nature, extent and needs of homeless and marginalized students

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS SURVEY BY FRIDAY 6TH AUGUST 2004.

Name of Primary School:

Address:

Name of Person(s) completing Survey:

Position Held:

Phone:

1. How many students in your school? ________

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PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH THE BEST AVAILABLE KNOWLEDGE.

In the interests of accuracy you may need to consult with other members of the school community, or alternatively, you may wish to pass this survey to key personnel in your school, e.g., Child Study team, Student Support Team or form a team with key people (teachers, learning support teachers, guidance counsellors, school secretaries). Some of this information will be difficult to ascertain with a great degree of certainty. Your closest approximation in each answer will assist in future developments for students in these circumstances.
Out-of-Home Students

One of the factors which impacts on a student’s ability to engage in effective education is having safe, secure, and adequate shelter. This part of the survey is designed to ascertain the number of students in each school who are living in out-of-home situations.

Some students are living in out-of-home situations. For example, some students may be in foster care, or living in a refuge or with grandparents or extended families, neighbours or the parents of school friends, etc

2 (a) How many students are in these circumstances this week? _____

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2 (b) What is the total number of students who have been in these circumstances at some time so far this year? _____

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3. Marginalized (or at risk) Students.

*Students may be marginalized or at risk for some of the following reasons:*

- home life is unstable;
- are subject to neglect;
- are subject to violence (physical, sexual, emotional) at home;
- whose parents have addictions;
- who themselves have mental health problems;
- whose parents have mental health problems;
- who are parentless in the sense that they do not have parents who care for them;
- who have significant learning difficulties;
- who have severe behavioural problems.

*In other words, who are the students you really worry about?*

3 (a) How many students are in these circumstances this week? ______

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3 (b) What is the total number of students who have been in these circumstances so far this year? _____

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4. Disengaged Students

*How many out-of-home and marginalized students require significant adaptations to the curriculum? _______*

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<td>Year 7</td>
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</table>

5 (a) Briefly write up a story (case experience) involving an out-of-home or marginalized student where something (response, intervention, strategy) really worked.

5 (b) Why do you think it worked?

6. Current Support Provision

Detail or list the current support provision available to out of home and marginalized students both within the school as well as in the community.

Support services available within the school (e.g., counsellor, breakfast club, etc)

Support available in the community (e.g., local St Vincent de Paul Conference provides uniforms, local neighbourhood centre providing parenting classes etc)
7. **Recommendations:**

7 (a) Your thoughts, ideas or suggestions on how we might improve our **SCHOOL-based** approaches, interventions and/or strategies for our out-of-home and students?

7 (b) Your thoughts, ideas or suggestions on how we might improve our **SYSTEM-based** approaches, interventions and/or strategies for our out-of-home and marginalized students?

The questionnaire should be completed and **returned by Friday 6th August 2004**

mailto: wdethlefs@bne.catholic.edu.au

Thank you for your time and assistance with this survey.
Appendix B    Schedule of Questions for Grandparents

Grandchildren
Names (not for publication):

Ages:

Primary:

Secondary:

1. Who are the people at school who support you?

2. What support do they offer you?

3. What support do you need and do not get? (your unmet needs).

4. How do you think the school could assist us better?

5. How do you think the Catholic Education System could better support you and other grandparents like you?

6. Would it be helpful to you if there was a group of grandparents who met regularly to support one another?

7. Would it be helpful if there was a place where your grandchildren could go from time to time for a weekend or a few days to give you a break?

8. Other remarks.