Making Room for us

Improving responses to the emotional and physical well-being of students

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

Rev Wally Dethlefs

On behalf of Brisbane Catholic Education
I tell everything to the school counsellor. If it’s really important, she’ll make room for us, for example, she’ll change appointments to fit us in. Laura Year 12
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Foreword

The numbers of out of home secondary students in Australia increased by five thousand between 1996 and 2001 (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2002). A small but significant percentage of these students attend Catholic schools.

In this research project, Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) aimed to quantify how many out of home and marginalised students currently attend primary and secondary Catholic schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese, and to determine what supports are in place, what the unmet needs are and how the schools and BCE could better meet the needs of out of home and marginalised students.

The aim of this report is to challenge, stimulate and inspire those involved in the work of teaching and assisting children and young people and their families in the Brisbane Archdiocese.

The Research Reference group and the author hope that the report and its recommendations will be a resource and a foundation to advance the work of Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Wally Dethlefs
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Acknowledgements

The Leadership Team of Brisbane Catholic Education initiated this research project. Their support, enthusiasm, encouragement and interest in the development and progress of this project never waned. I am grateful to them for instigating the research and impressed by their commitment to Gospel values, especially a preferential option for people who are poor and oppressed. During the course of the research, the “Education, Training and Reforms for the Future” (ETRF) enabling legislation was tabled in State Parliament. Now passed by Parliament, this legislation could severely impact on disadvantaged and marginalised students and their parents. Most of these students do not attend Catholic schools. Nevertheless, Brisbane Catholic Education and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission strongly advocated to the State Government on behalf of these students and their families, with the conviction that doing so was well within their mission.

The research work was ably supported and assisted by a Research Reference Group who gave generously of their time, skills, wisdom and experience. Their inspiration, guidance, advice and personal support were invaluable.

The members of this group were
Mr. Peter Crombie – Senior Development Officer, Secondary Schooling (BCE)
Ms. Belinda Drew – Network and Development Officer, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
Ms. Lesley Lavercombe – Education Officer, Counsellor Supervision (BCE)
Ms. Maria Leebeeck – Policy and Development Officer, Queensland Youth Housing Coalition
Mr Paul Toon – Community Development Worker and Teacher
Ms. Veronica Vutelec – Campus Minister, Mt Maria Senior College.

BCE specialist staff were available for consultation and offered invaluable insights. School staff such as Principals, Deputy Principals, Teachers, Counsellors, Campus Ministers, Learning Support Staff and many others made time in their overloaded schedules to complete the survey and to answer questions in one-to-one or small group interviews.

Ms. Sandra Kelly, Secretary to the Director – Schools Supervision & Equity offered invaluable assistance. Ms Phillipa Bowe set up data entry and retrieval systems and entered survey data, a massive task. Ms Denise Cadman, Librarian, found many helpful sources of information related to the topic.

I am grateful to Sandra Sewell, professional editor, who made invaluable editorial suggestions to the text. Many friends and colleagues, informally and formally, encouraged me during the course of the work. Some invited me to use quiet space in their homes, others assisted in the remuneration of the students who were interviewed.

Finally, and importantly, this research was stimulated, enlivened and enhanced by out of home students. Having reflected on their experiences, they made themselves and their distilled wisdom available to the researcher.
Executive Summary

1. As members of the Catholic Church with a Judeo/Christian heritage, our Catholic values of respect for human dignity and preferential option for poor and oppressed people underpin our concern for out of home and marginalised students.

2. Additionally, our Catholic Education tradition has an unequivocal commitment to pastoral ministry and states that the school is an authentic situation for this ministry of liberation and human rights to take place. The document, “The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,” states that poor and marginalised students must be assisted with education, training and Christian formation. It proposes that mutual, respectful relationships should be the norm in the educating community.

3. The literature supports the view that schools are the best sites to undertake prevention and early intervention work with out of home and marginalised students.

4. Primary Schools.
   a. Most primary schools (twenty-seven out of thirty-eight) who returned the surveys reported out of home students in their school during this current year at an average yearly rate of 10.4 students per 1000.
   b. Almost all primary schools (thirty-five out of thirty-eight) who returned the surveys reported marginalised students in their school at an average yearly rate of 68.9 students per 1000 per week.
   c. Primary School respondents identified the necessary components of “what is working” as: team work, relationship building with students, networking with community resources, long term commitment, peer support, family involvement, planning, flexible curriculum and financial support.
   d. Primary School Based Recommendations:
      i. Overwhelmingly, twenty-seven out of thirty-eight respondents recommended enhanced resources to schools, especially in the area of professionally trained staff, namely, counsellors (one for every school), social workers, psychologists, child protection officers, indigenous workers and experts in literacy/numeracy.
      ii. Fifteen suggested that schools should offer programs in parenting skills and advise parents of community support agencies.
      iii. Twelve suggested the need for special student programs, such as consistently implemented Behaviour Development and Management programs, along with Individual Education Plans for at risk or marginalised students.
      iv. Twelve respondents recommended professional development for teachers in such areas as: pastoral care techniques; strategies to support family carers; needs of out of home and/or marginalised students; at risk signs; emergency contacts; how to handle a parent with restricted access; ways to assist children deal with the many complex emotions which surface in the classrooms and how to promote an accepting attitude in the school community.
v. Six respondents recommended strengthening a team approach by conducting student support team meetings with selected pastoral care people (e.g., Child Study Team) on a regular basis, sharing ideas and experiences of successful teacher strategies.

vi. Finally, three of the thirty-eight schools raised the issue of the need for respite accommodation.

e. **Primary System Based Recommendations:**
   i. Again, there were recommendations for additional resources to be made available to schools in the form of a guidance counsellor for each school, school/home liaison people, and more teacher aides.
   
   ii. Fifteen schools advocated exploring and establishing an alternative school(s) and/or flexible curricula.
   
   iii. Four suggested regular meetings with community agencies to share resources and ideas.

5. **Secondary**
   
   a. All thirty-two secondary schools who returned the surveys reported out of home students at an average yearly rate of **13.9 students per 1000**.
   
   b. Almost all (twenty-nine out of thirty-two) secondary schools who returned the surveys reported marginalised students at an average yearly rate of **129 students per 1000**.
   
   c. School respondents identified the necessary components of “what is working” as: team work, cooperation, relationship building, counselling (organising comprehensive support), leadership, listening, family and home visiting, financial support, mentoring, flexible curriculum, networking with community resources, long term commitment.
   
   d. **Secondary School Based Recommendations:**
   
   i. Overwhelmingly, respondents recommended additional resources to schools, especially in the form of more counsellors, reduced teaching loads for pastoral coordinators and administrators, more learning support staff, youth workers for after school work, and financial assistance. Professional development rated highly in the recommendations and included: building community; building relationships with students and their families and between staff and students; providing opportunities for staff to debrief, to collaborate and to share information. Other topics suggested for professional development included: education about how to assist socially and financially disadvantaged people and groups in our community; mental illness; restorative justice practices, and sexual harassment.
   
   ii. Eleven out of thirty-two respondents recommended parent education programs, especially for step-families, single parents and for grandparents parenting their grandchildren.
   
   iii. Ten respondents recommended more flexible curricula, suggesting, in particular, more “hands on” skills training for students with different abilities, i.e., students unable to cope with a strict academic curriculum.
iv. Seven respondents expressed the need for up to date information about community services for students and families.

v. Six respondents recommended schools provide peer support groups, with schools offering peer counselling workshops to students to teach skills such as empathy and reflection of feeling.

e. **Secondary System Based Recommendations:**
   
i. Eleven out of thirty-two schools focussed on the specialist support needs of teachers (to prevent stress and burn out) especially Year level coordinators. They suggested this could be achieved by in-servicing, network meetings and support personnel in central administration.

   ii. Twenty-three out of thirty-two schools recommended that BCE provide safe and supported accommodation for out of home and at risk students (respite, medium and long-term).

   iii. Five recommended more counsellor hours for family support and networking among schools.

   iv. Three recommended that inequalities in funding and resources for schools be addressed by exploring other ways of allocating funds to support marginalised students for example, by increasing funding to schools with a high proportion of marginalised students.

   v. Three recommended the provision of alternative/flexible and less structured schooling options, with a practical life skills focus.

6. **Student Recommendations:**
   
a. Students recommended that schools assist them through professional development of teachers (on such issues as homelessness, drugs, sexuality and sexual identity), financial assistance, establishing peer support groups and having readily accessible and safe accommodation.

b. The students recommended that BCE assist them by having in place policies regarding notes (explaining school absence because of sickness etc), fee reduction and confidentiality, and by making information readily available on what support is in place for them in the school and in the community.

7. **Peer Support:**

   The research demonstrated that out of home students, in the main, spoke freely, openly and fully to their peers about their situations. However, peer support was promoted or encouraged in very few schools and specified in very few examples of “what is working.”

**Recommendations Arising from the Research.**

The Research Reference Group and Researcher recommend that

A. Because of the high level of interest in this research, the research report be made available to those who participated in the research process.

B. Task Force be established by the Executive Director, through the Director of Schools Supervision and Equity, to progress the recommendations and to continue to improve responses to the emotional and physical well-being of students.
a. Task Force be established by late February or early March 2004.
c. Task Force report to the Executive Director of BCE, through the Director of Schools Supervision and Equity.
d. Suggested Task Force membership: system based and school based people, as well as some continuity of involvement by the researcher and the project’s 2003 Research Reference Group.
e. Terms of reference: examine the research report and formulate priorities and implementation strategies, such as opportunities for implementation with key change agents such as school counsellors and school administrators.
Part 1. Research Process

Chapter 1. Methodology

1. Background:
In 1993, Chris Clementson, a student on social work placement with the South East Queensland Youth Accommodation Coalition (now Queensland Youth Housing Coalition) conducted a survey in Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane “to ascertain as accurately as possible the number of students who were experiencing housing difficulties” (Clementson 1993, 3). He found that twenty-one out of twenty-seven secondary schools identified students who moved out of home for short periods, with eleven schools having four or more students in this category and one school twelve students.

Further, twelve out of twenty-seven schools knew of students living in environments where they risked becoming homeless, while ten out of twenty-seven schools reported students leaving school with homelessness as a significant factor (Clementson 1993, 21)

Ten years later, in 2003, Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) decided to commission research into similar areas, adding primary to secondary students, and asking the researcher to consider the possible penalties and consequent criminalisation arising from the proposed ‘Education and Training Reforms for the Future’ legislation.

2. Terms of Reference
To research and make recommendations on the following issues:
1. the nature, extent and the needs of out of home and marginalised young people in Catholic school communities;
2. the extent and profile of the students for whom current educational provision appears to be irrelevant and who disappear out of school communities; and
3. the potential for further criminalisation of young people arising from the recent ‘Education and Training Reforms for the Future’ (ETRF) legislation.

BCE has jurisdiction over twenty-eight secondary and one hundred and eight primary schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese. These schools are called Systemic Schools. There are other Catholic secondary and primary schools which do not come under the jurisdiction of BCE and which are called Religious Institute Schools. The latter were founded and staffed by personnel from male and female Religious Orders, e.g., the Christian Brothers colleges of St. Laurence’s and St James’, the Sisters of Mercy college All Hallows and the Presentation Sisters college, St Rita’s. Religious Institute schools were invited to contribute to this research and five chose to do so.

3. Research Design
The research design encompassed the following elements:

i. Articulating the Judeo/Christian and Catholic ‘story’ since the context of the work is primarily Catholic.

ii. A limited literature search to find out what recent studies have said about the role of the school with regard to out of home and marginalised students.
iii. A Research Reference Group to support and guide the work.

iv. Information Sources

The researcher conducted interviews with a total of four-one schools, ten out of home students and eight staff from Brisbane Catholic Education Centre (BCEC). The researcher sent out questionnaires to one hundred and eight primary schools and forty-seven secondary schools.

a) Qualitative

i. Interviews with School Personnel.
   a) Primary: fifteen schools visited (Appendix A – Schedule of Questions).
   c) Student Interviews: ten out of home students were interviewed at length (Appendix B - Schedule of Questions; Appendix E - Letters to Schools; Appendix F – Letter to Students; Appendix G - Student Consent Form). (NOTE. All the names of the students have been changed.)

ii. Interviews with staff from the Equity Support Services Team at BCEC:
   a) Guidance, Counselling & Student Protection personnel
   b) Hearing Impairment Services and
   c) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and
   d) Vocational Education.

iii. “Alternative” Education Schools, namely, Center Education at Kingston and Southside Education at Sunnybank

b) Quantitative

A questionnaire was sent to one hundred and eight primary (Appendix C) and forty-seven secondary (Appendix D) schools. Both primary and secondary schools were asked to specify the numbers of out of home and marginalised students attending their school during the week they filled out the survey as well as during the current year 2003. They were also asked to nominate the number of out of home and marginalised students who were unable to engage with the curriculum. Secondary schools were asked to respond to a further question, “How many students failed to complete the year they enrolled in because they were out of home or marginalised?”

Both primary and secondary schools were requested to write up a story about an out of home or marginalised student, documenting what (response, intervention, strategy) really worked and why it worked.

Finally, primary and secondary schools were asked to make recommendations on how school based and system based approaches, interventions and/or strategies could be improved.

The survey returns were as follows:

Primary

☐ 34%, or thirty-eight out of one hundred and eight primary schools.
Secondary
☐ Systemic: 96%, or twenty-seven out of twenty-eight schools; and
☐ Religious Institute: 26%, or five out of nineteen Religious Institute schools.

4. Definitions
A. Homeless Students

There are three well-known and widely accepted definitions of youth homelessness.

i. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Report, *Our Homeless Children*, used the following definition:

*Homelessness* describes a lifestyle which includes insecurity and transience of shelter. It is not confined to a total lack of shelter. For many children and young people it signifies a state of detachment from family and vulnerability to dangers, including exploitation and abuse broadly defined, from which the family normally protects a child. However, the Inquiry also found that there is a growing number of children who are ‘homeless’ because the whole family cannot obtain adequate shelter (Burdekin, 1989, 7).

ii. The National Youth Coalition for Housing defines youth homelessness as

... the absence of secure, adequate and satisfactory shelter as perceived by the young person.

For homelessness to exist at least one of the following conditions or any combination of conditions should be operative:

a) An absence of shelter.
b) The threat of loss of shelter.
c) Very high mobility between places of abode.
d) Existing accommodation considered inadequate by the resident for reasons such as overcrowding, the physical state of the residence, lack of security of occupancy, or lack of emotional support and stability in the place of residence.
e) Unreasonable restrictions in terms of access to alternative forms of accommodation (NYCH, 1985,1).

iii. Chamberlain and MacKenzie in *Youth Homelessness 2001* identified ‘primary’, ‘secondary’ and ‘tertiary’ homelessness:

a) Primary homelessness is the same as literal homelessness or ‘rooflessness’.
b) Secondary homelessness includes people who are staying in any form of temporary accommodation, with no other secure housing elsewhere. Many homeless people move frequently from one form of temporary accommodation to another.
c) Tertiary homelessness refers to the occupants of single rooms in private boarding houses who live there on a long-term basis (three months or longer (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2002, iii).
Each of the above definitions of youth homelessness stressed the instability or transience of shelter, high mobility between places of abode, and people who stayed in any form of temporary accommodation. Having a roof over one’s head did not necessarily mean that one was not homeless. Uhr, in *Couch Surfing in the Burbs* (2003, 79), listened to the stories of “homeless” young people and concluded that young people who moved between places of abode did not see themselves as homeless. They saw homelessness as being “largely associated with people who sleep rough in the city centre coupled with images of poor health and hygiene.” When a young person had a place to stay, they did not consider themselves to be homeless. Uhr preferred to use the phrase “out of home young people.”

“Out of home” students is the phrase that has been used in this research. It is virtually impossible for a roofless or houseless person to continue to attend school. Although out of home students may be able to attend school for a short time, most eventually drop out because of the struggle to find a safe place to stay, to feed themselves, to maintain hygiene and do homework.
Chapter 2. The Judeo/Christian and Catholic Story

The Judeo/Christian and Catholic tradition underpins the work done in Catholic schools and, in particular, work with out of home and marginalised children and young people. The Catholic education tradition inspires, challenges and supports this work.

A. The Jewish Heritage Story

There are four generic words for "poor" in the Bible:

*RAS* – neutral word;
*EBYON* – the poor one who begs;
*DAL* – thin, weak, sickly, thin ones of the land: the rural proletariat; and
*ANI* – the stooped, bowed, lowered, overwhelmed whose power, strength and worth have declined because of economic poverty, sickness, prison or oppression.

An example of the use of these words is found in Psalm 82:

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

The spirit of the Deuteronomic Laws is summed up as follows, stressing justice for the poor:

> Since there will never cease to be some in need (EBYONIM) on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor (ANI) and needy (EBYON) neighbour in your land’ (Deuteronomy 15:11).

The Deuteronomic Laws authorise the Jubilee Year with its remission of debts, and the freeing of Hebrew slaves. The laws prohibit interest on loans, acceptance of a poor person's surety, and require the quarterly contribution to the unfortunate, and the daily payment of a worker's wages.

Today's voiceless, powerless, and underprivileged young people are a group who cry out to Yahweh about their dehumanisation, their lack of family stability, their need of a home, their inability to earn a livelihood, and their discouragement.

We might reflect on the words from Isaiah:

> Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! (Isaiah 10:1-2).

and from Sirach:

> My son, my daughter, rob not the poor person of their livelihood; force not the eyes of the needy to turn away. A hungry person grieve not, a needy person
anger not; do not exasperate the downtrodden; delay not to give to the needy.
A beggar in distress do not reject; avert not your face from the poor. From
the needy turn not your eyes. Give no one reason to curse you; for if, in the
bitterness of his/her soul, he/she curse you, his/her creator will hear his/her
prayer (Sirach 4:1-6).

There are two consistent Old Testament themes: the concern of Yahweh for the lowly,
the fatherless and motherless, the widow and widower, and the poor; and Yahweh's
regard for the causes of poverty and preoccupation with justice.

B. The Christian Heritage Story.
In the New Testament, according to Gustavo Gutierrez (1973), the Greek term ptokos
is used to describe a poor person. Ptokos means one who does not have what is
necessary to subsist, a wretched one driven into begging. Ptokos is used thirty-four
times in the New Testament. In most cases, it refers to an indigent person, one
lacking what is necessary. Only on six occasions does this term have a spiritual
meaning, but even then the poor person is mentioned in the company of the blind, the
mutilated, the leper, and the sick, providing a very concrete context for their poverty
(Gutierrez 1973, 291 & 303).

The oppression, dehumanisation and rejection (both personal and social) of the poor is
what God wants us to keep in mind. Poverty is evil, and we are called to overcome its
causes.

Four Key Texts
The following four key texts from the Gospels are the essence of the Jesus message:

1. Luke 4:16-18, especially verse 18. This is the inauguration text in Luke where
Jesus announces his manifesto of proclaiming good news to the poor, freeing the
oppressed etc.

2. Matthew 11:3-6. Here Jesus proclaims his preferential option for disadvantaged
people: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf
hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed
is anyone who takes no offence at me.

blessings and four curses.

4. Matthew 25:31-46: This is Matthew’s Last Judgement scene: ‘Truly I tell you, just
as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it
to me.’

Young people who live in out of home situations and/or are marginalised because they
suffer from mental health problems, addictions and poverty are sometimes viewed by
people, even some Christians, as hopeless, delinquent drop-outs. Some of these
young people are numbered among the despised of our society. Many are without
hope or ambition. They are often poor in a material, spiritual and emotional sense:
they are captives in the sense that they could potentially spend time in secure
institutions or prisons; they are blind because they see no alternative lifestyle for
themselves; they are often oppressed by society, police and the welfare system; the only salvation they know is that of alcohol, drugs and sex.

The “good news” for Jesus means the forgiveness of debts. Jesus spoke about this figuratively on many occasions, for example, in the parable of the prodigal son, and backed his words up with his actions by lodging with the chief tax collector in Jericho, calling a tax collector into his intimate group, and offering table fellowship to the outcasts and marginalised. Table fellowship was an offer of peace, trust, sisterhood and brotherhood, a sharing of life. Table fellowship pointed to a fellowship before God, that is, an eschatological feast. Above all, Jesus was the good news in that he championed those most at risk, namely, the women and children, the sick, the blind, the lepers and the multitude of little ones (Matthew 25:31-46).

The “poor” for Jesus were the broken-hearted, the captives, those bound, those who mourn, the faint of spirit, the oppressed who cannot defend themselves, those who labour and are heavily laden, the desperate, the God-forsaken and all those in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and those who are alone (Matthew 11:3ff & Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 4:18).

Jesus taught us to see the poor as a sign, a sacrament, of his own presence:

... for I was hungry and you gave me food...

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’ (Matthew 25:35,40).

Christ chose the way of poverty, suffering and failure in his incarnation, in his public life and in his passion. He was in close association with the poor and the outcasts of the society of his day. He was born in a stable. His first visitors were shepherds. He lived the greater part of his life in Nazareth, a place of which people of his time used to ask, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46).

Among his friends were Levi, a Roman tax collector (Matthew 9:9) and Mary Magdalene, a sinner (Luke 7:36-50). He was constantly in contact with marginalised people: the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11), the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28), the lepers (Matthew 8:1-4 & Luke 17:11-19), tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:9-13), and children (Luke 9:46-48 & 18:15-17).

In his parables, the despised often became the heroes: the poor were the privileged guests at the wedding banquet (Luke 14:16-24), the publican went home justified (Luke 18:9-14), the degraded son was welcomed back into his family and community (Luke 15:11-32), the good Samaritan was the hero, not the priest nor the levite (Luke 10:25-37), and the lost sheep was sought (Luke 15:1-7).

Jesus saw his mission essentially in terms of preaching the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, setting free the oppressed, and announcing the year when Yahweh will save his people. (Luke 4:16-30, Luke 7:18-23 & Isaiah 58 & 61). Jesus clashed with the establishment of his time in his outspoken criticism of the ways in which the ordinary person's life was made difficult (Luke 5:33-39, 6:1-5 & 6:6-11).
Paul and James often restated Jesus' message of identification with the poor:

Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly (Romans 12:16).

and

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you (James 5:1-6).

C. The Church Tradition Story

The Church, in its turn, has focused on and developed its teaching on what has come to be known as the doctrine of the preferential option for the poor. Vatican 11’s, Constitution, Gaudium et Spes poignantly begins:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts (Vatican 11, The Church in the Modern World).

In 1971, soon after the conclusion of Vatican 11, a Synod of Bishops met in Rome and produced a document entitled, Justice in the World. In the introduction, the bishops name working for justice as of the essence of the Gospel:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (Synodal Document: Justice in the World: Introduction, 1971, 2).

In a section of this document, "Educating to Justice", the bishops called for

a continuing and practical education: it [education] comes through action, participation and vital contact with the reality of injustice (11).

Pope Paul VI, who was elected during Vatican 11, further developed the Catholic teaching on the option for the poor. He stressed that holiness is bound up with simplicity, prayer, and charity towards all, especially the ‘lowly and the poor’:

The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man [and woman]. It risks being vain and sterile (Paul VI,
Later on, Paul VI spoke specifically to educators, instructing them that their task is

... to awaken in persons, from their earliest years, a love for the peoples who live in misery (Paul VI, *The Development of Peoples (Progressio Popolorum)* para 83).

*All of you who have heard the appeal of suffering peoples, all of you who are working to answer their cries, you are the apostles of a development which is good and genuine, which is not wealth that is self-centred and sought for its own sake, but rather an economy that is put at the service of man [and woman]. the bread which is daily distributed to all, as a source of brotherhood [and sisterhood], and a sign of Providence* (Ibid para 86).

Pope John Paul II sees the vocation of the Church in terms of protecting human dignity, and of being in solidarity with oppressed and disadvantaged peoples:

*The Church by its very vocation is called to be the faithful protector of human dignity everywhere, the mother [father] of the oppressed and those on the fringes of society, the Church of the weak and the poor* (Pope John Paul II, 1981).

The Church Tradition story, certainly since Vatican II, sees its mission, vocation and role essentially bound up with, and being in solidarity with, those people who are marginalised or oppressed. Moreover, the Church sees itself and its followers engaging with societal systems in order to make them more just and more humane. The whole Catholic community is called to build up relationships with, to advocate with and on behalf of, those students who are out of home or marginalised.

**D. The Church Tradition Education Story**

The recent *Evangelization for the Clergy – General Directory for Catechesis* points out that the Sermon on the Mount and especially the Beatitudes are keys to moral formation. The proclaimed word and the lived word are inseparable, and both must be explicit about the social dimensions of the Gospel.

*The Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus takes up the Decalogue, and impresses upon it the spirit of the beatitudes, is an indispensable point of reference for the moral formation which is most necessary today. Evangelization which involves the proclamation and presentation of morality displays all the force of its appeal where it offers not only the proclaimed word but the lived word too. This moral testimony, which is prepared for by catechesis, must always demonstrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, p86)
i. **A Message of Liberation**
Under the title, “A Message of Liberation,” the document calls in unambiguous terms for inclusiveness, a world vision, and justice, with its concomitant commitment to the marginalised peoples of the world:

> Catechesis is attentive to arousing “a preferential option for the poor, which far from being a sign of individualism or sectarianism, makes manifest the universality of the Church’s nature and mission. This option is not exclusive but implies a commitment to justice according to each individual’s role, vocation and circumstances” (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, pp 112 & 113).

ii. **A Respect for Human Rights**
The Congregation for Catholic Education calls for an affirmation of the dignity of every person. While this call is universal, it must be especially focused on those who, for whatever reason, feel less than human, for example, students who have been rejected, neglected or abused, or who suffer from mental health problems or addictions.

> The evangelising activity of the Church in this field of human rights has the task of revealing the inviolable dignity of every human person. In a certain sense, it is the central and unifying task of service which the Church, and lay faithful in her, are called to render to the human family. Catechesis must prepare them for this task (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, pp22 &23).

Further, the Congregation states that this is pastoral ministry and that the school is an authentic place for this ministry of liberation and human rights to take place:

> It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its structure as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, p14).

iii. **A Thirst for justice**
In an earlier document (1977), the Congregation for Catholic Education had called upon the Catholic school to make the world more just, even when its efforts encountered local opposition. The work for justice begins, it said, with children and young people who are marginalised.

> Since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society, and it tries to make its own contribution towards it. It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school. …. First and foremost the Church offers its educational service to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p44. My emphasis).
iv. ‘Care for learning means loving’ (Wisdom 6/17)

The document, “The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,” under the title “Care for learning means loving”, states that poor and marginalised students must be assisted with education, training and Christian formation.

The Catholic school is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest. ... Spurred on by the aim of offering to all, and especially to the poor and marginalised, the opportunity of an education, of training for a job, of human and Christian formation, it [the Catholic School] must find in the context of the old and new forms of poverty that original synthesis or ardour and fervent dedication which is a manifestation of Christ’s love for the poor, the humble, the masses seeking for truth (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, pp 18 & 19).

Mutual, respectful relationships should be the norm of the educating community.

During childhood and adolescence a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student’s formation when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, life-styles and day to day behaviour (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, p 22).

“Australian Religious Education – Facing the Challenges” gives examples of how Catholic schools can serve as evangelising communities:

Staff example, relationships: staff and students; staff and staff; staff and parents etc; solidarity with students about Gospel concerns e.g., social justice, environment, for the needy and poor, encouraging love and trust in school community; special concern for students with difficulties: disabilities, family, academic, personal, etc (Holohan, 1999, p37).

v. Interpersonal relationships between students and teachers

In its earlier document, the Congregation stressed solidarity and interpersonal relationships in the educational setting.

The teachers love their students, and they show this love in the way they interact with them. .... Their words, their witness, their encouragement and help, their advice and friendly correction are all important in achieving these goals, which must always be understood to include academic achievement, moral behaviour, and a religious dimension (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, p90).

Mutual respectful relationships will result in enrichment and a shared commitment in the educational undertaking.

When students feel loved, they will love in return. Their questioning, their trust, their critical observations and suggestions for improvement in the classroom and the school milieu will enrich the teachers and also help to facilitate a shared commitment to the formation process (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, p90).
vi. The Mission of Students
Vatican 11’s “The Document on the Laity” insisted that young people should be conscious of their mission to assist other young people. Moreover, young people should be given responsibility in these endeavours and encouraged to be creative in ministering to their fellow students and, indeed, to the world.

_The young should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them, exercising the apostolate by themselves among themselves, taking account of their social environment_ (Vatican 11: The Document on the Laity, 1965, no. 12).

E. The Brisbane Catholic Education Story

_It [Catholic Education] is called to provide a climate where the dignity of the human person is valued and affirmed and where community is developed with a profound relationship between the Gospel and culture._

While the vision of Brisbane Catholic Education encompasses social justice, multicultural and global perspectives, it realises that its message is conveyed though spoken messages, “relationships and the work of Christian service to others” (Catholic Education Council, 1992, p2)

The aim is to _educate for Christian leadership that is collaborative and participative_. This leadership is _a ministry which is expressed in solidarity with those who are without influence and status, especially in the context of our own society with Aboriginal Australians_ (ibid, p4).

F. Conclusion.
The Judeo/Christian and Catholic stories explicitly focus attention and consequent action on those people who are on the edge of society. The Church Tradition Education story, building on the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, similarly points schools in the direction of engaging in the work of liberation, human rights and justice. Catholic schools are to be of service to students who are poor, out of home and marginalised, and this work is best carried out through mutual, respectful relationships.
Chapter 3. Literature Search

Our fundamental point is that policies directed towards early intervention must focus primarily on schools (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1998, p87).

Preliminary Remarks
The limited literature search has been restricted to nine recent publications. Each of these studies has a strong and, in some instances, an exclusive focus on schools as sites to engage with out of home and marginalised students. Each study emphasises that schools are the appropriate societal institutions to undertake prevention and early intervention work to prevent homelessness and consequent possible addictions and delinquent behaviour amongst young people.

This Convention was ratified by Australia on 17th December 1990, after a ten year drafting process during which States and Territories were consulted and briefed on the requirements of the Convention. While the Convention has not been incorporated into Australian law, Australia’s ratification of the Convention creates a legitimate expectation that administrative decision-makers will act in accordance with the Convention.

Article 13.1 states:

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.

Article 19 imposes the following obligations on countries which have ratified the Convention:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention, and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Article 20.1 provides for special protection and assistance by the State for a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment.

Under Article 28, the Convention puts specific emphasis on the right of all children to a full and free education.
States Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular:

(b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(d) make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

Finally, Article 29.1 states:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

... (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

B. {PRIVATE }Our Homeless Young People: Their Experiences, O’Connor, 1989

In 1989, O’Connor interviewed one hundred homeless young people in the Gold Coast, Logan City, King’s Cross and Canberra. O’Connor contended that schools are potentially in a position to identify and respond to difficulties, to monitor the violation of the rights of the child and to ensure that their right to education is meaningfully met (p85).

He found from his research that schools were, instead, places of alienation which mirrored the marginalisation, rejection, and exclusion students experienced in their families. He reported that homeless students

found themselves on the outer at school [because of]: poor academic performance; lack of social skills; the disruptions of changing schools; simply not fitting in with their peers; falling foul of the authority structures; not complying with the school system’s expectations of normative behaviour (88).

The schools, far from responding to the needs of this group of students, rarely provided support or assistance to help them resolve their difficulties.

C. Our Homeless Children, Burdekin, 1989

In 1989, Burdekin and his fellow Commissioners, on the basis of O’Connor’s work and hearing directly from homeless young people, youth workers, teachers, school counsellors and some parents, concluded that:
our schools and teachers represent a critical resource which we must use effectively if we are to address the difficult issue of child and youth homelessness (278).

Furthermore, they stressed that

in the current social climate of continuing family disintegration, they [teachers] need, more than ever, programs, training, support and sufficient time to assist children who are homeless or in such domestic difficulty that they are at serious risk of becoming homeless. .... Therefore, although numerous onerous demands and expectations are already imposed on our teachers and schools, the issue of homelessness is one which must be addressed (278).

Consequently, the Burdekin Inquiry recommended that the school counsellor’s role be expanded to encompass these at risk students, that teachers, through professional development, develop a greater sensitivity and understanding of their needs, and that schools implement early intervention and prevention programs. The report finally recommended specially designed nationwide accommodation and support services be established for students detached from their families.

While the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was not ratified by Australia until after this Inquiry had reported, Burdekin criticised Australia’s failure to meet its international obligations:

The Inquiry found that homelessness represents a personal tragedy for many thousands of Australia’s children. It also represents a failure by governments to fulfil our international commitment to protect the rights of children. This commitment has been made at the international level in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and other international instruments, and at the national level by means of the incorporation of these international agreements in Federal law (p33).

In 1985, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Community Affairs, under the chairmanship of Mr. Allan Morris, MP, conducted an national inquiry into, among other things, the availability of family support and welfare services and their role and effectiveness in reducing homelessness and in resolving differences before young people leave home (xv). This committee received a substantial amount of evidence which advocated for schools to be better resourced to respond to the needs of young people and families (243).

The Report strongly supported an adequately resourced pastoral care role in schools while, at the same time, noting that the extent of specialist support services available in schools across States and Territories is poor (258). Finally, the committee recommended that schools become a focal point for early intervention and be given adequate resources to carry out this role effectively (274).
E. Homelessness among Young People in Australia, Crane & Brannock, 1996. In 1996, Crane & Brannock interviewed out of home young people, their parents and service providers. They noted that young people wanted to be respected and listened to, and that parents were distressed, angry, defensive and embarrassed by their son or daughter leaving home, and had great difficulty gaining adequate responses from service providers at critical times.

Parents indicated that, in order to prevent homelessness among young people, most needed were whole of family counselling or family mediation, time out accommodation and changed school practices (viii).

Service providers indicated, there was a need for greater collaboration between community based service providers and schools (viii).

Crane and Brannock found that schools are an important site for both prevention and early intervention (103). Their interview data from both young people and parents indicated that schools were often the first to know that the young people were experiencing difficulties, though they may not have been aware that the difficulties could lead to homelessness.

Crane and Brannock concluded that schools are well placed locations for providing early intervention or prevention responses to youth homelessness ... by networking more efficiently, by breaking down the barriers between teachers, welfare workers, youth workers and others professionals (103).

F. Under-age school leaving, Brooks and Milne et al, 1997
In 1997, Brooks and Milne addressed early school leaving, that is, young people exiting secondary school before they reach the compulsory school leaving age. The study referred to this group as “under-age school leavers”.

The study recommended a number of policy responses. These included: mainstream school should be the focus of intervention; the need to support school teachers through training and professional development; the need for a range of non-mainstream school options; the importance of community organisations as providers of alternative options; and improved links between schools and community support services such as youth accommodation and health services (86).

In 1997, under the heading Children at Risk in the Education System, the Australian Law Reform Commission noted the connection between inadequate education, offending and homelessness. Consequently, the Commission, like the Burdekin Inquiry, recommended that

all teachers and school counsellors should receive professional development training in identifying children at risk of dropping out of school and referring them to appropriate government and non-government support services and programs (198).
H. **Youth Homelessness: Early Intervention and Prevention**, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 1988

In 1998, Chamberlain and MacKenzie undertook research to answer two questions: How does homelessness begin? What is the process by which young people become homeless street children and homeless young people? They claimed that a young person did not suddenly become homeless, but that they first were ‘at risk’ because of, for example, violence and/or addictions at home. Then the young people left home for short periods of time, which Chamberlain and MacKenzie called ‘short-term homelessness.’ As they returned to the streets for longer and longer periods of time, and the breaks from home became permanent, they became involved in the culture of the streets and were termed ‘long-term homeless.’ Finally, when the streets and its culture became their homes, they graduated to the ranks of the ‘chronic homeless’ (70-72).

Chamberlain & MacKenzie concluded

> Most homeless students are at an early stage in the [homelessness] career process, and it is much easier to help them at this point. If young people remain at school and located in their local community, then they will not become deeply involved in the homeless sub-culture (87).

Chamberlain & MacKenzie summarised what they learnt about early intervention and prevention in ten points. Schools figured prominently in their findings.

1. Early intervention refers to measures to help young people as soon as possible after they become homeless. Preventative strategies include: individual support for young people who are perceptibly at risk; school strategies directed towards all young people; and strategies focusing on groups with higher risk levels.
2. Schools must embrace a broad responsibility for the education and welfare of young people in the 21st century and become full-service schools. Student support and welfare have to become a secure part of the curriculum and schools must work closely with community agencies.
3. Early intervention should be proactive as well as reactive, not just waiting until young people in need ask for help.
4. A comprehensive approach for homeless youth and teenagers at risk will include both early intervention and prevention strategies. Early intervention is the starting point and the basis for extending to preventative initiatives. Prevention on its own is usually ineffectual.
5. Early intervention policy and practice to assist homeless young people should focus on secondary schools, not primary schools.
6. Early intervention involves schools and community agencies working together.
7. Schools in the same community have to work together to support homeless teenagers and young people at risk. This will only come about if there is a government directive that all schools must have an adequate welfare infrastructure, and there is funding for coordination initiatives in local communities.
8. An early intervention strategy requires coordination at all levels of the service system - at the client level, at the local community level, and at the government level.
9. A school based early intervention policy is cost effective. However, to realise the benefits, a long-term strategy must be pursued.
10. The welfare resources required in school for effective early intervention to assist homeless youth are largely the same resources needed to respond to issues such as drug abuse, youth suicide and early school leaving (115-129).

I. **Youth Homelessness 2001**, Chamberlain and MacKenzie, 2002
In 2002, Chamberlain & MacKenzie presented the main findings from the second national census of homeless school students, carried out in August 2001. The report estimates the total number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18, on the basis of information from the school census combined with Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) data.

1. Numbers of homeless secondary students in Queensland: 3,073, i.e., 15 per 1,000 of school population, with the national average being 10 per 1,000 of school population.
2. Estimated number of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 in Queensland: 6,381, i.e., 18 per 1,000, with the national rate of homelessness being 14 per 1,000 of the youth population.
3. Percentage of homeless young people in education (school and TAFE), unemployed or in full-time work, in Queensland: 39% in education; 60% unemployed, 1% in full-time work. Proportion of homeless students in state and Catholic schools in Queensland: State 94%; Catholic 6% (20).
4. There were 21,000 homeless young people in 1994, compared with 26,000 in 2001. This is an increase of 24% (31).

Chamberlain and MacKenzie found that most teenagers have their first experience of homelessness while they are still at school. Other studies support this finding.

- In a study of 100 homeless young people prepared for the Burdekin Report (1989), Ian O’Connor found that 82% were 15 or younger when they had their first experience of homelessness.
- Similarly, Crane and Brannock (1996) found that 92% of their respondents were 15 or younger when they first left home.
- The first national census of homeless school students (in May 1994) reported that there were 11,000 homeless secondary students in census week, and estimated that 25,000 to 30,000 students experience a period of homelessness each year (MacKenzie and Chamberlain 1995).

Chamberlain and MacKenzie concluded that:

1. Our core argument is that schools are sites for early intervention where it is possible to provide young people with assistance at the earliest stages of the ‘homeless career’ (33).
2. Schools have a critical role to play because they can support young people who want to remain at school and make the transition to independent living (33).
3. It seems reasonable to suggest that homeless teenagers and at risk students are more likely to stay at school if there is a strong welfare infrastructure (38).
4. When homeless teenagers drop out of the education system they do not all become long-term unemployed, but this is the destination of the largest group (38).

J. Couch Surfing in the Burbs: young, hidden & homeless, Rachael Uhr, 2003

In 2003, Rachael Uhr, surveying out of home young people from some of the north-eastern suburbs of Brisbane, found that young people wanted to maintain links with what was familiar: home, school and local community. However, these out of home
young people did not consider themselves homeless. Being ‘homeless’ for them meant living in the gutter, as a hopeless alcoholic, for instance.

In a section on schools, Uhr noted that

\[
\text{the role of school and the relationships formed through school provided a large component of the community connectedness articulated by young people (34).}
\]

School provided the place where friendships were formed and maintained, gave structure to the day, gave young people something else to think about other than their situation and, in many cases, gave them access to supportive staff. Many young people said that school was a priority for them, but difficult to maintain once they had left home.

Uhr concluded that schools are an important institution in young people’s lives, especially when they are at risk of ending up out of home because of circumstances beyond their control:

\[
\text{If staff in the school system are skilled in identifying ‘at risk’ students and have the ability to source appropriate responses, it seems that they are more likely to better assist young people in meeting their school and personal needs (72).}
\]
Part 2: Findings: Primary

Chapter 4. Statistics for Primary Schools

I am amazed by the resiliency of the children: some come from horrific backgrounds but still come to school. The challenge for us is: How can we capitalise on this? Deputy Principal

Out of Home Primary School Students
Thirty-eight primary schools returned surveys for numbers of out of home students on a weekly and a yearly basis. In face to face interviews counsellors, some principals, teachers and support staff from ten primary schools were asked a series of questions to elicit information about out of home students in their schools (Appendix A).

1. Out of Home Primary School Students
Weekly
Twenty-six out of thirty-eight primary schools reported out of home students for question 2 (a) of the survey (Appendix C). These schools had out of home students attending their school at the time they completed the survey.

The following schools reported the highest weekly numbers of out of home students:

- St Joseph’s, Murgon: 13
- St Paul’s, Woodridge: 11
- St William’s, Grovely: 8
- St Francis Xavier, Goodna: 6

Total BCE schools: 7.7 students per 1000

The schools which responded to the survey were situated in the following regions. Metropolitan: Annerley, Ashgrove, Ashgrove West, Cannon Hill, Coorparoo (Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St James and Villanova), Graceville, Grovely, Kenmore, Mitchelton, Mt Gravatt, New Farm, Rochedale, Toowong, Woolloowin, Yeronga. Outer Metropolitan: Alexandra Hills, Aspley, Bray Park, Cornubia, Crestmead, Jimboomba, Kingston, Victoria Point, Woodridge. South Coast: Ashmore. Sunshine Coast: nil return. Ipswich: Goodna, Leichhardt, Springfield. Rural: Beaudesert, Boonah, Gympie, Kingaroy, Laidley, Maryborough, Murgon, Nanango.

The following regions recorded the highest weekly numbers of out of home students:

- Rural Region: 12.6 students per 1000
- Ipswich Region: 9 students per 1000
- Outer Metropolitan Region: 8.1 students per 1000
- Metropolitan Region: 5.6 students per 1000.

29
Yearly
Twenty-seven out of thirty-eight primary schools reported out of home students in answer to question 2 (b) of the survey (Appendix C), that is, these schools reported out of home students during the current year 2003.

The following schools recorded the highest yearly numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Paul’s, Woodridge</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph’s, Murgon</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St William’s, Grovely</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryfields, Kingston</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Dympna’s, Aspley</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Immaculate, Annerley</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Francis Xavier, Goodna</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total BCE schools: 10.4 students per 1000

The following regions recorded the highest yearly numbers of out of home students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Students per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Region</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich Region</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are some students living in out of home situations?
Counsellors gave the following reasons:
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 step-father; mother abusive; depression; in the care of the State; adopted; mother is in a new relationship.

Where are they living now?
Counsellors said out of home students were living in the following situations: in a stable fostering arrangement; with neighbours; with grandmother; with very supportive grandparents; with extended family; with the parents of a friend.

2. Marginalised Primary School Students

One Principal, making a preliminary comment on marginalised students in her school, noted, “We don’t suspend or expel.”

“Marginalised Students”
Rather than define the term “marginalised student,” the researcher asked school personnel, mainly school counsellors, in face-to-face interviews the following question: When I use the phrase ‘marginalised students’, what kind of students come to mind? (Appendix A) The answers to these questions formed the basis of the survey question (Appendix C, 3) on marginalised students.
Weekly
Thirty-six out of thirty-eight primary schools reported marginalised students in responses to the survey.

The following schools reported the highest weekly numbers of marginalised students.

St Francis Xavier, Goodna  99  
St Francis, Crestmead   84  
Holy Spirit, Bray Park   76  
St Paul’s, Woodridge   63  
St Dympna’s, Aspley   49  
St Patrick’s, Gympie   45  
Guardian Angels, Ashmore   43  
Maryfields, Kingston   33  
Holy Cross, Wooloowin   32  
Our Lady of the Rosary, Kenmore   31  
St William’s, Grovely   20  
St Joseph’s, Murgon   17  
Mary Immaculate, Annerley   6  

Total BCE schools:  69.4 students per 1000

The following regions recorded the highest weekly numbers of marginalised students:
Ipswich Region:      129 students per 1000  
Outer Metropolitan Region:  89 students per 1000  
Rural Region:        70 students per 1000  
Metropolitan Region:  37 students per 1000.

Yearly
Thirty-five out of thirty-eight primary schools reported marginalised students in response to the survey.

The following schools reported the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students:

St Francis Xavier, Goodna  99  
St Francis, Crestmead   91  
Holy Spirit, Bray Park   76  
St Paul’s, Woodridge   68  
St Dympna’s, Aspley   54  
St Patrick’s, Gympie   46  
Maryfields, Kingston   45  
Holy Cross, Wooloowin   33  
Our Lady of the Rosary, Kenmore   32  
St William’s, Grovely   20  
St Joseph’s, Murgon   17  
Mary Immaculate, Annerley   6  

Total BCE schools:  68.9 students per 1000

The following regions reported the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students:
Ipswich Region: 127 students per 1000
Outer Metropolitan Region: 96.9 students per 1000
Rural Region: 75.4 students per 1000
Metropolitan Region: 37.5 students per 1000.

Marginalised male students consistently outnumbered females by almost two to one.

**Students may be marginalised for some of the following reasons:**
subject 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.

3. **Disengaged Primary School Students**

One Principal commenting on her school policy and practice regarding disengaged students said,

"Our aim is the pastoral care of students and staff: welcoming; acceptance of everyone as they are; an acceptance of our cliental; we focus on the needs of children both physical and academic."

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 C, Question 4).

Twenty-two out of thirty-eight primary schools reported disengaged students.

The following schools reported the highest numbers of disengaged students:

St Francis, Crestmead 83  
St Francis Xavier, Goodna 53  
Holy Spirit, Bray Park 38  
Holy Cross, Wooloowin 16  
St Patrick’s, Gympie 14  
St Dympna’s, Aspley 12  
St Joseph’s, Murgon 11

Total BCE schools: 24.6 students per 1000

The following regions reported the highest numbers of disengaged students:

Ipswich Region: 73.6 students per 1000
Outer Metropolitan Region: 36.9 students per 1000
Rural Region: 24.5 students per 1000.
4. Discontinuing Primary Students

“Is Catholic Education out of reach of the ordinary family?” asked a Pastoral Care Worker.

“Discontinuing students” refers to those students who fail to enrol in Catholic Secondary Schools after completing Year 7 in a Catholic Primary School.

The question asked in face to face interviews was, “Why don’t some of your students continue on in the Catholic system post Year 7? (Appendix A, 5).

Five Primary Principals, one Deputy Principal and two Pastoral Workers all nominated lack of finance for school fees and fares for transport as the main reason.

Often it is financially hard, even when both parents are working.

There were, however, regional differences. The Principal from a rural community said, The majority of my Year 7 students do not continue on to a Catholic High School, while another Principal from an outer metropolitan school noted the opposite, A very small percentage don’t go to a Catholic High School.

Three respondents further noted friends going to state high schools as a factor, while two said sometimes the reason was poor public transport, coupled with the lack of own transport. Two said the reason was the proximity of another high school. One said that the decision was made on what the school had to offer. Two respondents recommended that a bus service be set up (in a rural region) and that there be financial assistance for books, uniforms etc.
Chapter 5. What is Working In Primary Schools

One teacher said, “A welcoming attitude within the class” is the key to assisting marginalised children, while a principal thought that students seeing “the school as safe and secure” was the foundation for working successfully with marginalised students.

Survey questions invited respondents to write up a story of what worked and why the intervention worked (Appendix C 5 (a) & 5 (b)). Thirty-three schools responded with examples of what they were doing to assist out of home, marginalised and disengaged children.

1. Elements of What is Working
Examples of what is working encompassed some or all of the following.

Team work. Respondents noted that team work between key players in the school, parents and community agencies was integral to working successfully with marginalised children. Cooperation, communication and planning were important elements in team work.

In this context, they mentioned individual, staff and school wide programming; effective communication and co-ordination of intervention by key people through student support meetings; cooperation between all parties involved in formulating and implementing plans; communication between all parties; team meetings with selected pastoral care people (e.g., Child Study Team meetings); commitment of the teacher, the learning support teacher and parents to provide time, energy and communication to assist with planning and follow through; commitment and professionalism of staff.

Relationship building. School staff saw ‘going the extra mile’ to form and foster mutual respectful relationships with marginalised children as fundamental to the work of a Catholic school.

Important elements in relationship building, they said, were caring teachers; providing a safe and caring environment with stable relationships with specific staff members; students knowing there are people there for them; children receiving positive one on one attention.

Networking with community resources. Some schools worked closely with community agencies which greatly assisted them in their work with marginalised children. One Principal noted that the school Guidance Counsellor and the Learning Support Teacher worked closely with other school personnel and outside agencies.

Long term commitment. The school community had to make a long term commitment since many out of home and marginalised children had complex problems and/or parents with multi-faceted problems. Some noted that regular, consistent support was needed, plus close monitoring of progress.

Peer support. A few schools saw the importance of fostering peer support in their work with the children. A welcoming attitude in the class and social skilling made a positive impact.
Family involvement. Integral to working with marginalised students was communication and involvement of the parents and, in some instances, support for the parents. Initiating contact with parent or parents was seen as essential in assisting marginalised children.

Planning. Some noted that planning should be based on student needs as determined by the assessment made by welfare professionals and teachers. They suggested that the family should be involved in the planning.

Flexible curriculum. Some marginalised children found it almost impossible to cope with the ordinary curriculum. Modification in the classroom with separate literacy materials was important in engaging these children in learning processes.

Financial Support. Some schools said it was essential to provide financial support to some families. Other schools partly funded the intervention, while a few attempted to provide uniforms and books.

2. Stories about what works

Story 1. Children from a Women’s Refuge
Although the children who do come through the refuge have varying degrees of educational needs, some are highly tuned to learning while others need lots of scaffolding. We are limited in the sense of the uncertainty of their stay which hampers some intervention other than [through] the classroom teacher.

Having said that, most of the children who come to us seem to settle into the school life here. There is a welcoming attitude within the class. We attempt to provide uniforms and books, so any obvious differences are minimised.

Why do you think the intervention worked?
There have been times in the past where the social skills of the children have made it difficult for them to feel a total sense of belonging. In these cases we have the support of the learning support teacher and guidance teacher to work with the class and the child on inclusive practices. However, the children are not always with us long enough to see effective change.

Story 2. Team Work
M, a pre-schooler, is in foster care with a school family who fosters children. He comes from an abusive home environment. The school put in place a very prescribed behaviour management and crisis management policy, also a dedicated preschool teacher.

Why do you think the intervention worked?
Because of the co-operation between all parties involved – teacher, guidance officer, foster parents, family services personnel and school admin in formulating and implementing the plans.

Story 3. Peer Support
A Year 6 child with a Level 6 ascertainment* for Aspergers had much difficulty socialising with his peers and didn’t know many of their names. As part of his
program with the teacher aide, he was to interview each person in the class, take their photo, and make a small poster about them. Finally, he would give a morning talk about each one.

[*Ascertainment is a school based process for determining a student’s support needs to enable them to access the curriculum in a meaningful way. Data is gathered from teachers, parents, specialists like doctors, psychologists, etc and a plan is agreed upon to provide for the student’s learning needs. Students targeted are those with high level support needs i.e., those with impairments or difficulties in areas such as physical functioning, hearing, vision, language, diagnosed social-emotional disorders etc. These students are then entered on a data base and funding support (from the Federal government, but administered through BCE) is provided to the school to support the student.]

**Why do you think the intervention worked?**
The program enabled the boy to proactively find out lots of information about his peers and gave him knowledge he could then use in his interactions with them. It also helped his anxiety around unstructured conversation. The activity also helped the child become ‘visible’ and appreciated by his peers. They were able to support him without feeling they had to take total responsibility for him.

**Story 4. Long Term Positive Approach**
R, Year 6 male, was constantly wandering out of the classroom and not engaging in his work. R’s family background is unstable. R is creative and he was given responsibilities within the school involving artwork. R was allowed regular breaks after a specified amount of time through out the school day with particular adults (e.g., learning support teacher, behaviour teacher, English as a second language teacher. The choice of adult and the choice to utilise the option to leave the class is his. R receives one on one classroom support with a school officer. R now spends more time in the classroom. Rewards are in place.

**Why do you think the intervention worked?**
[R has a]sense of value and belonging through a special job, namely, interest based intervention (artwork). R is given power through choice. There is effective communication and co-ordination of intervention by key people in the school through student support meetings and review and modification of the intervention (e.g., time required in classroom gradually increased) occurred through student support meetings. A positive approach was implemented and maintained.

**Story 5. A Safe and Caring Environment**
A Year 7 boy at the school is experiencing a significant amount of difficulty as a result of the unpredictable, frequent and often prolonged absences of his father, which are related to drug addiction. The family stress and instability and the emotional (as well as actual) unavailability of his father are leaving him very angry, frustrated and sad.

**Why do you think the intervention worked?**
Providing a safe and caring environment, with stable relationships with specific staff members is at least ensuring that this child is coming to school consistently. His mother works long hours and he is without adult supervision for extended periods of time, so keeping him safe and relatively trouble free feels like a real achievement.
Having stability, support and caring interactions with the child and keeping in frequent touch with his mother and trying to support her as well are the keys to our success.

Story 6. Curriculum Modification
This boy will spend most of his day under a desk making unusual sounds, obsessed with an object. The teacher has implemented an Intensive Educational Plan with one goal per session, e.g., sit at desk and complete one modified activity; a reward such as use of computer is offered.

Why do you think the intervention worked?
The goal was simple and clearly outlined. It was achievable, hence his self-esteem was maintained. The child’s interests were identified. The teacher has created a most inclusive and supportive atmosphere. The students in this boy’s class are very protective in support of this boy both in and out of the classroom.

Story 7. Partnership with parent & TLC.
About two years ago, a student was enrolled here mid-year due to an inability to conform to the rules of the previous school. The general impression from the previous school was that the child purposely acted in such a way as to be sent to the Responsible Thinking Room each day, as there was tension between the student and the class teacher. We approached the parent to agree to follow our Behaviour Education Program to the letter, and we set boundaries for the student. However, we kept the child in class as much as possible, with the intention to form positive and workable relationships with the teachers and support staff. This worked well. However, it did take some months and a good deal of patience to achieve the desired outcome. We also found that when the student moved into high school, much the same approach was needed for the student to remain in classes.

Why do you think intervention worked?
I think, in this particular case, the student required a good deal of positive feedback, some stable relationships to lean on and go to in times of confusion or emotional upsets. With these in place, the child could cope with the school setting and get a little TLC which was not present in the home setting.

This child, “Benita”, was defiant, deceitful, aggressive to peers, had an eating disorder, would hide, steal, was manipulative, tearful and engaged in attention seeking behaviours.

Strategies: 1. Wrap around sessions: data gathering, staff feedback sheets, group discussion with the Staff Equity Team.
2. Develop action plan: meeting with parent, guidance intervention, school based plan to deal with school behaviours; informed other staff; offered rewards for good behaviour as well as consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Shared goals with her classmates.
3. Provided opportunity for second wrap around session which resulted in developing a social skills program with funded teacher aide assistance. Referral to Paediatrician re long term eating/behaviour disorder.
Why do you think the intervention worked?
Benita’s behaviour was partly attention seeking for nurturing possibly not given at home. She responded to the consistent parameters and rewards offered at school. Social skills program is successful in two ways: provides opportunity to explicitly teach sound skills and the child receives positive one on one attention three times a week from a calm adult.

It was a planned, team approach from staff who were given time for planning and review. The intervention was in part funded by the school.

Conclusion
Many schools are dealing with children with high and complex needs in a variety of creative and planned ways. Successful interventions for these children are imaginative, demanding long term commitment and involvement of all significant players, both from within and outside the school, as well as peers.
Chapter 6. Primary School Based Recommendations

We need to remember our charter, to have an “option for the poor and marginalised”.

School based personnel are in an excellent position to assess their own services and to recommend how the school might better serve marginalised children. Consequently, a survey question was, “How could your school better assist students who are out of home and/or marginalised?” (Appendix C 6 (a)). School personnel were asked the same question in face to face interviews (Appendix A). The recommendations noted: resources, parent/families, student programs, professional development, enrolment process, team approach, connecting with community resources, flexible curriculum and accommodation.

1. Resources
Twenty-seven out of thirty-eight respondents recommended enhanced resources, especially in the form of additional professionally trained staff. They specifically mentioned counsellors, social workers to work with school, students and families, psychologists, child protection officers, indigenous workers and experts in literacy/numeracy skills.

*Put counsellors in all schools so that children and families have an ongoing person who can work with them and point them to other agencies if appropriate.*

*These kids often need professional time spent with them which behaviour management type programs cannot provide. These families strongly tend not to use support services unless they are based in the school.*

*Teachers are teachers not psychologists and social workers. These children need a mentor who has time for them, not the busy school personnel who have limited time and skill.*

Seven respondents also mentioned finance to assist children with books, uniforms, clothes and to attend school excursions. Some even mentioned the need for washing machines in the school so children could have access to clean uniforms, while others suggested setting up a breakfast club for those children who came to school hungry. One principal asked the question, *Is Catholic Education out of reach of the ordinary family?* Another respondent suggested, *Have some funds set aside for use in action plans that may result from the wrap around sessions.*

Two schools suggested that learning support staff needed to be given more time for planning, while one school recommended that parish people be encouraged to do pastoral work with students.

2. Parents/ Families
There were fifteen recommendations which pertained to parents and families. Seven of the fifteen, in fact, suggested that the school should offer programs in parenting skills and advise parents of community support agencies. One observed *Some parents need parenting.*
Three school personnel suggested assisting parents with literacy/numeracy skills, and one suggested engaging a specialist in adult literacy/numeracy skills.

*In-service and workshops for parents on such areas as: how to listen to your child; how to read to your child; how to do maths with your child.*

Three also recommended supporting parents in crisis, as their personal traumas affect the lives of their children, while one suggested involving parents in “wrap around” and/or in follow up meetings.

*Our Church needs to be serious about the “lost sheep,” as some parents have no idea re use of money. If children are in a Catholic school, then they are in a Catholic community.*

3. **Student Programs**

Twelve school personnel recommended the need for special student programs: five considered a consistently implemented Behaviour Development and Management Policy to be essential, with another two stressing the need for individual education plans for students at risk or marginalised. Another believed protective behaviours information sessions should be conducted for the children each year.

*Plan with determination to make changes for these children within our circle of influence, while accepting that we may not be able to change the home situation.*

*Give students opportunities to build on their strengths.*

*Have regular “wrap around” opportunities for any staff to nominate students for discussion.*

4. **Professional Development**

Twelve respondents suggested that professional development was needed in the following areas: pastoral care techniques; strategies to support family carers; out of home and/or marginalised children; at risk signs; emergency contacts; how to handle a parent with restricted access; ways in which to help students deal with the many complex emotions which surface in their classrooms; how to promote an accepting attitude in the school community. Other issues mentioned were: grief and loss programs; legal advice re allowing or permitting children to shower at school; how to reach out to non-Catholic parents; and how to bring parents together.

*[It] should be recognised that despite provocation they [teachers] usually remain calm and respectful.*

5. **Enrolment Process**

Six school personnel stressed the need for a supported enrolment process, with the school counsellor present in some instances, to determine level of student need prior to enrolment; the establishment of an action plan to support these needs; regular monitoring of the plan; and, finally, regular team reviews.
6. **Team Approach**
A team approach was recommended by the respondents from six schools: for example, conducting student support team (e.g., Child Study Team) meetings on a regular basis; strengthening pastoral care networks; and sharing of ideas and experiences amongst teachers on strategies they have tried, and how successful or otherwise they have been.

*Maintain lines of communication with all those involved in providing support for any at risk children and their families so that a true team approach can be implemented.*

*Continue to provide a stable inclusive environment in which young people feel safe and valued and in which their strengths are recognized and nurtured.*

*We do reasonably well at a school level because we have key staff who are ‘on the ball’, so to speak. All are encouraged to monitor children closely and to seek out assistance or information if/when required. We have connections with a school guidance officer (shared over three schools) and a Parish initiative “Family & Friends.”*

*Every child needs someone they can depend on and become emotionally attached to, who they know will help them if they need it.*

*Some children won’t say anything because they don’t want anybody to know what is going on.*

7. **Connecting with Community Resources**
Five respondents saw linking guardians/carers with community support agencies as vital in assisting out of home and marginalised students, as well as utilising the skills of specialist liaison officers e.g., child protection and indigenous officers.

Three respondents recommended increased communication and collaboration between schools, student protection officers and outside agencies such as Dept. of Families and Child and Youth Mental Health Services.

8. **Flexible Curriculum**
Four respondents recommended curriculum flexibility, as well as support and advice regarding modifications for children who are struggling, e.g., manual arts for those who can’t sit in a classroom all day.

*Traditional schooling does not suit all clientele.*

9. **Accommodation**
Three respondents saw a need for respite accommodation for children looked after by grandparents and, indeed, for some parents with children with complex needs.
Chapter 7. Primary System Based Recommendations

Perhaps we need first to reflect on our own vision, that of BCE and the Archdiocese, as to what Catholic Schools are all about.

School personnel were asked in face to face interviews and in the survey, "How could the Catholic school system better assist students who are out of home and/or marginalised?" (Appendix A and Appendix C 6 (b)). The responses have been grouped into four categories, namely, additional resources, roles and responsibilities, professional development and community agencies.

1. Additional Resources

More personnel are needed at schools to assist, support and counsel these marginalised children.

There were forty-four responses out of forty-eight advocating that more resources be made available to schools: twenty wanted a guidance counsellor for each school; nine recommended a school/home liaison person (e.g., a pastoral person connecting families to community resources); three wanted the number of teacher aides in schools increased, while two wanted a reduction in teacher/student ratios by providing enough time and money to enable pastoral care teams to develop and be supported.

Implementing modifications is more likely to happen, and happen more effectively, if there is more time in the classroom and smaller class sizes.

Schools working on behaviour management programs are addressing some of the issues, but schools with a curriculum focus do not meet the needs of this out of home and marginalised group of students. Teachers can and do become frustrated attempting to meet the needs of all the students in their classes, and not many teach students, most teach the curriculum.

Several respondents mentioned the need for special needs teachers with training in disabilities to be working in every school and to increase the number of protective services officers in schools.

Five respondents expressed the need to support marginalised students through the ascertainment process and have funds available to be used as needed, for example,

Fund each school to have assessments done privately – thus freeing up BCE therapists to fulfil the consultancy role on a regular and reliable basis.

Two recommended a change in delivery of service in both Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy from BCE to the school itself.

One school recommended that appropriate use of funds be monitored by BCE.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

It is difficult for BCE to be at the coalface of knowing who is at risk and in need.
There were fifteen responses addressed to BCE, with seven advocating exploring and establishing an alternative approach (like Center Education School at Woodridge or using the Vocation Education model from Secondary Schools) to assist students who are unable to engage in schooling as it exists for the mainstream students.

*Not all children fit into the State curriculum.*

Two respondents proposed that the Church make a commitment to keep a school presence in low socio-economic areas.

*Our status as a needy school is gradually being eroded so that now all schools are equal which has wiped out disadvantage.*

*If BCE was true to its equity principles, why can’t a richer school twin with our school and make it into an alternative educational facility such as Seton and Kolbe and Center Education are in secondary?*

A further two respondents recommended that BCE should recognise disadvantaged schools, teachers who work in them and their financial needs.

*Some schools should be recognized as schools of hardship and teachers should be transferred after five years or paid more money.*

*BCE should give a certain amount of dollars to disadvantaged schools so that the school doesn’t put pressure on poor people to be paying.*

*This is a poor socio-economic area. Our fete nets $10,000 - other places net $30,000 - $70,000.*

Finally, one respondent recommended a new staffing formula based on identified needs and numbers of marginalised students in the school.

3. **Professional Development.**

*It takes a teacher with much wisdom and skill to cope in today’s classroom.*

*Share best practice from different schools.*

Three responses suggested regular opportunities for professional development and sharing effective interventions, requesting in particular that the faith issues of teachers and administrators be addressed.

4. **Community Agencies**

*[We need to be] consistently building and maintaining close links and networks with the various government and community agencies that provide services to children and families.*

Four respondents suggested bi-monthly meetings with community agencies to share resources and ideas. One suggested interaction with other Church groups to attempt to meet the needs of the families enrolled in Catholic schools.
Conclusion
Additional resources in terms of professional personnel to better assist marginalised children were called for as well as Brisbane Catholic Education exploring and establishing an alternative approach for children who cannot cope with an academic environment. Keeping a focus on, maintaining a presence in and even expanding into socio-economic poor areas were strongly recommended.
Part 3: Findings: Secondary

Chapter 8. Secondary Statistics

1. Out of Home Secondary Students
Thirty-two secondary schools returned surveys for numbers of out of home students on a weekly and yearly basis (Appendix D, 2). In face to face interviews, counsellors, some principals, teachers and support staff from twenty-six secondary schools were asked a series of questions to elicit information about out of home students in their schools (Appendix A).

Weekly
Thirty out of thirty-two secondary schools reported out of home students in their survey (Appendix C, 2). These schools had out of home students attending their school at the time they completed the survey.

The following schools reported the highest weekly numbers of out of home students:
St James, Fortitude Valley 32
St Edmund’s, Ipswich 18
St Peter Claver, Riverview 15
Trinity, Beenleigh 14
St Francis, Crestmead 11
Marymount, Burleigh Waters 9

Total: 11.6 students per 1000
Total BCE schools: 10.4 students per 1000

Out of home female students outnumbered male students in
- Year 11 by 41%,
- Year 12 by 46.6%

The schools which responded to the survey were situated in the following regions.

Metropolitan: Annerley, Fortitude Valley (All Hallows and St James), Carina, Enoggera, Hawthorne, Indooroopilly, Mitchelton, Mt Gravatt East, Paddington, Sunnybank, Thornlands, Upper Mt Gravatt.
Outer Metropolitan: Bracken Ridge, Cornubia, Crestmead, Petrie, Scarborough.
South Coast: Ashmore, Burleigh Waters, Carrara.
Sunshine Coast: Eli Waters, Nambour.
Ipswich: Ipswich (St. Mary’s and St. Edmund’s), Riverview, Springfield.
Rural: Beenleigh, Caboolture, Gympie, Kingaroy, Maryborough.

The following regions reported the highest weekly numbers of out of home students:
Ipswich region: 18.9 students per 1000
Rural region: 13.9 students per 1000
Outer Metropolitan region: 13.0 students per 1000
South Coast region: 8.3 students per 1000
Metropolitan region: 6.5 students per 1000
Yearly
All thirty-two secondary schools reported out of home students during the current year 2003. The number of out of home students per year per school ranged from 1 to 38 students, with the following schools recording the highest yearly numbers:

St James, Fortitude Valley  38
St Edmund’s, Ipswich   35
St Francis, Crestmead   20
Trinity, Beenleigh      18
Marymount, Burleigh Waters 16
St Peter Claver, Riverview 15

Total: 15.8 students per 1000
Total BCE schools: 13.9 students per 1000

Out of home female students outnumbered males in
- Year 11 by 34.7%
- Year 12 by 19%

The following regions reported the highest yearly numbers of out of home students:
Ipswich region: 21.3 students per 1000
Rural region: 16.8 students per 1000
North Coast region: 14.7 students per 1000
South Coast region: 14.7 students per 1000
Outer Metropolitan region: 8.1 students per 1000
Metropolitan region: 7.2 students per 1000.

Comparing National Figures
In their secondary homeless student national research, Chamberlain and MacKenzie reported that forty-one per cent of Catholic schools recorded homeless students in 2001 census week (2002, 20). This research reveals that one hundred per cent of Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane reported out of home students in 2003.

Further, Chamberlain and MacKenzie reported that the rate of out of home secondary students for Queensland was 15 per 1000, much higher than the national average of 10 per 1000. This research shows that Brisbane Catholic Education secondary schools reported a rate of 13.9 per 1000 of out of home secondary students, much higher than the national average, and consistent with Chamberlain and MacKenzie’s figures for Queensland (14).

Why are some students living in out of home situations? (Appendix A). Counsellors gave the following reasons:
family history of long-term domestic violence; father left home and mother does not provide emotional or financial support; mother has a mental illness; conflict with mother; doesn’t get along with father; parents with drug/alcohol problems and/or depression; mother addicted to illegal drugs; father encourages young person to take drugs; mother is a heroin addict; parent in prison; sexual abuse; parents live out of town; conflict with step-father; mother abusive; depression; in the care of the State; adopted; mother is in a new relationship; student has drug/alcohol problems; refugee
young people (unaccompanied minors); some are rebelling against too many restraints.

**Where are they living now?**
Counsellors said out of home students were living in the following situations: with foster carers since Year 9; with boyfriend’s family; in a stable fostering arrangement; with neighbours; with boyfriend; on the streets for a couple of weeks; with grandmother; with very supportive grandparents; in a flat with others; young women’s shelter; family of a staff member; with a friend; with some friends who are in their twenties; with grandparents; with an aunt; independently; in supported accommodation; moving from friend to friend (couch surfing); with relatives; in share accommodation; sharing a flat; with the parents of a friend; living on the streets or in parks.

### 2. Marginalised Secondary Students

**“Marginalised Students”:**
Rather than define the term “marginalised student”, the researcher asked school personnel, mainly school counsellors, in face-to-face interviews the following question: *“When I use the phrase ‘marginalised students,’ what categories of students come to mind?”* (Appendix A). The answers to these questions formed the basis of the survey question on marginalised students (Appendix D, 3).

**Weekly**
All but three of the thirty-two secondary schools reported marginalised students.

The following schools reported the highest **weekly** numbers of marginalised students:

- St Francis, Crestmead 250
- Seton College, Mt Gravatt East 139
- St James, Fortitude Valley 91
- Mt Maria, Mitchelton 85
- Trinity, Beenleigh 78
- Mt Maria, Enoggera 74
- Aquinas, Ashmore 70
- Southern Cross, Scarborough 70
- Clairvaux/McKillop, Mt Gravatt 68
- St John’s, Nambour 57
- St John Fisher, Brackenridge 46
- Lourdes Hill, Hawthorne 26

Total: 82.9 students per 1000
Total BCE schools: 96.2 students per 1000

Marginalised male students outnumbered females in
- Year 11 by 22.1%
- Year 12 by 9.8%.

The following regions reported the highest **weekly** numbers of marginalised students:

- **Outer Metropolitan Region:** 209 students per 1000
- **Metropolitan Region:** 110 students per 1000
South Coast Region: 72.3 students per 1000
Rural Region: 49 students per 1000
Ipswich Region: 27.9 students per 1000

**Yearly**
All but three of the secondary schools reported marginalised students.

The following schools reported the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students:
- Trinity, Beenleigh 367
- St Francis, Crestmead 250
- Seton College, Mt Gravatt East 139
- St Edmund’s, Ipswich 138
- St James, Fortitude Valley 115
- Mt Maria, Mitchelton 98
- Mt Maria, Enoggera 80
- Aquinas, Ashmore 70
- Clairvaux/McKillop, Mt Gravatt 68
- Marymount Burleigh Waters 62
- St John’s, Nambour 57
- Lourdes Hill, Hawthorne 57
- St John Fisher, Brackenridge 46
- St Peter Claver, Riverview 38

Total: 118 students per 1000
Total BCE schools: 129 students per 1000

In Year 10 marginalised male students outnumbered females by 34%,
In Year 11 marginalised female students outnumbered males by 2.8% and
In Year 12 marginalised male students outnumbered females by 31%

The following regions reported the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students:
- Outer Metropolitan Region: 202 students per 1000
- Rural Region: 173 students per 1000
- Metropolitan Region: 125 students per 1000
- South Coast: 80 students per 1000
- Ipswich Region: 61 students per 1000

**Students may be marginalised for some of the following reasons:**
drug/alcohol problems; subject 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; they have problems with their sexual identity (Appendix D 3 (a) and 3 (b)).

### 3. Early School Leaving Secondary Students
The survey asked the following question, ‘This year, how many students failed to complete the year they enrolled in because they were out-of-home or marginalised?’ (Appendix D, 4).
Twenty-two out of thirty-two schools responded, with the following schools reporting the highest numbers:

- St Francis, Crestmead 20
- St Edmund’s, Ipswich 13
- St James, Fortitude Valley 12
- Mt Maria, Mitchelton 12
- St Thomas More, Sunnybank 6
- Trinity, Beenleigh 6
- Carmel, Thornlands 5
- Clairvaux/McKillop, Mt Gravatt 5
- Aquinas, Ashmore 3
- St Mary’s, Ipswich 3

Total: 6.7 students per 1000
BCE schools: 6.7 students per 1000

The following regions recorded the highest numbers of early school leaving students:
- Outer Metropolitan region: 14.8 students per 1000
- Metropolitan region: 7.2 students per 1000
- Ipswich region: 4.9 students per 1000
- Rural region: 4.1 students per 1000

4. Disengaged Students Secondary

The survey asked the following question, “How many out-of-home and marginalised students are not able to engage with the curriculum as it is offered by your school?” (Appendix D. 5).

Eighteen respondents out of thirty-two secondary schools answered this question, with the following schools noting the highest numbers of disengaged students:

- St Francis, Crestmead 80
- St Thomas More, Sunnybank 29
- St Edmund’s, Ipswich 22
- Aquinas, Ashmore 21
- St Mary’s, Ipswich 15
- Clairvaux/McKillop, Mt Gravatt 9
- St Patrick’s, Gympie 7
- Carmel, Thornlands 5

Total: 13.1 students per 1000
Total BCE schools: 15.4 students per 1000

The following regions reported the highest numbers of disengaged students:
- Outer Metropolitan region: 38.6 students per 1000
- Metropolitan region: 12.9 students per 1000
- South Coast region: 12.4 students per 1000
- Ipswich region: 12.3 students per 1000
- Rural region: 5.3 students per 1000
- North Coast: 4.3 students per 1000
Chapter 9. Secondary Student Interviews

School is the most important thing for a child.
Therefore they should be as good as possible. Montanna 16 years

NOTE: All the names of the young people have been changed. Some students chose a pseudonym.

1. The Interviewees
Ten out of home students were interviewed, five female and five male. Their ages ranged from fifteen to nineteen years. They were in Years 8 to 12 while they were out of home. When interviewed, one was in Year 10, one in Year 11, five in Year 12, and three were not in school. As out of home students, one lived independently, one was in a home stay situation, two were in youth shelters, three lived with extended family, and four lived with the families of friends. One of the above students lived with extended family, and then with friends. The Interview Schedule is at Appendix B.

2. Support People
To the question, Who are the people at school who support you? out of home students nominated the following: counsellor (eight responses); friends (eight responses); Year coordinator (five responses); teacher (four responses); principal (four responses); deputy principal (two responses); assistant to the principal religious education (two responses); campus minister (one response); English as a second language teacher (one response). To the question, What support did they offer you? the students gave the following responses.

Counsellors listened and gave advice. They were told everything, even really personal information.

Harry: The counsellor listens to me and gives me advice. She helped me when I had an accommodation crisis. I needed accommodation pretty quick and she searched around and made appointments and gave me addresses. (Year 12)

Laura: I tell everything to the school counsellor. She is someone to talk to. If it’s really important, she’ll make room for us, e.g., she’ll change appointments to fit us in. (Year 12)

Joan: If I am upset I can leave the class and go to the counselling area. (Year 10)

Mick: I don’t like to talk about my situation a lot. I talk to him [counsellor] about really personal stuff; He’s really like my mate. (Year 12)

Students said that friends were very significant: they befriended, listened, and understood.

Tear: A Year 12 girl and her friends took me under their wing. (16 year old)

Laura: Friends understand me. I feel better when I talk about the situation I am in with my friends. (Year 12)
Joan: *I can talk to them [friends] about things that I can’t talk to other people about.*  (Year 10)

Logan: *I have friends and that helps a lot.*  (Year 11)

Students said that teachers listened, understood, befriended, were helpful, mentored, and assisted the students in being responsible for their academic work and attending school regularly.

Tear: *I was having a nervous breakdown in class and the teacher talked to me and we are still friends today.  I went to ADAWS (Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal Service) and she came to a BBQ there as my friend and support person.*  (16 yr old)

John: *If I don’t understand anything, I go to my teachers.  They help me whether it is their morning teatime or their lunchtime.*  (Year 12)

Mick: *She [my teacher] puts a lot of effort in, makes sure I’m on track.  When assignments get too much for me, my response is to stay away, and she tracks me down through my mobile phone, and gets me to come to school and shows me that it’s not as bad as what I’m thinking.*  (Year 12)

Frank: *He [my sporting coach] gets me to think in a more sensible way.  He makes sure I’m in the right place at the right time.  He gets me to come to school and to go to work.*  (Year 12)

Tear: *Teachers encouraged me to do my best and do what I could - not just cheesy motivational talks, but really down to earth stuff, as I was having a nervous breakdown and I lost it.*  (16 yr old)

John: *Whatever happens, these guys [school staff] are always there with me.*  (Year 12)

However, Montanna noted a lack of confidentiality.

*I asked teachers not to tell Mum about the DVO (Domestic Violence Order) I was taking out against her, but they did.  I lost trust in the whole school over that.  I was appalled by it.*  (16 years)

Students reported that Year coordinators played a key role in assisting the student pastorally and academically and making the system more flexible.

Harry: *The Year 12 Coordinator kept an eye on how I was and how I was going academically.  He gave me some special consideration for assignments and exams.*  (Year 12)

Joan: *The Year Coordinator is much the same [as the counsellor].  I need to have those people.*  (Year 10)
Principals also played key advocacy, pastoral and supportive roles for out of home students.

John: *The Principal went to the Immigration Department with me and sat in on the interview and produced support letters from all the members of staff.* (Year 12)

Lynne: *I had big troubles going into class and sitting there. I’d play up a bit. The Principal tried to make it a bit easier for me; she’d ask what would make it better for me. She sat with me in the class and helped me with my work.* (15 year old, homeless in Year 8)

Frank: *He’s the sum of the lot of them [counsellor, teacher and friends]: he asks me how things are going, where I live and have I contacted my parents recently.* (Year 12)

The Assistant to the Principal Religious Education was a friend and advocate who offered practical assistance to some out of home students.

Tear: *She was willing to give me a chance on a leadership camp. She was willing to help me. She also helped me to find somewhere to stay.* (16 year old)

Finally, two students said the assistance staff gave them was given unselfishly and was invaluable in their staying at school.

Tear: *If I had asked them [staff] for it [assistance] they would have given it to me or shown me where to get it.* (16 year old)

Joan: *All of this [support] helps me to stay at school and to learn. I feel I have to stay here and learn and that’s good because this helps me more in life with more opportunities and more choices later on.* (Year 10)

3. Unmet Needs
When the students spoke about how the school could have assisted them better, they mentioned such things as lack of understanding of their situation and of their out of school work and home responsibilities, their difficulties in obtaining notes when sick, and the need for extra tutoring.

a) Understanding
Out of home students say they crave understanding from the school in such areas as what they are going through, where they are living, difficulties with assignments and personal issues.

Tear: *[There needs to be] more understanding for a student who is on drugs, having a hard time and homeless.* (16 year old)

Logan: *Sometimes when things are hard at home, I’d bring them to school and teachers don’t understand. I’m acting out. They are reacting because they don’t understand my situation. I’m usually pretty calm.* (Year 11)
Laura: There is not much understanding re assignments and examinations for students like me. (Year 12)

Laura: Sometimes I’ve noted a very judgemental and intolerant attitude to students like myself from some of the teachers, when they should really be supportive. (Year 12)

b) Work. Some out of home students are working up to 35 hours a week, supporting themselves financially and trying to attend school full time.

Laura: There are just not enough hours in the day for everything. For example, this afternoon I have to do some messages, drop back a video, go home, cook dinner for myself and do my homework. (Year 12)

Montanna: Where I lived, I had to take care of the three children and clean the house. (16 years)

c) Notes were a concern for some of the students.

Laura: If I am away, I have to bring a note. I can’t write my own note, so I have to contact one of my parents (thankfully, my parents are cooperative). If I am sick at school, the school has to contact my parents before I can go home, which is most unsatisfactory, as I don’t live with my parents. (Year 12)

Montanna: I was my own guardian, but if I couldn’t get a note from the head of the household I got arvos, i.e., afternoon detention for one hour. (16 year)

d) Tutoring
One out of home student expressed the need for after hours assistance with her school work.

Lynne: I needed an after school tutor. (15 year old)

4. School Based Recommendations
The students had a number of recommendations about how the school could assist them and those like them. These recommendations included professional development for staff, financial assistance, establishing peer support groups, and having readily accessible and safe accommodation.

a) Students suggest staff have professional development on such issues as drugs, homelessness, sexuality and sexual identity.

Tear: A niceness course to treat us like human beings. (16 years)

Laura: The teachers need more understanding of where we are coming from and should be trying to build up relationships of trust with students like me. (Year 12)

Montanna: Train principals and teachers to be more understanding, not just sympathetic. (16 years)
b) **Finance.**
Three students spoke of their financial difficulties, and suggested reducing school fees for out of home students and assisting them with excursions and uniforms.

Montanna: *The Principal reduced my school fees to $30 per fortnight.* (16 years)

Tear: *Schools need to be open to people who don’t have money.* (16 year old)

c) **Peer Support.**
Six students were in favour of peer support groups for out of home students, while two were not.

Laura: *Peer support from others in the same position as myself could be good.* (Year 12)

Lynne: *[Peer support groups would help] to let out what I’m feeling and going through.* (15 years)

Frank: *[Peer support groups would help] to generate a little community.* (Year 12)

Montanna: *Yes, [they would help.] I could voice my opinions. We could share advice on our experiences.* (16 years)

Tear: *No. It could set up eliteness [sic]. We need to learn how to mix.* (16 year old)

Harry: *No, it’s not something I like to talk about.* (Year 12)

d) **Notes**
Many students spoke of the difficulties of obtaining notes.

Harry: *Notes are a problem when you don’t have parents to write and sign them, or for the school to phone.* (Year 12)

Mick: *I told the Principal and the counsellor my situation, and I sign my own notes.* (Year 12)

e) **Counsellors and Year coordinators**
Two students suggested that the counsellors and Year coordinators look out for the student on a regular basis, and be present and assist at the time of enrolment.

Logan: *They could check up on me every now and again to see how I am going. A little push from this direction may help if there is something going on.* (Year 11)

Lynne: *To be with me at enrolment stage so that I’m understood and helped from the start.* (15 years)
f) Accommodation
Students stressed the need for accessible and safe accommodation.

Harry: *There is not enough accommodation for students like us.* (15 years)

Lynne: *They should have a scheme like they have for overseas or exchange students.* (15 years)

Frank: *[There is a need for accommodation] especially for students who don’t have friends or mates so these people have somewhere to fall back on.* (Year 12)

Logan: *[We need] accommodation, especially respite accommodation.* (Year 11)

John: *If you have a good place to stay, study and eat well and are relaxed at home, then you will come to school and learn.* (Year 12)

Two out of home students offered fellow students a place to stay when they were in the same predicament.

Montanna: *Friends offered me a place to stay. Another friend was having problems and I offered for her to stay with me.* (16 years)


g) Home/School Liaison
Three students commented on the need for a home/school liaison person to assist them find accommodation, support them in that accommodation and advocate for them at school.

Harry: *[We need someone] to work with us to assist us with accommodation and all that goes with it.* (Year 12)

Mick: *[We need] someone who spent half time out of school ringing up students and checking up on them and coming around to see us.* (Year 11)

Lynne: *Schools should have a youth worker to help us understand our rights and help teachers understand us.* (15 years)

One student recommended after hours tutoring.

Lynne: *[Schools could] Employ an after school tutor for students like me.* (15 years)


5. System Recommendations.
The students made some system recommendations in the areas of policy and information and referral.

Three students suggested that policies be put in place regarding notes, fee reduction and confidentiality. One suggested that BCE facilitate entrance for poor students into
Australian Catholic University. Another suggested a person be appointed on a regional basis to assist with such issues as accommodation and university entry.

Montanna: *Confidentiality: have a good policy and stick to it.* (16 years)

Students said they needed to know what support is in place for them in the school and in the community.

Montanna: *School should have referred me to places that could assist me with what I was going through.* (16 years)
Chapter 10. Secondary: Early School Leavers

Many students will come to school when they have just one teacher or adult person to talk with. Deputy Principal

1. Statistics
The survey asked the following question, ‘This year, how many students failed to complete the year they enrolled in because they were out of home or marginalised?’ (Appendix D. 4)

As noted in Chapter 8, twenty-two out of thirty-two school personnel responded, with BCE schools averaging 67 students per 1000, the Outer Metropolitan region 148 students per 1000 and the Metropolitan region recording 72 students per 1000.

On visits to the schools, the researcher asked Principals and counsellors the following questions.
Do you have students who have left or are at risk of leaving school early?
Tell me about one of them.
What supports have you offered?
What needs are/were not being met?
What are your school based and system based recommendations for this group of students? (Appendix A)

The following personnel from sixteen secondary schools answered these questions: principals (5); deputy principals (2); assistant to the principal admin. (1); counsellors (16); indigenous support officer (1); campus ministers (2); and learning support teacher (1).

2. Who are the young people who are leaving school early?
The following answers represent a summary of the responses.

Students who are disillusioned with school and want to do hands on work;
young people who have a mental illness; students who don’t want to leave Mum and Dad who have mental health issues; school avoiders, that is, students who aren’t turning up very often and therefore are at high risk of leaving.

[We have] a student who is very intelligent but is moving around. When she is here at school she is very happy, but then she disappears.

[There is] a Year 12 student who won’t work, hates authority, is a poor lost soul and in a constant state of conflict [who left school].

[One of our students] left home and the family refused to pay her fees, so she had to leave school.

[There is] a Year 11 student who is manic depressive and a Year 12 student who is obsessive compulsive [who left school].
[One of our students, a] Year 11 female, ran away from home to grandparents because her parents didn’t like her boyfriend. She is determined to be back home, and we may get her back to school.

[We have a] Year 10 student [who] has lots of problems and couldn’t stick to anything. At school he has stability, help and friends. His grandparents are struggling with him. He loves sport.

[There is] one Year 12 student [who] left this year because of mental health problems.

3. Discussion
Respondents reported that their schools worked hard to retain early school leavers. They tried to assist by providing programs to meet their needs and a safe environment (from bullying and harassment), by encouraging the students to think through their decisions and, if at all possible, to complete Year 12, and by leaving the door open for them to come back.

Pressure is high not to leave.

Students need to finish Year 12 safe, unharmed and intact.

Two respondents said their schools were not the right schools for some students and could not meet their needs. One counsellor said that early school leavers just changed schools or went interstate with their families.

Several counsellors stated their schools, as a community, are apprehensive about students with a mental illness, that some staff are frightened, and that some staff “can’t get a handle on depression.”

There is a group in Year 12 who are disengaging and not engaging at all. Thirty years ago they would be in the work force. Now the government says they must stay at school, plus they need education just to gain apprenticeships.

School works well with Year 9 and Year 10 students. Fifteen were likely to drop out in 2002, but all stayed on. Those who don’t complete schooling or who don’t want to are assisted into apprenticeships, or TAFE etc.

One lad who left in Year 10 to do an apprenticeship was sacked after three months probation, and decided to come back to school and is doing well.

We are trying to bring Vocational Education into Years 9 & 10 as well as community service, e.g., work on a property or a farm or in the railway museum

4. Recommendations
There were five main areas of recommendations: additional resources, flexible curriculum, professional development, early intervention and a leaving certificate and ritual.
Change the system to reflect the diversity of young people’s experiences and build more flexibility into the system. Counsellor

a) **Additional Resources**
Several school personnel recommended additional personnel and resources for intervention, i.e., one to one, hands on work with students, with one suggesting that in some areas the ratio of teachers to students should be one teacher for every ten students (as at Center Education).

*We get criticised for putting lots of energy into a few to the detriment of many.*

b) **Flexible Curriculum**
Five counsellors recommended Vocational Education for Year 10, with one day a week for work experience. Two suggested Vocation Education for Year 9 and even Year 8.

*Each school faces the challenge of an accessible curriculum. Many students want and need hands on stuff.* Principal.

*Schools need to be a lot more creative in their response. They should encourage home schooling (distance education), have part-time schooling with more flexible enrolment.*

*Present school structures need compliant students who sit in the class rooms and are cooperative. Many students just can’t do this. They need a structure which gives them freedom to move around.*

c) **Professional Development**
Six counsellors recommended professional education for teachers on such issues as mental illness, good modelling, and other ways of doing school and of living life.

*Many teachers are driven by reporting and the curriculum, and not by human factors, e.g., relationship building.*

d) **Early Intervention**
Several counsellors recommended putting in place processes to detect signs of early school leaving. Such signs would include skipping classes, behaviour problems, isolation, truanting, exasperated parents and school phobia.

One counsellor recommended a program called “Stepping Stones” where Year 9 teachers identify who might be at risk (which is 10% to 15% of students). The teachers meet with these students once a week, connect them with a workplace, identify their dreams for the future, identify their hobbies, develop their outside interests and skills and assist them to obtain part time work. The teachers, therefore, open the students’ eyes to possibilities and work with them until the end of Year 10.

*Grab onto whatever works; be flexible; be creative; get into lateral thinking.*
One counsellor mentioned the problem of student transport to a workplace in a rural area, while another suggested the school needed money to buy work clothes for students who could not afford them.

e) **Leaving Certificate and Ritual:**
One respondent stressed the importance of giving the students certificates when they leave, and of also conducting a ritual.

*Some have to leave, and it is right for them.*

*Give the certificate earlier to acknowledge they are leaving and to ritualise their leaving with and for them. Have good exit goals, even if they are expelled. Walk with these people in the Christian sense as far as possible.*
Chapter 11. Disengaged Secondary Students

*Often the school is the only safe, consistent group that the student has contact with.*

Counsellor

*I’m fairly independent. The situation I was in was a result of my choices so I had to handle it. The school was very good with its resources. Students should approach the school when they need help.* Harry, Year 12.

The survey question was, *How many out-of-home and marginalised students are not able to engage with the curriculum as it is offered by your school?* (Appendix D, 5)

1. Statistics

As noted in Chapter 8, nineteen out of thirty-two schools responded, with BCE schools averaging 199 students per 1000, the Metropolitan region with 129 students per 1000, the South Coast region recording 124 students per 1000, and the Ipswich region 123 students per 1000.

On visits to the schools, the researcher asked Principals and counsellors the following questions.

Do you have students who are not engaged, who are just there?
Tell me about one of them.
What supports have you offered?
What needs are/were not being met?
What are your recommendations for this group of students? (Appendix A)

The following personnel from ten secondary schools answered these questions:
principal (1); assistant to the principal admin. (1); counsellors (9); and campus minister (1).

2. Who are the young people who are not engaged?

The following answers represent a summary of the responses.

*Many are deeply into the drug culture or on the edge of it; they get behind in their work, and cannot catch up; some do not do any school work; they are going nowhere; some drop out if they do not qualify for learning support; some talk about moving out of home but have no skills; if they stay at school, it is because they have a commitment to something, e.g., sport.*

*Every student is exposed to the drug culture. Many have no coping strategies. Drugs destroy them.*

*[We have] a Year 8 student who is new to the school, not engaged, receiving professional help. We have funding to support him. We’re trying to find out why he does what he does.*

3. Discussion:

This group of disengaged students was readily identified by the teacher aides and the learning support teachers. Several respondents said that the curriculum was unbending, for example, requiring that young people learn a second language when
some cannot cope with English. Some thought this group of students exhibited a lack of coping skills for life, and that they were often socially unconnected and needed role models. Others mentioned that they had difficulties identifying these students in the larger classes of Years 8, 9 and 10.

_The dropouts want a trade or to work, and don’t fit in socially to school._

One counsellor thought that this group of students in particular showed up the limits of the ascertainment system for threshold young people.

One counsellor reported that the school modified a lot of the work for disengaged students or placed them into a Vocational Education course.

_Early identification and a targeted response, e.g., re-jigging programs was the way forward._

4. **Recommendations**

The recommendations were that this group of students could be assisted by schools employing more learning support teachers and teacher aides in the classrooms, by having a very accessible curriculum and, finally, accessible or readily available money which could be used to provide programs.
Chapter 12. Secondary: What is Working

*If they do what’s done here, they’ll be doin’ well.* Frank, Year 12.

*The pastoral care culture of the school focuses on the inclusion and acceptance of all students.*

Survey questions invited respondents to write up a story of what worked and why the intervention worked. Many schools responded with examples of what they were doing to assist out of home, marginalised and disengaged young people. (Appendix D 6 (a) and (b))

“What is working” examples encompassed some or all of the following elements.

1. **Elements of what is working**

   **Team work.** Respondents emphasised that action plans should be based on information/data sheets provided by all teachers. Action plans should then be fed back to all staff. Some schools included parents as a part of their team.

   **Cooperation.** Respondents noted that fostering cooperation and a climate of concern between all care-givers was essential. Respondents wrote that cooperation encouraged a pastoral approach among staff members.

   **Relationship building.** Developing a relationship with the student was frequently cited as vitally important. Respondents said they actively promoted unconditional care of the student, but with limits.

   **Counselling.** Many saw counselling not purely as one to one sessions with the student, but as organising comprehensive support.

   **Leadership.** Some respondents saw that leadership was important in many situations and sometimes needed to come from the Principal.

   **Listening.** Respondents said it is imperative to listen to the needs of the student. One said that *the most important factor is to find the time to regularly sit with these students and to hear their story and to begin to understand them.*

   **Family and Home Visiting.** Respondents wrote that fully involving the family and including the family in planning and strategies assisted in successful outcomes for the students. Some respondents saw the importance of a home visit.

   **Financial support.** Respondents said that financial support provided by the school played a key role in assisting some students. Some said their schools paid for extra support, for example, out of school counselling, or made it known that the school offered fee reduction.

   **Mentoring.** Respondents emphasised that staff mentoring of students aided in establishing genuine caring relationships.
Flexibility of School. Safe space needed to be created at school, respondents wrote. Many counsellors were successful in making arrangements for the re-integration of students after a significant absence, including personal support and negotiated educational goals.

Networking with community resources. Respondents valued a team approach with outside organisations and specialist school staff.

Long Term Commitment. Some respondents stressed follow through over an extended period with the school refusing to give up on the student.

Control and Incompetence. One respondent noted that plans fell apart when people came into the network who tried to take control and didn’t have the expertise required.

2. Examples of what is working

Story 1: Cooperation between all Care Givers
We have a female student who is severely depressed. Her parents are not accepting of academic demands, despite her mental health issues. Finally, we got through to her parents with the support of mental health workers to let us try something different, in order to keep the girl at school and reasonably active, as a deterrent to depression, while she stabilises (as every day we were unsure if she would remain alive). The principal was supportive of a reduced timetable, and the use of additional funding to engage a person once a week for a Fun lesson. She attended sessions with the counsellor to complement the therapy she was receiving at Child and Youth Mental Health Service.

Why do you think it worked?
So far, so good. The alternative session is with a former student from last year, who was in the school musical with her. They relate well. This suggestion came from her drama teacher, so there was a whole group approach to her well-being.

In summary, all staff were concerned to do their best for this student with leadership coming from the principal, at the counsellor’s request. Alternative funds were made available and there was co-operation between all caregivers.

Story 2: Relationship and Network Building
A Year 10 student was ascertained with Level 5 Aspergers Disorder Syndrome. He wanted to leave school. The outside world was looking very attractive. The counsellor working with the Learning Support Head of Department implemented a program involving school-based work experience, which will lead to wider community involvement in Term 4 and school-based traineeship hopefully next year. A lot of in-class teacher aide time was allocated to this student. He sees the counsellor each week to address issues and also works with the Head of Department Learning Support each week as well.

Why do you think it worked?
The strategy worked for a number of reasons, namely, the flexibility of the school, a team approach with his parents, funding to pay for extra support, listening to the needs of the student and relationship and network building.
Story 3: A Team Effort
One of our students who has a mental illness was quite suicidal and had made several attempts on her life with overdoses. Two of these attempts were made from school. The student was helped by a collaborative effort.

The therapist from Queensland Child and Youth Mental Health Service worked closely with the counsellor. She was available to advise the Principal and other Admin members. What made this workable was the fact that the student gave permission to both counsellor and therapist to work together. If this hadn’t been the case, the story may have been very different. The therapist tried to work with the girl’s extended family members, but this was not so easy. The girl ended up going to alternative accommodation for a short time. Unfortunately, this did not work out long-term due to the ill health of the carer.

Why do you think it worked?
A team effort is required in helping students with very complex and complicated family and personal backgrounds. People with different levels and types of expertise, plus flexible working hours, who are able to work as part of a team, are essential. Openness and boundary setting on the part of the helpers and the young person are necessary if the plan is to work. I believe these things happened, more or less.

Story 4: Refusing to Give Up.
This story related to a collaborative intensive support effort involving the year coordinator, principal, school counsellor and other teachers in which the student was supported and encouraged in many ways including help with buying lunches, uniform, school shoes, attending doctor’s visits, home visits and liaison with external agencies. The student was able to find a staff member who he was comfortable with and who was willing to act as a mentor.

Why do you think it worked?
The school refused to give up on this student, and despite many ups and downs, there was a general willingness to go the extra mile in caring for this student and in trying to keep him at school. The staff member who was a mentor was able to establish a genuine caring relationship with the student.

Story 5: Flexibility & Advocacy
This student lives independently. He has been a ward of the state and is now over 18. He possesses a personal resilience and commitment to achieve. He has a number of supportive relationships out of the school who encourage him to commit to finishing. He wants to join the police. He has at school a significant teacher who has mentored him through his final year. Flexibility has been encouraged in the nature and timing of tasks, using teachers as advocates for his cause against inflexible structures. School personnel have supported him in his home life as well as his school life. He has been challenged and, at the same time, supported. Integral has been the strength of mentoring relationships within the school, advocacy for him, intelligence and resiliency skills.
Why do you think it worked?
The key elements in this successful outcome were: relationships of staff members with the student, home visits, maintenance of the relationships and follow up, negotiated educational goals, advocacy, mentoring, intelligence and resiliency.

Story 6: Taking Time to Listen
A student involved in the Stepping Stones Program showed great progress over a period of eighteen months with a one to one session each week which focussed on building self esteem, an awareness of her gifts and the support to plan ahead. Contact with parents also supported this process.

Why do you think it worked?
The most important factor is to find the time to regularly sit with these students to hear their stories and to begin to understand them. The journey through adolescence is a time of great change and there is need for strong support networks during this time.

Story 7: Exclusion and Inclusion
A Year 9 boy excluded from school for selling drugs. The process of exclusion included an opportunity for him to return to the school in Year 11. We monitored his progress at the new school and maintained contact with his family. After eighteen months, we instituted an enrolment process, including transition meetings with his family, prior to accepting him back. Goals and mentors etc. were set up. This student is progressing well in Year 11 at the moment.

Why do you think it worked?
“A number of factors were involved in this successful plan, namely, his family was fully involved and included in the planning, forgiveness and hope were evident throughout the process, and follow through was kept up over the extended period.
Chapter 13. Secondary School Based Recommendations

We need to chip away at the mind set of some teachers
to assist them to see their role as guided by Gospel values,
especially those teachers where curriculum motivation drives them solely. Counsellor.

The recommendations recorded in this chapter came in response to survey question 7 (a) (Appendix D), as well as from face to face interviews with counsellors, principals and other staff (Appendix A). There were recommendations in the following seven areas: additional resources, professional development, parenting programs, flexible/more diverse curriculum, connecting with community resources, student peer support and curriculum.

1. Additional Resources

   More counsellors to ensure the emotional safety of students. Mick Year 12

Thirty-eight out of fifty-eight responses recommended more resources: more counsellors; reduced teaching loads for Year coordinators and administrators; more learning support staff; more campus ministers’ hours; youth workers for after school work (or social workers shared with the parish); tutorial programs to complement in-class work. Some suggested more counsellor and campus minister hours specifically for family support and early intervention.

   a) Year level co-coordinators could be given more release time to attend ‘wrap around’ meetings. These can take several lessons out of a teacher’s day and require significant blocks of time.

   b) Learning Support Teachers: It is a little strange that in our schools – particularly those funded through Block Grants Authority – and that’s most of our schools – there is no allocation of specific designed space for Learning Support Teachers who carry a very significant responsibility for addressing the needs of these students.

   c) [We need] a youth service which closely liaises with the school so that the maximum amount of support can be given without being too intrusive; undertake more preventative work by employing school/parent liaison people.

Some school personnel believed that only a specialist team could adequately address the issues of out of home and marginalised students.

   Schools [should] develop a student focus team or pastoral team, with a clearly identified case manager to be the contact person and facilitate accountability to assist students that are out of home or marginalised.

Some respondents expressed the need for financial resources to be made available to Principals.

   Extra resources should be provided to Principals so that uniforms and books can be purchased for students in need, and so that students could attend
excursions, and for students who suddenly are out of home to help with personal expenses, toiletries etc.

2. Professional Development

Teachers should be helped to understand that some students have a hell of a life. When we act like a proper community (caring, supportive and develop structures that assist), then marginalisation is reduced to nothing.

Twenty-three responses stressed the need for professional development for school staff, including principals, on such topics as: building community; building relationships with students and their families and between staff and students; providing opportunities for staff to debrief (“this will resource them so that they are more patient and compassionate with marginalised students”); collaboration and information sharing.

[We need to] promote significant, regular, one to one support for these students over the five years of secondary schooling to ensure successful transition from school.

The key is the relationships you have with students.

Responses suggested specific topics for professional development, namely, acceptance of, education about, and how to assist socially and financially disadvantaged people and groups in our community, mental illness (depression, at risk behaviours), learning difficulties, anxiety, Asperger’s Syndrome, restorative justice practices, racism, sexual harassment, abused young people. The respondents valued consistent and regular consultation with specialist staff.

[We need to] recognize, understand and meet the needs of marginalised and out of home students.

Some students are the sole breadwinners in the family, working from 20 – 30 hours per week.

Finally, some respondents expressed the need to access funds for out of home and marginalised students to help with living costs. One suggested that each school should have a committee which includes teachers, parents, and community members, who meet regularly to address this issue. Another needed assistance with submission writing for grants for students with support needs, but then added, We don’t have time to write submissions.

3. Parenting Programs

Eleven respondents recommended providing parent education programs, especially for step-families, single parents and for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren to help them understand and deal with a teen culture of “sex, drugs and rock and roll”, mental health issues etc.

[We need to] support families walking the edge with greater understanding by helping them become aware of how to gain support to overcome some of the hurdles they experience.
4. **Flexible/More Diverse Curriculum**

Ten responses indicated that the school should have a more flexible curriculum, including more “hands on” skills training for those students with different abilities and/or priorities. One suggested taking these students out of the structured school environment on a regular basis.

- We need a more relevant and/or alternative curriculum for students who have different priorities and/or are marginalised/homeless.
- We need more experimental/alternative learning opportunities for students who don’t “fit” the system, e.g., outdoor education programs, gardening, outward bound/wilderness, assembling cars, learning new skills that are useful in the home environment.

5. **Connecting with Community Resources**

Thirteen responses indicated a need for access to up to date information about community services, especially accommodation, and networking with community groups and families.

- We need to make alliances with outside of school agencies such as GP’s, CYMHS, Family Services, psychiatrists, mediation services, youth services etc.
- We should offer students a networking system in case some avenues of assistance may temporarily (for whatever reason) be unavailable/unworkable.

6. **Student Peer Support**

Peer support is paramount.

Six respondents recommended that schools should provide peer support groups so that students could talk about the effects of their situations with a counsellor or campus minister present. Others recommended schools offer peer counselling to students on such topics as empathy and reflection of feeling.

- We should empower students to be welcoming and responsible.

*Often these students feel alone and isolated in their situation. Peers are frequently the first to know of these dilemmas.*

- We recommend bringing abused students together in a support group with an adult.

- We suggest establishing a buddy system for the marginalised student. Someone from his/her peer group who volunteers to assist and keep a friendly
eye out for the student especially in regard to deadlines, lesson needs and general organizational issues.

7. Curriculum
Five respondents suggested demystifying and mainstreaming issues associated with out of home and marginalised students. This could take place, they wrote, in appropriate class settings and would promote a greater acceptance of diversity in school.

Addressing some of the issues for marginalised students within the curriculum helps them to stop feeling so isolated and different and gives them ideas for how to access support.

[We need to] promote a cultural change to greater acceptance of diversity to reduce subversive ‘girl bullying’, exclusion, etc as these are issues for some marginalised students.
Chapter 14. Secondary System Based Recommendations

[We need] a strong ethos throughout the system (i.e., at all levels) that the marginalised students in our communities are our special focus or concern in line with the mission of Jesus.

The recommendations recorded in this chapter came in response to survey question 7 (b) (Appendix D), as well as from face to face interviews with counsellors, principals and other staff (Appendix A). There were nine recommendations, covering teachers, Year level pastoral coordinators, accommodation, counsellors, student skilling, finance, curriculum flexibility, Education Training Reform for the Future, and Brisbane Catholic Education.

1. Teachers
Eleven respondents addressed the support needs of teachers, especially Year level coordinators.

The system needs to address levels of stress and burn out among teachers - marginalised students need ongoing support and teachers often extend themselves to care for these students and to respond to all their needs, emotional and social as well as educational.

Staff working at grass roots needs support from the system. School principals and other administration staff would benefit from support and guidance also.

BCE needs to give teachers more in-service on how to teach students with mental illness.

Regular and reasonably frequent access to, e.g., BCE consultants who have a broader picture of available programs, resources etc than individual staff in individual schools.

2. Year Level Pastoral Coordinators
Eleven respondents recommended that Year Level Pastoral coordinators be provided with appropriate in-serivce. They noted that the three periods per week they have to plan and support up to 140 students is not enough time. Furthermore, they suggested that network meetings of Year Level Pastoral coordinators would be useful, and that the position of Year Level Pastoral coordinator should be assisted with support personnel in central administration. As well, they recommended that BCE establish a floating Pastoral Care position to assist the Year Level Pastoral coordinators.

3. Accommodation.
There is an acute shortage of shelters and beds for homeless students.

Twenty-three respondents recommended that BCE provide accommodation for out of home students who are unable to return home or who need time out from family relationships. This accommodation should be safe and supported, and include respite, medium and long-term. Such a facility should be staffed appropriately to promote reconciliation and reconnect families in a manner consonant with Catholic values and
consistent with accepted adolescent development and family therapy principles and practice.

[We should] promote the “Homebase” model for community placement of students, where the students were looked after within the school community. Often students would benefit from temporary respite care out of the home situation, or a change from their everyday reality in terms of an opportunity to participate in an adventure camp or similar initiative.

Expert staff are needed to support these students, as many need support, as they “do it tough” once out of home.

4. **Counsellors**

The individual needs of the student are paramount.

Five respondents recommended more counsellor hours for family support and networking among schools, as well as more system support for guidance counsellor hours for counsellors who have a holistic approach to school counselling. Access to affordable and/or free and timely counselling and support services is a constant need.

It is only after the crisis situations have been dealt with that there is time to be proactive in detecting and dealing with the problems associated with the marginalised students who often appear to be coping but are not performing at their optimal level.

In a P-12 college, Speech Therapy (BCEC) should be provided by only one therapist, not one for Primary and one for Secondary. Perhaps a better use of funds would be to allocate a nominal amount of money to each school which would cover assessments/ascertainties by private therapists. This would free up some valuable time for consultancy from BCEC therapists.

5. **Student Skilling**

Marginalised students are our special focus.

Three replies from the school survey suggested that out of home and marginalised students needed more socialization skills and assertiveness training.

6. **Finance**

The three finance recommendations were: to address the inequalities in terms of funding and resources in schools; to explore other ways of allocating funds to support marginalised students; and to increase funding to help schools with a high proportion of marginalised students.

Schools in “poorer” socio-economic areas are disadvantaged because fewer parents pay fees, parents are less educated, buildings are less attractive etc.

7. **Curriculum Flexibility**

Two recommendations here encompassed:
a) the provision of alternative/flexible schooling options for out of home and marginalised students who need such a facility, and
b) the establishment of a centre that could be accessed by schools that has a practical life skills focus where the ambience is less structured and where perhaps live-in emergency accommodation is also available.

We need systemic alternative education units with support teachers for re-integration.

8. Education Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF)

There was one recommendation, for effective lobbying by BCE to ensure that the Government supports the ETRF initiatives with the necessary resources.

9. Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE)

Six schools suggested that BCE develop policies for out of home students in such areas as fee reduction, notes, what information about a student gets shared with whom, and clarify such legalities as, for example, whether a young person can be their own guardian; and who the school should be communicating with. They also suggested that counsellors be assigned to schools in relationship to the needs of the students in the particular school, for example, the numbers of suicides, dysfunctional students, sexually abused students etc.

BCE should establish a team of people, including a paediatrician and a psychologist, to visit on a regular basis.

Lots of other Catholic High Schools won’t integrate special needs students. They just won’t take them.

Three counsellors recommended a special coordinated project, specifically targeted at out of home and marginalised students.

BCE should set up a Youth Development Project which would, instead of funding bits and pieces, have a funding life of three years, and would pursue a coordinated approach to out of home and marginalised students in the Catholic system.

Two recommended that BCE critique the educational system:

Societal systems and educational systems are fundamentally damaging children and not a lot can be done to bring about primary change. Schools can only deal with immediate needs. BCE should critique the educational system.

And, finally, one respondent asked:

Why don’t we have more out of home students attending our Catholic Schools?
Chapter 15. Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF)

1. **Background.**

An associated purpose of this research has been to make “recommendations on the potential for further criminalisation of young people arising from the recent Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) legislation.”

During the course of the research, the State Government tabled proposed legislation in Parliament and gave interested parties an inadequate three weeks to comment. The ETRF enabling legislation is called *Youth Participation in Education and Training Act* and was passed by the Queensland Parliament in October 2003. The intention of the Act is to

i. make it compulsory for young people to remain at school until they finish Year 10 or have turned 16, whichever comes first;

ii. require young people to then participate in education and training for a further two years, or until they have gained a Senior Certificate, or until they have gained a Certificate I or a vocational qualification; or until they have turned 17.

Furthermore, the Act makes it an offence for parents to fail to ensure the young person participates in education, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. The penalties will be incurred by parents, not by young people.

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) raised major concerns about this legislation in their submissions to the Minister, and Queensland Catholic Education Commission entered into discussions with senior bureaucrats from Queensland Education about, among other issues, the possible adverse impact of this legislation on marginalised young people and their families. In this action, BCE and QCEC acknowledged that ETRF is a collective State-wide issue in which the Catholic voice should be heard.

It is appropriate that this research project examine the Act with out of home and marginalised young people and their families in mind. Approximately 70% of students in Queensland complete Year 12, which means the Act, in the main, applies to the other 30%. This latter group is largely made up of: young people of Aboriginal descent; the approximately 3000 Queensland young people who are out of home (Chamberlain and Mackenzie, 2002); young people at risk of homelessness, with addictions, mental health problems, limited literacy/numeracy etc. There are, also, at least 10,000 young people aged 15 – 17 years who are not in school, not in training and not in work (Minister’s Second Reading Speech). Approximately 30,000 students are suspended or excluded from school each year. The question then is: How will these students and their families fare under the Act?

2. **Guiding Principles: The Potential for Further Criminalisation**

Section 8 of the Act outlines the guiding principles.

*the State should develop practical ways to improve the social, educational and employment outcomes of young people including, in particular, those who are at risk of disengaging from education and training;*
the State should foster a community commitment to young people by involving members of the community and community organisations in developing education and training opportunities for young people, and re-engaging young people in education and training, and developing ways to improve the social outcomes of young people;

the State should work with parents to achieve the best outcome for young people; and that the State should work in consultation with non-government entities to achieve the objects of this Act.

The intention of these guiding principles is to be commended. The concern is, however, that the intentions will be impossible to implement unless appropriate resources are made available. Services to out of home and marginalised students are conspicuous by their absence, evidenced by long waiting lists for accommodation in youth refuges and for Government mental health services, and few addiction services for young people and their parents. As Youth Advocacy stated in its submission, “Significant resources will need to accompany these principles with newly funded programmes to support and assist young people, schools, employers and families” (Youth Advocacy Centre, 2003, 2). Providing these resources is essential, “given the potential for sanctions to be imposed on the parents of truants or early school leavers” (Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, 2003, 2).

The Act fails to recognise the 3000 out of home students, many of whom are living independently and have not and do not want contact with their parents. The Chief Executive’s power to approve flexible arrangements should not be contingent upon contact with a young person’s parents when the young person does not wish contact to be made with the parent.

The Act does not guarantee that the most vulnerable of our young people are supported to "learn or earn" - in fact, it has a number of “out-clauses,” e.g., sections 17 and 26. “As a result, this new Act will not address any further the education or training needs of the large majority of the 10,000 young people not “earning or learning’” (Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, 2003, 1).

Section 19 of the Act deals with parents’ obligations to ensure their child’s participation in education until the child has reached seventeen years of age. It states that each parent of a young person in a compulsory participation phase, that is, until the age of seventeen years, must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. The penalty for non-compliance in the first instance is 5 penalty units ($75); or for a second or subsequent offence, whether or not relating to the same child of the parent, 10 penalty units ($350).

The Act states it is a reasonable excuse for a parent that the young person lives with another parent and the first parent believes, on reasonable grounds, the other parent is ensuring the young person participates full-time in an eligible option; or the parent is not reasonably able to control the young person’s behaviour to the extent necessary to ensure the young person participates full-time in an eligible option.
The penalties seem excessive, and would cause grave hardship in impoverished families and further conflict in dysfunctional families. Further, if parents are unable to pay the fine, they could be liable to incarceration. “It is especially important that those parents who struggle to support their young people through the current post compulsory phase of learning be made aware of their obligations and the type of support that it is possible for them to receive in fulfilling their obligation” (Queensland Catholic Education Commission. 2003, 3).

Education Queensland should monitor Section 19 of the Act to determine what action is actually taken against parents under the new legislation and what the current status of charges against parents is, as well as the trends over the past few years. Education Queensland has stated that the exemptions given to parents are wide and broad and the intention is to support parents. The questions needing answers are in what form will this support be provided and how accessible will it be to the parents and young people who will need it most. While youth support coordinators play an important role in supporting and assisting out of home and marginalised students and their parents, very little planning has occurred with the community in formulating the District Youth Achievement Plans which form the basis for the implementation of the reforms.

3. Conclusions
The enabling legislation for the Education and Training Reforms for the Future will not directly criminalise young people as its penalties apply only to parents. However, Section 19 (Parents’ obligation to ensure participation) should be monitored to ascertain to what extent it is being applied and what supports are being offered to parents.

Young people could be indirectly penalised by neglect and omission. If out of home and marginalised students are not given appropriate support to remain in school, and the “out-clauses” are applied to them, many will be candidates for homelessness and consequent delinquency and consequently attract punishment from the courts.
Part 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Primary Schools
   i. Out of Home Primary Students
   Twenty-seven out of thirty-eight primary schools reported out of home students during 2003, with two schools, St Paul’s, Woodridge, and St Joseph’s, Murgon, reporting twenty-one and fourteen out of home students respectively.

   The Rural region with 13.8 students per 1000 and the Outer Metropolitan region with 13.1 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of out of home students. The average yearly total of out of home students in BCE schools was 10.4 students per 1000.

   ii. Marginalised Primary Students
   Thirty-five out of thirty-eight primary schools reported marginalised students during 2003 with St Francis Xavier, Goodna, reporting ninety-nine marginalised students and St Francis, Crestmead, ninety-one.

   The Ipswich region with 127 students per 1000 and the Outer Metropolitan region with 96.9 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students. The average yearly total of marginalised students in BCE schools was 68.9 students per 1000. In this category, males consistently outnumbered females by almost two to one.

   iii. Disengaged Primary Students
   Twenty-two out of thirty-eight primary schools reported disengaged students during 2003, with two schools, St Francis, Crestmead, and St Francis Xavier, Goodna, reporting eighty-three students and fifty-three students respectively.

   The Ipswich region with 73.6 students per 1000 and the Outer Metropolitan region with 36.9 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of disengaged students. The average yearly total of disengaged students in BCE schools was 24.6 students per 1000.

   iv. Discontinuing Primary Students
   “Discontinuing students” refers to those students who fail to enrol in Catholic secondary schools after completing Year 7 in a Catholic primary school. Lack of finance for school fees and fares for transport to school were given as the main reasons for Year 7 students failing to enrol in a Catholic secondary school.

   v. What is Working - Primary
   Primary school personnel had clear ideas about what worked well in meeting the many and complex needs of out of home and marginalised students in their schools. Included were the following: team work, relationship building, networking with community resources, long term commitment, peer support, family involvement, planning, flexible curriculum, and financial support.
vi. Primary School Recommendations

Schools need more resources, especially in the form of additional professionally trained staff. Primary school respondents saw the need to work with families and to offer programs in parenting skills and advise parents of community agencies. Added to this, professional development was high on their lists of recommendations on issues such as pastoral care techniques, assistance in understanding marginalised and at risk students, and how to promote an accepting attitude in the school community.

A large number of schools wanted a guidance counsellor for each school, with many advocating exploring and establishing an alternative approach (like Center Education School at Kingston or using the Vocation Education model from Secondary Schools) to assist students who are unable to engage in schooling as it exists for mainstream students.

A few responses suggested regular opportunities for professional development and sharing effective interventions, requesting in particular that the faith issues of teachers and administrators be addressed.

B. Secondary Schools

i. Out of Home Secondary Students

All thirty-two secondary schools reported out of home students during 2003 with two schools, St James, Fortitude Valley and St Edmund’s, Ipswich, recording thirty-eight and thirty-five out of home students respectively.

The Ipswich region with 21.3 students per 1000 and the North and South Coast regions with 14.7 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of out of home students. The average yearly total of out of home students in BCE schools was 13.9 students per 1000.

Chamberlain and MacKenzie reported the out of home secondary students rate for Queensland at 15 per 1000. This research shows the BCE secondary schools reported rate of out of home students at 13.9 per 1000 is consistent with Chamberlain and MacKenzie’s figures for Queensland (2002, 14).

ii. Marginalised Secondary Students

All but three of the secondary schools reported marginalised students during 2003, with the following schools recording the highest yearly numbers: Trinity, Beenleigh, recorded 367, St Francis, Crestmead, recorded 250, while Seton College, Mt Gravatt East, and St Edmund’s, Ipswich, recorded 139 and 138 respectively.

The Outer Metropolitan region with 202 students per 1000, the Rural region with 173 students per 1000 and the Metropolitan region with 125 students per 1000 recorded the highest yearly numbers of marginalised students. The average yearly total of marginalised students in BCE schools was 129 students per 1000.

iii. Early School Leaving Secondary Students

Twenty-two out of thirty-two schools reported early school leaving secondary students in 2003, with St Francis, Crestmead, reporting twenty students and St Edmund’s, Ipswich, reporting thirteen students.
The Outer Metropolitan region with 14.8 students per 1000 and the Metropolitan region with 7.2 students per 1000 recorded the highest numbers of early school leaving students. The average yearly total of early school leaving secondary students in BCE schools was 6.7 students per 1000.

iv. Disengaged Students Secondary
Eighteen out of thirty-two secondary schools reported disengaged students during 2003, with two schools St Francis, Crestmead, and St Thomas More, Sunnybank, reporting eighty students and twenty-nine students respectively.

The Outer Metropolitan region with 38.6 students per 1000, the Metropolitan region with 12.9 students per 1000, the South Coast region with 12.4 students per 1000 and the Ipswich region with 12.3 students per 1000 recorded the highest numbers of disengaged students. The average yearly total of disengaged students in BCE schools was 15.4 students per 1000.

v. What is Working - Secondary
Secondary school personnel, especially counsellors, noted that to meet the needs of out of home and marginalised students some or all of the following elements were needed: team work, cooperation, relationship building, counsellors organising comprehensive support, leadership, listening, family and home visiting, financial support, mentoring, flexibility of school, networking with community resources, and long-term commitment.

vi. Secondary School Recommendations:
a) Student Recommendations
The student recommendations included professional development for staff, financial assistance, establishing peer support groups, and having readily accessible and safe accommodation. A number of students recommended that BCE put in place policies regarding notes, fee reduction and confidentiality.

b) School Based Recommendations
All secondary schools needed more resources, especially in the form of more counsellors, reduced teaching loads for Year coordinators and administrators, more learning support staff, more campus ministers hours and youth workers for after school work.

Added to this, they needed professional development on such topics as building community, building relationships with students and their families and between staff and students, providing opportunities for staff to debrief, and collaboration and information sharing. School staff needed education about how to assist socially and financially disadvantaged people and groups in our community, mental illness, learning difficulties, anxiety, Asperger’s Syndrome, restorative justice practices, racism, sexual harassment, abused young people.

They saw the need to work with and for families by providing parent education programs, especially for step-families, single parents and for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren, on such issues as understanding and communicating with young people, mental health issues, and addictions.
Schools needed to have a more flexible curriculum, including more “hands on” skills training for those students with different abilities and/or priorities. Up to date information needs to be provided to schools so that they can make appropriate referrals and enter into partnerships with community services.

Structured peer support was absent in the majority of schools the researcher visited. Schools should provide peer support groups so that students are able to talk about the effects of their situations with a counsellor or campus minister present.

c) System Based Recommendations
Year Level Pastoral coordinators need to be provided with appropriate in-servicing, and network meetings of Year Level Pastoral coordinators are seen as a useful tool.

The need for Brisbane Catholic Education to provide respite, medium and long-term accommodation for out of home students who are unable to return home or who need time out from family relationships was mentioned to the researcher on many occasions and often written in the survey recommendations.

Brisbane Catholic Education should address the inequalities in terms of funding and resources in schools, especially exploring ways of allocating funds to support marginalised students, and increasing funding to help schools with a high proportion of marginalised students.

Brisbane Catholic Education should provide alternative/flexible schooling options for out of home and marginalised students who need such a facility.

Brisbane Catholic Education should develop policies for out of home students in such areas as fee reduction, notes, what information about a student gets shared with whom, and clarify such legalities as, for example, whether a young person can be their own guardian, and who the school should be communicating with.

Brisbane Catholic Education may need to continue to engage in effective lobbying to ensure that the State government supports the ETRF initiatives with the necessary resources.
Bibliography


Holohan, Gerard J. (1999) *Australian Religious Education – facing the Challenges. A discussion on evangelisation, catechesis and religious education questions raised*


Appendix A

Schedule For Staff Interviews
(Principal, Counsellor, Teacher, Campus Minister etc)

1. Out of Home Students
   - Are you dealing with any out of home students at this moment?
   - Tell me about one of them.
   - Why are they out of home?
   - Where are they living now?
   - What support is being offered?
   - What needs are not being met?
   - What are your school based recommendations?
   - What are your system based recommendations?

2. Marginalised Students
   - When I use the words “marginalised students,” what categories of students come to mind?
   - Are you dealing with any marginalised students at the moment?
   - Tell me about one of them.
   - What support is being offered?
   - What needs are not being met?
   - What are your school based recommendations?
   - What are your system based recommendations?

3. Early School Leaving Students

Have you dealt with students who have left school before completing their compulsory education?
   - Tell me about one of them.
   - What supports were offered?
   - What needs are not being met?
   - What are your school based recommendations?
   - What are your system based recommendations?

4. Disengaged Students

Are you presently dealing with students who are disengaged, “just there,” e.g., who have limited literacy/numeracy?
   - Tell me about one of them.
• What supports were offered?
• What needs are not being met?
• What are your school based recommendations?
• What are your system based recommendations?

5. Discontinuing Primary Students
Why don’t some of your students continue on in the Catholic system post year 7?
Appendix B

Schedule for Student Interviews

1. Who am I? (Introduction of researcher)

2. Purpose of Interview: Did you receive a copy of “Letter to Young People”?

3. Reading and Signing the Consent Form

4. Name of student

5. Name you would like me to use, should I quote from you in the final report

6. Where are you living now?

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

8. What support do or did they offer you?

9. What support did you need and did not get? (your unmet needs)

10. How do you think the school could assist you better?

11. How do you think the Catholic Education System could better support you and those like you?

12. Supplementary Questions:
   a. If a peer group of out of home students was set up at school, would you join it? Why? Why not?
   b. Would it be helpful if the school had accessible and safe accommodation for out of home students?

13. Payment and Receipt
Appendix C

Form B: Primary Schools

BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION
ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Research Project

into

the nature, extent and needs of homeless and marginalised students

Name of College:
Address:

Name of Person Completing Survey:
Position Held:
Phone:

1. How many students in your school? ________

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

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. 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.

2. Out of Home Students:
Some students are living in out-of-home situations. For example, some students may be in foster care, or living with grandparents, 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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2 (c) Case study:
Tell me about the last out-of-home student you had dealings with (just a paragraph or two), including why the student is living in an out-of-home situation?
3. Marginalised Students.

Students may be marginalised 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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<td>Year 7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3 (c) Case study:

Tell me about the last marginalised student you had dealings with (just a paragraph or two).
4. Disengaged Students

How many out-of-home and marginalised students are not able to engage with the curriculum as it is offered by your school? ________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-School</th>
<th>Female:</th>
<th>Male:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Female:</td>
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<td>Year 7</td>
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</table>

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

5 (b) Why do you think it worked?

6. Recommendations:

(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 marginalised students?

(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 marginalised students?

The questionnaire should be completed and returned by Friday 8th August 2003 mailto: wdethlefs@bne.catholic.edu.au

If you need to clarify any matters regarding the survey, I will be available by phone (3844 5587) all day Monday 4th, Thursday 7th, Friday 8th August and after 11.00am on Tuesday 5th August.

Thank you for your time and assistance with this survey.
Name of College:

Address:

Name of Person Completing Survey:

Position Held:

Phone:

1 (a) What is the total number of students in your school? _________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>8</td>
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</table>

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

2. Out of Home Students
Some students are living in out-of-home situations. For example, some students may be in foster care, or living with grandparents, or living independently or living with girl/boy friends or moving from house to house (mainly the houses of friends).

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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Female:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
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<td>Year 12</td>
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</table>

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

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<th>Year 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Female:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(c) Case study:
Tell me about the last out-of-home student you had dealings with (just a paragraph or two), including why the student is living in an out-of-home situation.
3. Marginalised Students.

Students may be marginalised for some of the following reasons:

- Home life is unstable;
- Have drug/alcohol problems;
- 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;
- Who have problems with their sexual identity.

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

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

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<th>Year</th>
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</table>

(b) What is the total number of students who have been in these circumstances this year? ______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female:</th>
<th>Male:</th>
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</table>

(c) Case study:

Tell me about the last marginalised student you had dealings with (just a paragraph or two). Why is the student at risk? What do you think is going to happen to this marginalised student? (drop out? ......)

4. Early School Leavers

This year, how many students failed to complete the year they enrolled in because they were out-of-home or marginalised? ______

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</table>
5. **Disengaged Students**

*How many out-of-home and marginalised students are not able to engage with the curriculum as it is offered by your school? ________*

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Year 12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

(b) Why do you think it worked?

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 marginalised 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 marginalised students?

The questionnaire should be completed and **returned by Friday 8th August 2003**

mailto: wdethlefs@bne.catholic.edu.au

If you need to clarify any matters regarding the survey, I will be available by phone (3844 5587) all day Monday 4th, Thursday 7th, Friday 8th August and after 11.00am on Tuesday 5th August.

Thank you for your time and assistance with this survey.
Appendix E: Letter to Schools

Letter to Schools re Interviewing out of home students

247 Gladstone Rd
Dutton Park
Qld 4102

Dear ,

As you are aware, I am undertaking a research project on behalf of Brisbane Catholic Education. The project is researching the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home and marginalised students who attend Catholic Schools.

Over the course of the past few months I have met with key staff members from many Catholic Secondary Colleges. These consultations have been invaluable.

I have developed an interview process to use with young people who are currently living in out-of-home situations. I am looking for young people to participate in the interviews that will be conducted in August. The information gathered from the young people will be collated and form a part of a report to be completed by the end of November 2003.

The interviews will be approximately 30 to 60 minutes in length. No identifying information will be used in the report and young people will be remunerated for their participation. I am wanting to find out who the people at school are who supported these young people, what support they offered, what support they needed and did not get (their unmet needs) and how they think the school or the Catholic education system could have assisted them better.

The specific criteria that the project requires is that the person is:

• attending a Catholic Secondary College
• not living with their biological parent(s).
I will contact to see if you are interested in participating in the interview phase of the project. I will phone you so we can discuss the details further and I can forward to you the young people’s specific info sheet. If you have further questions about the project and its processes I would be more than willing to provide further information. I can be contacted on 3844 5587.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

Rev Wally Dethlefs
Project Worker
Brisbane Catholic Education Centre

14 August 2003
Appendix F: Letter to Students

Letter to Young People

My name is Wally Dethlefs and I work for Brisbane Catholic Education, a Catholic Church organisation, which conducts Catholic schools in Brisbane and the surrounding regions like the Sunshine and Gold Coasts. I am currently doing a research project and writing a report about young people who attend Catholic schools and do not live at home and/or who are marginalised.

I am wanting to find out who the people at school are who support you, what support they offer you, what support you need and do not get (your unmet needs) and how you think the school or the Catholic education system could assist you better.

If you wish to participate in the project, it will involve a conversation with me for approximately 30—60 minutes in length. No identifying information will be used in the report and you will be given a $15.00 gift voucher for your involvement.

If you have any questions, are interested in participating and:

- Are attending a Catholic Secondary College
- Are not living with your biological parents.

You can either contact me on 3844 5587 or talk with your support worker who will contact me on your behalf.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Yours sincerely

Rev. W A Dethlefs

July 24, 2003
Appendix G: Student Consent Form

Consent Form

247 Gladstone Rd
Dutton Park 4102

Research Project into needs of out-of-home students who attend Catholic Schools.

I understand and agree to the following:

➤ I will be interviewed and asked questions for the purpose of writing a report.

➤ I can choose to stop the interview whenever I wish

➤ Until the research is published, I can choose to not have the information I have given to be used.

➤ Written notes will be taken during the interview

➤ My name will not be used so nobody will be able to identify my information

➤ I accept an in-kind payment for participating in the interview.

-----------------------------      --------------------------
Name         Date

-----------------------------      --------------------------
Signed         Wally Dethlefs