Year 10 –
The next generation

An exploration of the possible conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum with a P–12 framework

A discussion paper prepared for the Queensland Studies Authority

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INTRODUCTION

There is a temptation to assume that there is a natural order to the way curriculum is or should be. It might be natural to assume, for example, that there is an optimal age at which to commence formal schooling, regardless of the physical or cultural context in which the schooling occurs. Another sometimes taken-for-granted assumption is that students should move through various levels of schooling on the basis of their chronological age. Another taken-for-granted assumption might be that particular year levels fall naturally into specific sectors of schooling, such as 'primary' or 'secondary' sectors. Similarly, for others, a new 'truth' might have emerged with the popularity of the middle schooling movement which for some translates into curriculum, assessment and pedagogical responses largely influenced by developmental theories positioning all students 'at-risk' of educational failure. In the course of the arguments presented throughout this paper these assumptions, along with other assumptions, are explored a little further.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

One purpose of this paper is to inform a principled decision about the conceptual positioning of 'Year 10', the tenth year of formal and compulsory schooling for Queensland students within a Preparatory to Year 12 (P–12) curriculum framework. Another purpose of the paper is to explore some of the key organisational implications of any major changes to the positioning of Year 10 curriculum.

For the purposes of this paper, 'conceptual positioning of Year 10' refers to some broad *curriculum considerations* and priorities which apply regardless of whether the curriculum for this year level is located in either the senior phase or the middle phase of learning. Some of those broad considerations and priorities, however, favour particular *configurations*, that is, the specific ways in which the curriculum is sequenced into year levels, phases or sectors of schooling.

This paper consists of two parts. Part A is concerned with the curriculum considerations and configurations related to Year 10 curriculum. The first section of Part A outlines some overall curriculum considerations and priorities, referred to above, that constitute the backdrop which might inform any decision in relation to the conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum. On the matter of the alignment of Year 10 within either the senior or middle phase of learning, it is proposed here that there are four feasible configurations. The second section of Part A addresses the opportunities and constraints associated with each of these configurations in turn.

The possible configurations outlined in the second section of Part A are summarised as follows:

- Configuration 1: Common and agreed curriculum framework for the compulsory years of schooling
- Configuration 2: Different curriculum frameworks for different phases of learning
- Configuration 3: Year 10 as an induction year
- Configuration 4: Year 10 an integral component of the senior phase.

There are always, of course, structural implications arising from any curriculum arrangements or "organised set of formal education educational and/or training intentions" (Pratt, 1980, p. 4). The *Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002* establishes the Queensland Studies Authority as responsible for the development of syllabuses and related documents for use by the Catholic, Independent and State sectors. Matters related to the implementation of these documents reside within the domain of the school education authorities. Given that any discussion of future curriculum arrangements in relation to Year 10 has implications for structures within school education authorities and especially within schools themselves, some of the possible organisational issues are discussed in Part B of this paper. A few concluding thoughts are offered following Part B. We attempt in these concluding words to suggest some generative ways forward during this time of significant curriculum change.

PART A: CONCEPTUAL POSITIONING OF YEAR 10

Overview of Part A

As flagged above, the first section of Part A provides an overview of key factors that constitute the backdrop against which any decision-making in relation to Year 10 curriculum might occur. These factors include:

- a stance on the broad purposes of schooling beyond the economic imperative
- the need for generic capabilities, that is, knowledge and skills that might equip students for successful futures
- a generative view of curriculum
- a measure of student achievement in literacy and numeracy and systemic underachievement in equity
- diversity among 15 year-olds as a cohort
- a snapshot of the various enactments of Year 10 curriculum across Queensland learning sites
- the state policy context
- disciplinary studies in the senior phase of learning
- impacts of curriculum policy on student completion to end of Year 12.

While this section addresses curriculum considerations that might apply equally to schooling at other year levels and phases, the specific arguments for various Year 10 configurations later in Part A are made against this backdrop.

Section 1: Key factors constituting the backdrop for curriculum reform

A stance on the broad purposes of schooling beyond the economic imperative

This discussion paper is written on the premise that Year 10 curriculum, like all other levels of formal schooling, should serve the diverse interests of the range of learners in Queensland schools, as well as serve the interests of the community at local, state, national and global levels. The question of how best to serve personal and societal interests is, of course,

fundamentally a question about the purposes of schooling and the values that underpin those purposes.

The argument here is that "curriculum lies at the heart of schooling" and that a key purpose of schooling in a post-industrial Australian society must be to contribute to the public good (Reid & Thomson, 2003, xiii). Reid and Thomson link the notion of the public good to "lively and healthy democracies [which] require healthy and vibrant public spheres" (p. xiii). They draw on the work of Iris Marion Young to explicate this further:

> Civil society enables the emergence of public spheres in which differentiated social sectors express their experience and formulate their opinions. Perhaps even more importantly, the public sphere enables citizens to expose injustice in state and economic power and make the exercise of power more accountable. Through public discussion and agitation, moreover, citizens can and sometimes do influence the politics of state or corporate institutions or catalyse practical changes within civil society itself. (quoted in Reid & Thomson, 2003, p. xiii)

It is the authors' belief that the building and maintenance of a civil society must direct the work of curriculum design and implementation generally, and specifically inform any curriculum reform in relation to Year 10 curriculum. Furthermore, we contend that such a civil society is aligned with the social, political and economic wellbeing of the range of individuals who make up our communities, along with the wellbeing of communities themselves.[1] To re-iterate a key point, economic prosperity for *all* Queenslanders, along with prosperity for the State, must be a fundamental purpose of schooling but, we think, must not overshadow the broad goal of developing and maintaining a civil society.

The economic imperative as a key purpose for schooling is recognised in Queensland initiatives, as is a commitment to schooling for personal and societal wellbeing with a stated goal to "us[e] knowledge, creativity and innovation to maintain prosperity and quality of life for all Queenslanders" (*QCE: Queensland Certificate of Education*, 2005a, p. v). This stance has been clearly articulated within the Queensland public schooling context through a key policy document, *Queensland State Education 2010*:

> Education has many benefits, some of them intangible and unquantifiable. The OECD says social cohesion rather than narrow economic gain is the greatest prize for societies in which all citizens, through learning, become more effective participants in democratic, civil and economic processes. Rapid change puts stress on the social fabric of communities, creating the need for schools to promote social cohesion, harmony and sense of community. (2001, p. 7)

The intention here is to ground the purposes of schooling within the broader goal of the development of a civil society. Economic factors are among the broad range of imperatives, but schooling in a socially-just society must serve purposes beyond the economic imperative. That said, the economic necessity for a more highly educated workforce is significant for both individuals and for the community generally. The *Federalist Paper 2: The future of schooling in Australia* (Council for Australian Federation, 2007) points out that:

[1] The discussion of what constitutes a 'civil society' is of necessity brief in this paper. See Reid & Thomson (2003) for a detailed discussion.

> Failing to complete upper secondary education, or its equivalent, has an impact on individuals. Those who do not complete are at a disadvantage in the labour market in all OECD countries. The disadvantage is generally less in countries where there is a relatively high proportion of the population which does not complete this level of education, but Australia is an exception.
> …In Australia, 24 year-olds who have not completed upper secondary education or its equivalent are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as 24 year-olds who have completed that level of education. Only in the Czech Republic [among OECD countries] is the ratio higher. (pp. 14–15)

The benefits of a highly educated workforce to economic prosperity at local, regional, state and national levels are well documented and are not explored in any detail here. McGaw (2007a) quotes OECD research that suggests that an increase of one year in the average level of education of the working age population raises the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 3 to 6% and increases the growth rate by around 1%. A further important point to make is that economic wellbeing for both individuals and society is interwoven with personal and societal health and wellbeing, the capacity for civic participation and so on.

The relatively high disadvantage that Australians experience in the labour market in comparison with other OECD countries as a result of incompletion of a Year 12 or equivalent qualification is not, of course, spread evenly across groups of Australians or Queenslanders. Disadvantage in terms of employment prospects varies according to gender, class, ethnicity, Indigeneity, place of dwelling and so on, with some groups well positioned and others poorly positioned. In parallel, but of course not solely related to employment status, some groups of young Australians are more vulnerable than others to deleterious health and wellbeing. According to Education Queensland's (n.d) *Boys, Gender and Schooling* website, undereducated and unemployed males are at greater risk of becoming both victims and offenders of crime, noting also that Aboriginality is a high risk factor for death by homicide. The diversity of Queensland's youth must be a key consideration in the conceptualisation of Year 10 curriculum, as it must be for schooling generally.

In short, this paper is underpinned by the premise that the purposes of schooling in a democratic society include the building of a civil society where the range of groups have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to engage in civic participation, and where the promotion of individual and societal wellbeing generally, economic prosperity and ecological sustainability are valued. There has been much discussion in recent times in relation to the need for student 'capabilities' that would best serve individual and societal needs.

The need for generic capabilities for successful futures

Writing about national curriculum collaboration, but with relevance to curriculum design at the state level, Reid (2005), in a paper commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training, advocates curriculum shaped around capabilities. He proposes that such capabilities could include: knowledge work; innovation and design; productive social relationships; active participation; intercultural understandings; interdependence and sustainability; understanding the self; ethics and values; and multiliteracies and communication.

These capability domains are influenced by recognition of the demands of building and maintaining healthy civic, economic and personal lives within the context of the increasing opportunities and impacts of a range of factors, including those related to globalisation, and information and communication technologies. The contention here is that the capabilities, which could be developed around these or other domains, "will be brought to bear differently in different geographical, cultural and social contexts [but] they will be the same capabilities" (Reid, 2006, p. 68). Furthermore, it is argued in this paper that students' acquisition of knowledge and skills for a civil society through capabilities also requires what is labelled here as a generative conceptualisation of curriculum.

A generative view of curriculum

The use of a football analogy to understand 'curriculum' more deeply will resonate with many Queensland readers. Grundy (1994) argues that just as football can be thought of as both an object and an action, so too can curriculum be thought of similarly. According to Grundy, curriculum as an object suggests a "syllabus view of curriculum" in which "the syllabus is mediated through the choices, actions and skills of the teacher before being passed onto the students" (p. 29). Apart from its mediation through teacher choices, actions and skills, "[t]he basic component of the curriculum, the syllabus, is designed elsewhere by expert curriculum designers and developers, and given to those for whom it is intended, for their use" (p. 29). Grundy explicates another way of looking at curriculum, considered in this paper to constitute a *generative* view of curriculum.

Just as football can be considered an activity rather than an object, so too can curriculum. Football, the game, is a dynamic activity, varying according to the rules as they are prescribed and as they are applied, the actions, experience and capacities of the players, along with a range of contextual factors which include the weather, the grounds and the impact of the spectators. Grundy enlists the term, the "pedagogical view of curriculum", to construct a picture of curriculum as a dynamic activity. Drawing on Schwab's (1969) "four commonplaces of schooling", that is the teachers, students, subject-matter and *milieu* (or the context), she contends that it is through the dynamic interaction of these factors that curriculum is best understood. In other words, "teachers and students through their work actively construct the curriculum, just as players in a game of football actively construct the game as they play it" (p. 33). A similar argument is used by Gough and Gough (2003) when they "foreground the idea of 'curriculum work' deliberately to shift attention away from the noun 'curriculum' which suggests that curriculum is a *product* (a prescribed course to be followed) rather than a set of historically contingent, socially locatable and collective *practices* that produce particular effects" (p. 1, emphasis in original).

There are increasingly persuasive arguments to embrace a pedagogical view of curriculum, that is, one that acknowledges the dynamic interplay of the four commonplaces and recognises the professional capacities of teachers. An important corollary of a pedagogical view of curriculum is trust in teachers. Australia's performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has sparked much discussion in relation to this. The sample testing of 15 year-olds among participating Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members tests students' competency in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. Luke's (2007) claim that "low definition/high

trust" curriculum is closely aligned with "high quality/high equity" (McGaw, 2007a, 2007b & 2006) results is explored further in the next section.

Similarly, Kenway's important research (2007) into 'place-based curriculum' challenges any highly-defined prescription of curriculum at either the state or national level in favour of greater spaces and flexibility for more nuanced approaches that accommodate the complex interplay of global, national, state and local factors in specific places. Kenway's 'place-based curriculum', in short, positions any state, and especially, national curriculum initiatives that do not provide spaces for teachers and students to engage in highly contextually-responsive curriculum as not serving the interests of the diverse range of individuals and communities.

It is argued here that a generative view of curriculum, which has been explored here by drawing on Grundy's (1994) "pedagogical view of curriculum", should form a cornerstone of the conceptual framing of any Year 10 curriculum. Such a view rejects a conceptualisation of curriculum as an object to be handed to teachers who will 'deliver' it to their students without consideration of the particular ways in which the students are positioned in relation to that curriculum or the complex ways in which 'the curriculum' positions those students. Such a generative view of curriculum resonates with the call for "low definition/high trust" curriculum (Luke, 2007). This argument will be examined in the next section by way of understanding more fully the performance of students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

A measure of student achievement in literacy and numeracy and systemic underachievement in equity

There are, of course, a multitude of measures that could be used to gain some insights into the learning achievements of 15 year-olds across Queensland. Every measure would privilege some forms of knowledge and marginalise or silence others.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

In PISA students' competencies in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy is tested. Lokan, Greenwood and Cresswell (2000) point out that Australia is among the four highest performing participating countries on the basis of mean outcomes in all three areas on both the 2000 and 2003 tests. PISA thus provides a measure of the quality of learning among Australian 15 year-olds and confirms that Australian students are among the best in the world – a reassuring thought for educational bureaucrats around the country.

PISA results also yield an indication of the extent to which equity exists within a country's educational system/s. After removing the results of students in the highest and lowest quartiles, PISA also measures the difference between highest and lowest scores within this middle range. On this measure of equity Australia does not perform well with one of the largest gaps between the highest and lowest scores within the middle range among OECD nations. Countries, such as Korea, Japan, Finland and Canada are among what McGaw (2007a, 2007b, 2006) labels "high quality/high equity" systems, that is, student achievement is high and the effect of socio-economic disadvantage is minimal. Being socially disadvantaged in Australia is associated with greater educational disadvantage in countries like the US and the UK than in countries such as Finland and Korea. Vickers (2005) highlights Australia's lack of

achievement in terms of equity in relation to a range of other countries including those with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged people:

> In contrast, Canada, Ireland, Finland, Japan and Korea, had much lower spreads in the middle quartiles, suggesting that in these systems, excellence in achievement is more equitably distributed [with these results suggesting] that social background makes more difference to achievement in Australia than it does in these other high-performing countries. Unequal outcomes might be expected in countries such as Brazil and Mexico, which have large populations of poor people. Yet even these countries showed smaller score ranges in the middle quartiles than did Australia in terms of reading literacy. Given Australia's relative affluence, the PISA 2000 results do suggest that we are a high-achieving country with a low commitment to equity. (p. 266–267)[2]

Luke (2007) confirms Australia's "high quality/low equity" performance in terms of PISA data and, importantly, explores some of the educational, as well as broader social conditions, which might be aligned with "high quality/high equity" educational systems. One caveat needs to be mentioned here. Australia is, of course, made up of eight state and territory jurisdictions, and therefore, state/territory differences are silenced to some extent in a discussion of 'countries'. Thomson, Cresswell & De Bortoli (n.d.) provide detailed figures in terms of Australian performance according to states and territories in relation to the 2003 testing of mathematical literacy.

With recognition of the contextual differences between Australia and "high-quality/high-equity" countries such as Finland and Canada, lessons can be learnt in terms of the characteristics that might be aligned with low equity results and high equity results respectively. Luke (2007) paints a compelling picture of the schooling circumstances in the US, a "low equity" country, when he talks of the day-to-day lives of teachers and students at, for example, a school in the Chinatown section of Los Angeles. Such school lives are characterised by highly scripted pedagogies, prescribed materials, which are further regulated in terms of the timing of their delivery, and which privilege literacy approaches that draw on phonics exclusively as opposed to more contextually responsive and critical approaches. It is Luke's claim that such highly defined curriculum is aligned with low quality and low equity.

Minimally-defined curriculum

On the basis of the strong empirical data afforded by the PISA results and the propositions put by Luke (2007) in relation to the nature of the educational and societal contexts that might be aligned with producing particular levels of both quality and equity, a "cool curriculum"[3] focus to inform the conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum is advocated here.

The concept of a minimally-defined or "cool curriculum" (Luke, 2007) is aligned with a "low definition/high trust" curriculum. For the development of Year 10 curriculum and indeed curriculum across the senior phase of learning, the QSA might be guided by the minimal

[2] See Thomson, Cresswell & De Bortoli (n.d.) for a further explanation of the comparison between countries in terms of the relationship between socio-economic background and test performance.
[3] Luke's use of the term, "*cool* curriculum" is informed by the work of Marshall McLuhan.

approach to curriculum documentation evident in places such as Finland and Ontario, Canada, noted as "high quality/high equity" on PISA results (McGaw, 2007a, 2007b & 2006). It is important to note that the minimal documentation occurs in order to give teachers spaces in which to design and implement curriculum which responds to student needs, interests and aspirations and is cognisant of the broader social context in which the school operates.

The Ontario Curriculum: Grades 11 and 12 Science (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000), for example, outlines the overall and specific expectations relevant to the range of science courses offered, including biology, chemistry, earth and space, physics and other broadly based science courses[4] as suggested below:

> The expectations identified for each course describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate in their class work, on tests, and in various other activities on which their achievement is assessed and evaluated. Two sets of expectations are listed for each *strand*, or broad curriculum area, of each course. The *overall expectations* describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each course. The *specific expectations* describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail. (p. 9)

While size does matter in any proposal for a low definition curriculum, it is suggested here that other conditions are necessary. For example, if minimal documentation prescribes testing that is onerous for students and teachers and with no apparent link to valuable knowledge and skills, it could not be said that a low definition curriculum exists. In contrast to the maintenance of the proven successful school-based assessment in the Queensland senior phase of learning, the Ontario system mentioned above does involve external exit examinations. The key point here is that the reconceptualised senior phase of learning must respond to local student and school needs. The corollary of "low definition" curriculum, as is proposed by Luke (2007) is "high trust [in teachers]".

High trust in teachers' capacities and professionalism in Queensland is not unfounded. It is argued here, however, that conditions are required for such capacities and professionalism to provide the basis for enacted curriculum that serves local student needs. While the scope of this paper does not allow any indepth exploration of this aspect of a preferred conceptual underpinning of Year 10 curriculum, Sachs' (2001) distinction between democratic professionalism and managerial professionalism provides food for thought.

Sachs suggests that, "...democratic professionalism is emerging from the profession itself while managerialist professionalism is being reinforced by employing authorities through their

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[4]Science (and other courses) in the Ontario system are designated according to the students' preferred destination, that is, according to whether the student requires preparation for university, university/college or the workplace. It is not anticipated that the reconceptualisation of the senior phase of learning syllabus documents available to Queensland schools will follow this path. In fact, unlike the current Queensland system, the reconceptualised senior phase in Queensland will cast all students as 'OP-eligible' and remove the two-tier arrangement of syllabuses into 'Authority' and 'Authority-registered'.

policies on teacher professional development with their emphasis on accountability and effectiveness" (pp. 149–150). The argument here is that teacher professionalism required to produce "low definition/high trust" is probably aligned with democratic professionalism as opposed to managerial professionalism. In turn, such democratic professionalism to make the myriad of decisions necessary to enact what might be described as contextually responsive curriculum requires resourcing by school education authorities for ongoing professional learning and support for communities of practice as teachers continue to grapple with their work as curriculum designers and implementers.

Finland, a country described as achieving "high quality/high equity" PISA results through the practice of "low definition/high trust curriculum" (Luke, 2007) employs teachers who are highly qualified in comparison to many countries, including Australia. Finnish teachers undergo five years of initial pre-service teacher education and graduate at a masters level. This represents a high level of investment in teacher education and indirectly, of course, in the education of the country's young people. While a similarly high level of investment might not be occurring in Queensland, Luke makes a cogent point when he speaks of the considerable latitude that teachers and schools have to work to implement curriculum to suit the contexts in which students learn. That level of responsiveness is considered in the next section through a brief survey of the various enactments of the Year 10 curriculum across Queensland learning sites.

Various enactments of the Year 10 curriculum across Queensland learning sites

Despite a dearth of empirical research in this area, it is feasible to assume that the intended curriculum in Queensland is being enacted in a range of ways and draws on a range of sources. Firstly, while formal curriculum documents might ostensibly suggest that 15 year-olds are engaged currently in demonstrating Level 6 or Beyond Level 6 outcomes, as they are articulated in the key learning area syllabus documents, this is not necessarily the case. In Catholic, Independent and State sectors the impact of middle phase of learning movement, with its emphasis on reinvigorating and tailoring learning for students from year levels ranging from anywhere between Year 4 through to the end of Year 9, has led to the development of 'middle phase' programs. This, in turn, has created the perception of Year 9 as a watershed, a milestone in students' education. The way in which Year 8 was seen as a transition year to secondary schooling and, thus by many as a wasted year has also contributed to school programs in which, rather than marking time and preparing for the high school experience, schools have drawn on the appropriate levels from the key learning area syllabus documents in order to continue students' learning in a relatively seamless way, whether the students are located on primary, secondary or P–10/P–12 campuses.

In other learning contexts within state schools what students learn and how it is assessed is informed by the New Basics curriculum (The State of Queensland, 2000), with its focus on rich tasks at Years 3, 6 and 9 year levels. Practice in Education Queensland New Basics schools especially has encouraged a take-up of senior phase learning in Year 10. The connection between the New Basics curriculum with its 'final' rich task located at the Year 9 level and the notion of Year 10 as the commencement of the senior phase is clearly flagged in *Queensland State Education 2010* (The State of Queensland, 2001):

> The [New Basics] framework lays the foundation for a senior schooling through Years 10 to 12 offering multiple pathways for students to post-school destinations. (pp. 15–16)

The Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) (The State of Queensland, 2002), with its emphasis on phases of learning, reinforced a context for considering Year 9 as a conclusion to the middle phase, along with a consolidation of the senior phase of learning, including Year 10. As a result in all sectors of Queensland schooling, to varying degrees, there exists a range of what might be considered senior phase of learning initiatives, including sampling senior subjects, completion of subjects for inclusion on the previous Senior Certificate, completion of vocational and educational training modules and certificates and so on.

In short, the Queensland schooling landscape is made up of a range of implementation modes in terms of what is prescribed/not prescribed by the school education authorities, as well as the responsiveness exercised at the school level to act in innovative, creative and flexible ways to best serve the range of student needs. It should be noted that other pragmatic considerations, such as staffing and resourcing generally might be playing a part in such initiatives at Year 10 level. As a result, it is not possible to simply describe what is and then propose what could or should be. A further, and crucially important, stipulation in relation to talking about '15 year-olds' as a cohort must be made.

Diversity among 15 year-olds as a cohort

Australian researchers, Wyn and White (1997) label as "categorical" approaches that define students on the basis of their age, arguing that "even in the same locality, social divisions will make the seemingly common experience of schooling...very different" (p. 12). The diverse cohort of 15 year-old Queenslanders experience life differently, live under widely varying conditions and are variously positioned for success or failure in specific contexts. The heterogeneity of 15 year-old Queenslanders as a group is confirmed by Luke et al.'s (2003) snapshot of Australian school children and young people:

- 20% are living with "the effects of socio-economic marginality and poverty"
- over 25% are from culturally- and linguistically-diverse backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience "disproportionate levels of educational failure"
- numbers being ascertained with learning difficulties are increasing (p. 16).

Issues of poverty

Queensland educators must be especially mindful of, and proactive in response to, the extent of poverty experienced by large sections of the Queensland population. Daly, McNamara, Tanton, Harding and Yap (2006) provide a snapshot of that poverty in relation to other states when they propose that:

> ...while 34 per cent of Australian children lived in New South Wales and 25 per cent in Victoria, these states were under-represented among the SLAs [Statistical Local Areas] that were in the bottom decile of the CSE [child social exclusion]

> index.[5] 17.7 per cent of children in the bottom decile came from SLAs in New South Wales and 5.1 per cent from Victoria. Children from SLAs in Queensland and Tasmania accounted for a larger share of the population in the bottom decile than they did in the population of Australian children as a whole. Almost half the children in the bottom decile of the index were from Queensland, almost double its share of Australia's child population. (p. 15)[6]

It is these and other issues related to diversity that need to be key considerations at both state and national policy levels. The next section provides an overview of some of the salient characteristics of the current policy climate.

Current policy contexts

The Director of the Queensland Studies Authority confirms the impact of policy contexts at both state and national levels when commenting that, "the school system [in Queensland] is on the cusp of some substantial changes in curriculum…with fundamental changes to occur over the next two years" (Bannikoff, 2007). The policy contexts at both state and national levels point to some clear-cut directions in relation to the best positioning of Year 10 within the P–12 curriculum framework.

Education and training reforms

A key driver for Queensland curriculum reform has been the Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) initiatives, which have been designed to enhance student participation and achievement in schooling or training in order to build "skills for work and life" (*Education and Training Reforms for the Future*, 2002, p. 6). It was noted that "at least 10 000 young Queenslanders aged 15 to 17 years are not in school, not in training and not in any kind of substantial work" (p. 6). Emerging from this commitment to supporting a greater percentage of young people completing Year 12 or its equivalent, the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* introduces the notion of a compulsory participation phase for all young people in Queensland.

The *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* requires young people to stay at school until they complete Year 10 or until they reach 16 years of age, whichever comes first. Furthermore, they are then required to participate in education and training for another two years or until they have:

- been awarded a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE)
- been issued with a Senior Statement
- been awarded a Certificate III vocational qualification
- reached the age of 17.

[5] The CSE or child exclusion index is a measure which combines low income with factors such as education, car ownership and so on (see Daly et al., 2006 for a discussion of its development).
[6] Figures for the Northern Territory have not been used in these calculations due to the transience of the population in that jurisdiction.

Queensland Certificate of Education

One of the many initiatives emanating from the ETRF relevant to an informed discussion about the conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum is the Queensland Certificate of Education.[7] This certificate represents a significant departure from its predecessor, the Senior Certificate, which will be issued for the last time in 2008. Firstly, the QCE requires young Queenslanders to "achiev[e] a significant amount of learning to an agreed standard, including literacy and numeracy" (*Queensland Certificate of Education: Expect success*, QSA, 2005a, p. 2). The points of departure from the previous certification at the end of Year 12 relate to students needing to attain an identified standard within a range of studies and that such attainment must include a specific achievement in relation to literacy and numeracy.

The Queensland Certificate of Education is built on the notion of banking credits with 20 credits required. According to *Queensland Certificate of Education: Expect success* (QSA, 2005a[8]), the QCE "acknowledges successfully completed *core courses* of study that demonstrate a depth of learning" (p. 3, emphasis in original). Each core course studied over two years yields four credits with the stipulation that at least 12 credits must be obtained from core courses of study. A range of other options is available for students in terms of gaining credits, including recognition for vocational and education training, university subjects or awards in the Arts or sports.

Importantly in terms of the focus in this paper, schools are required to register students before the end of Year 10. If students have completed appropriate learning at any time in Year 10 it can be banked towards the QCE regardless of when a school actually registers them. This is significant because it effectively gives students up to three years to get the credits for the QCE. For example, young people pursuing VET certificates or re-engagement programs can get a head start on credits. These possibilities could provide much needed support for those most at risk of not gaining the knowledge and skills, as well as the formal certification, which will prepare them for successful working lives.

Review of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning

A further significant aspect of the current policy context is the *Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning* (QSA, 2006). The ETRF agenda included the commitment to "reshaping senior" in order to "ensure that the 27 per cent of students who currently do not finish Year 12 have the best possible chances to succeed (The State of Queensland, 2002, p. 8). Within the parameters set by QSA to underpin future syllabus design with the principles of coherence, rigour, flexibility and connections (see QSA, 2006 for explication of these principles), statewide consultation led to the gathering of significant insights in relation to the content, structure and scope of the Years 11 and 12 syllabus documents, as well as information on stakeholder views in relation to QSA procedures, the positioning of non-English speaking students, those living in remote locations and so on. Review feedback suggested a need to cater for the diversity of students' interests, aspirations and capacities, as well as gaining detail in relation to the need for specifics, such as management skills required for

[7] The first Queensland Certificate of Education will be issued by the Queensland Studies Authority in 2008.

[8] See also *Queensland Certificate of Education – Implementing the QCE: Additional Information* (QSA, 2005b).

working, study and personal lives. As well as these learnings from the review, all of which are relevant in some way to the conceptual positioning of Year 10, specific feedback in relation to the Year 10 curriculum was gathered.

Some aspects of the feedback from educators on the place of Year 10 in the curriculum is summarised by the Queensland Studies Authority in the following statements:

- Most participants agreed that Year 10 is not an end point. Rather, Year 10 is a multi-purpose year preparing students for the transition to Years 11 and 12.
- There should be explicit links between Year 10 and Year 11.
- Concern was expressed that the 'jump' in workload and expectations from Year 10 to Year 11 was too great. The students confirmed this and cited the jump in complexity of learning and the change to the way subjects are delivered. Students specifically mentioned English, mathematics and science as subjects where this jump was most noticeable.
- The importance of adequate, relevant information allowing students to make informed choice prior to Year 11 was emphasised.

(Report: Initial targeted consultation August – September 2005 for the Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning: A proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses, QSA, 2005d, p. 6)

Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework

The review of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning coincides with the QSA response to perceptions that the Years 1 to 10 curriculum is cluttered, making student demonstrations of indepth knowledge and skills very difficult. As a result of this concern and a national policy context, which stipulates particular requirements within state syllabus documents, work commenced on the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* (QCARF) (QSA, 2005c). The Commonwealth requires that all state jurisdictions incorporate the National Statements of Learning in civics and citizenship, English, science, mathematics and information and communication technologies (Curriculum Corporation, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c & 2006d) into state syllabuses by 2008.

The QCARF (*Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*, QSA, 2005, p. 1) attempts to align what is taught with the assessment and reporting of student learning, and consists of the following key elements:

- essential learnings
- standards
- assessment bank
- statewide assessment
- reporting framework.

In short, curriculum reform in relation to the key learning area syllabuses is occurring within a complex mix of policy initiatives at both the state and national levels. The implementation of national literacy and numeracy testing at Year 9, as well as at other year levels, along with the tying of Commonwealth funding to the use of 'A to E' reporting, prompts some to claim that a *de facto* national curriculum already exists. Such initiatives, described as "coercive federalism" by Reid (2007), provide some givens within which state curriculum development, and specifically Year 10 curriculum, must occur. Of particular relevance to this paper is the standardised testing in literacy and numeracy of Year 9 students, further reinforcing Year 9 as a key juncture, a watershed, a 'natural' conclusion to a particular phase. While one might challenge the efficacy of standardised testing and its relationship to improved student learning (see Luke, 2007), the fact remains that the testing at Year 9 might reinforce that year level as a concluding year for the middle phase of learning.

Disciplinary studies in the senior phase of learning

Students in many, but not all contexts, enter the senior phase of learning having been involved in integrated approaches to learning that draw on either the key learning area syllabuses or the New Basics curriculum. Though a dearth of empirical evidence exists in this area, it is feasible to assume that student engagement and achievement in the middle phase of learning in many sites is the result of learning tasks that are personally and socially meaningful for students and which adopt a problem-based approach. While this provides an excellent context for learning in the middle phase of learning, unless specific strategies are put in place, many students are poorly positioned for success within disciplinary learning that features so prominently in their later schooling journeys. Disciplines can be defined in the following way:

> Disciplines are publicly recognisable and historically enduring bodies of knowledge and methods of inquiry that are focused on the explanation of some aspect of human experience. (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning*: *Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, QSA, 19 July 2007c, p. 3)

The contention here is that students' engagement through integrated tasks in the middle phase of learning is most productively accompanied with explicit skilling in terms of disciplinary knowledge and skills. That is to say that during the course of an integrated teaching unit curriculum moments are taken to make explicit to students that the knowledge they are accessing or constructing for themselves, or the skills they are utilising, belong to a particular discursive set – a discipline. This approach is described here as an 'integrated + toolbox approach' where the disciplinary 'toolbox' is taken out at regular intervals to ensure that an explicit disciplinary knowledge and skill base is developing. The 'toolbox approach' supports

students to understand the sometimes complex ways in which the particular disciplines value their own ways of thinking, acting, writing, talking about their 'subjects'. Some students are easily able to take up these discourses without any explicit discussions about, for example, what studying 'history' involves, as opposed to what is involved in the study of 'biology'. Students, who are most disadvantaged and at risk of failure, however, require scaffolding in this area.

Cole (2007) in his panel presentation at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Conference highlighted the need for students to have a greater understanding that each discipline provides a particular way of seeing the world. Students are often involved in the minutiae of content and fail to recognise the specific opportunities and lens provided by the particular discipline. It needs to be made explicit to geography students, for example, that their discipline privileges ways of being in the world, seeing the world and thinking about its challenges in terms of spatial relationships. The issue of the dominance of disciplinary-based learning in the senior phase of learning is flagged here as a crucial consideration – especially for disadvantaged students – in any reform of Year 10 curriculum. The next section draws on key research to explore some of the ways in which curriculum policy impacts on students' completion of schooling until the end of Year 12.

Impacts of curriculum policy on student completion to end of Year 12

The work of Vickers and Lamb (2002) is used here to explicate the role that curriculum policy makers have on school completion by young people, especially those who are most vulnerable to early leaving. Vickers and Lamb (2002) suggest some key characteristics of systems that are aligned with increased completion to the end of Year 12. Drawing on data from the Australian Longitudinal Survey (ALS) and the Australian Youth Survey (AYS), Vickers and Lamb (2002) claim that "in states where formal assessments were imposed at the end of Year 10, more students left school at this point" (p. 173). The Year 10 Certificate is no longer issued in Queensland, thus positioning this juncture as less of an invitation for students to exit their formal school.

A further observation made by Vickers and Lamb (2002) is that "school completion rates were higher where final Year 12 *assessments were either entirely school-based (as in Queensland)* or included substantial school-based components" (p. 173, emphasis added). A characteristic of the reconceptualised senior phase of learning is the retention of school-based assessment. Further, Vickers and Lamb propose that "completion rates were also higher in states where substantial numbers of students were able to gain a Year 12 certificate without having their course of study dictated by tertiary entrance requirements" (p. 173). It would appear that the reconceptualised senior phase of learning, driven as it is by the Queensland Certificate of Education, makes significant moves towards reducing the dominance of tertiary preparation in favour of a broader educational focus with a revitalisation of the vocational and education training components. Additionally, the removal of the previous two-tier system, Authority syllabuses and study area specifications from which Authority-registered subjects are developed as part of the reconceptualised senior phase of learning, should also contribute to the perception and the reality that schooling in the senior phase of learning has a broader focus beyond, but including, tertiary preparation.

Acknowledging that completion rates are also influenced by non-policy factors, Vickers and Lamb (2002) propose that, even after taking account of workforce and demographic factors that vary according to state jurisdictions *and* social background, curriculum policies still exert an effect on patterns of school completion. The focus of their inquiry is not concerned with state differences after taking into account demographic and workforce matters, but "whether or not the policies adopted by states impact differentially on various social groups" (p. 173). In relation to their analysis of the Y95 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), Vickers and Lamb comment that:

> In NSW and WA, substantial proportions of young people leave formal schooling at earlier periods than in Victoria, SA or Queensland. In NSW, where the School Certificate is still in place, the major exit point for early leavers is at the end of Year 10. This is particularly true for boys. In WA, the main exit point for early leavers is now the end of Year 11. (p. 186)

Furthermore, Vickers and Lamb (2002) claim that such "state policies…have a marked and differential impact on participation for disadvantaged groups" (p. 172). They conclude, not surprisingly, that the students from high socio-economic backgrounds are resilient in terms of the effects of state policy on school survival (that is, school completion), adding that "[s]uch students appear to be insulated against the impacts of curriculum policy and finish high school, irrespective of the state in which they live" (p. 186). In strict contrast, "low SES students have no such protection" from the impacts of curriculum policy (p. 186). In summary, the comparative analysis above suggests that high-stakes assessment milestones, such as external exams with official certification at the end of Year 10, are linked to higher levels of school attrition. Queensland, with its abolition of the Year 10 Certificate and no high stakes testing at the end of Year 10 (or indeed at the end of Year 12) positions students well for continued participation, assisted, of course, by the legislative requirement for continued education or training for a further two years beyond Year 10. The question for Queensland curriculum leaders relates to which configuration for Year 10 curriculum best positions *all* young people for completion of Year 12 schooling or training.

Interstate and international comparisons

The following table provides some insights into the diverse ways in which 15 year-olds are positioned within other state jurisdictions and in selected international sites. NSW, Victoria, South Australia and the ACT all locate Year 10 in a phase or stage prior to Years 11 and 12. As the summary below suggests, South Australia has reconceptualised Year 10 as part of the senior phase of learning. Korea and Ontario, both classed as "high quality/high equity" systems, have Year 10 located with their respective Years 11 and 12 cohorts. Another "high quality/high equity" country, Finland, organises students into upper secondary education over a three-year period (but can be extended over four years) with students usually between 16 and 19 years of age. The commencement age for schooling in Finland is much later than that in Australia, with students starting school at 7 years of age.

Table 1: Overview of structures in selected Australian state and overseas systems

	Current arrangements for Yr 10	Proposed arrangements for Yr 10

Queensland	A range of alternatives currently exists: • students complete level 6 and prerequisite Beyond Level 6 outcomes in the KLA syllabuses. Beyond Level 6 outcomes are prerequisites e.g. Maths where students would like to study Maths B or C • schools provide their own courses for students that are a backward mapped version of senior onto Year 10 in terms of content, learning experiences and assessment. Schools offering this approach offer a much greater range of subjects in Year 10 than the 8 KLAs. • variable progression rates for study of senior subjects are offered in some schools where students start senior subjects in Year 10.	• commencement of Year 10 as the beginning of the senior phase of learning with programs to cover three years of learning • students to study core domain learning through the selection of elective courses within domain fields • schools may offer the core domain learning as a separate course in Year 10 and then reinforce the core learning through the electives in Years 11 and 12 • schools may offer programs to support young people who are struggling to meet Year 9 standards in literacy and numeracy • will be informed by a set of principles for development of a P–12 approach with principles focusing on characteristics of high quality, high equity school systems.

Table 1: Overview of structures in selected Australian state and overseas systems cont'd

South Australia	• Year 10 is conceptualised as part of the senior years with the Senior Years Band of the SACSA Framework describing the curriculum scope and standards for learning in Years 10 to 12 with Year 10 considered to be part of the senior phase of learning • Year 10 curriculum, generally constructed by schools, is described through the integration of the Key Ideas in each Learning Area and the Essential Learnings • the organisation of learning in the Senior Years Band comprises externally constructed and increasingly specialised Years 11 and 12 curriculum.	• while only Year 11 and 12 currently count towards the SACE, recommendations from the SACE review are proposing that some studies completed in Year 10 will count to the SACE. Queensland already has a QCE that does this.
Victoria	• curriculum is arranged through –Prep to Year 10 Essential Learnings and Standards –Years 11 and 12 – Victorian Certificate of Education.	
ACT	• separated provision of high school (Years 7 to 10) and senior college (Years 11 and 12) with students completing a broad and general education • no pre-requisites are required to enter senior colleges. • Year 10 Certificate issued. *Note (relates to opposite column):* • *due to significant advantages of this three-year senior model, it may be considered in the future* *–importance of a foundation studies year, which could be Year 11, with Year 12 as a specialisation year* *–alternatively, Year 10 could provide the study of baseline and/or specialist subjects.*	• Review of Government Secondary Colleges indicated the following: –a need for new structural arrangements between high schools and colleges that will improve significantly the continuity of students' learning from Year 10 to Year 11; built around pathways planning. –inclusion of Year 10 into senior colleges to provide better continuity, greater flexibility in curriculum provision, and to contribute to an extended and perhaps less intensive assessment regime. • due to estimates of effort and cost involved decision was made not to go to a 3-year structure; review indicated students should have increased opportunity to participate in college programs (see note).
New South Wales	• curriculum is arranged through: K to 6 syllabuses (Primary); 7 to 10 syllabuses (Middle school) –Stages 4/5; and–11 and 12 (Senior phase) –Stage 6 • Year 10 Certificate issued • based on the legislative requirements, the Board of Studies has determined that candidates for the School Certificate are required to study a particular set of subjects (see note) • some of the set subjects require mandatory study of the syllabus in Years 7 and 8 with opportunity to specialise in electives in Years 9 and 10 (aligning with the variety of Year 11 and 12 subjects offered).	*Note (relates to opposite column):* *Required subjects are* *–English, in each of Years 7 to 10* *–Mathematics, in each of Years 7 to 10* *–Science, in each of Years 7 to 10* *–Geography and /or History, in each of Years 7 to 10, with Aust. Geography and Aust History studied in Years 9 and 10* *–PDHPE, in each of Years 7 to 10* *–Design and Technology* *–Visual Arts* *–Music* *–Languages.*
Finland High quality, high equity (on the basis of PISA results)	• students complete 9 years of compulsory basic education • upper secondary education (senior phase) comprises general and vocational education with students studying a core curriculum over 3 years, within a maximum of 4 years • each educational provider then prepares its local curriculum based on the core curriculum with the syllabuses including specialisation and applied courses, the provisions of which are decided by schools • education in upper secondary is not tied to year classes and students are usually 16 to 19 years of age.	
Canada (Ontario) High quality, high equity	• students complete 8 years of elementary education (Grades 1 to 8) and four years of secondary education (Grades 9 to 12) • Grades 9 and 10 of secondary education offer three types of courses: academic for developing a student through theory and abstraction; applied courses for practical study; and open courses for preparing students for later specialist	

	subjects.
Korea High quality, high equity	• high school (senior phase) involves Years 10 to 12; the middle phase involves Years 6 to 9 • in the first year of the senior phase students continue with a common curriculum and in the final two years students specialise in humanities or sciences and have a choice of elective subjects according to their interests and future career plans; students have to choose from both general and intensive elective courses that are offered.

Section 2: Possible configurations for Year 10 curriculum

Overview of configurations

In Section 1 of Part A, an overview of key factors, which constitute the backdrop against which any decision-making about Year 10 curriculum, was presented. This leads us to consider several different configurations for future Year 10 curriculum programs. These configurations may be summarised as follows:

- *Configuration 1: Common and agreed curriculum framework for the compulsory years of schooling*
  In Configuration 1, the focus is on the compulsory years of schooling, Years 1 to 10, with an emphasis on the provision of a sound, general education that features delay of crucial choice and delay of specialisation. In this configuration, Year 10 is regarded as a critically important consolidation year to round off the compulsory years. There would be a common and agreed core curriculum framework for Years 1 to 10 with opportunities for certain students to engage with optional or elective (and possibly including integrated) studies such as manual arts, home economics and so on.
- *Configuration 2: Different curriculum frameworks for different phases of learning*
  Configuration 2 focuses on the phases of learning including re-conceptualised early and middle phases of learning: Years P to 5 (early/primary phase of learning), Years 6 to 10 (upper primary/lower secondary or middle phase of learning), Years 11 and 12 (upper secondary or senior phase of learning). In this configuration, Year 10 is regarded as a critically important consolidation year to round off the (re-conceptualised) middle phase of learning. Delay of crucial choice and delay of specialisation would again be a feature. There would be common and agreed core curriculum frameworks for all phases but in the middle phase there would be increasing opportunities for students to engage with optional or elective (and possibly including integrated) studies such as manual arts, home economics and so on.
- *Configuration 3: Year 10 as an induction year*
  Stages of schooling (not to be confused with phases of learning) would be the focus of Configuration 3. These three-year stages, Years 1 to 3, Years 4 to 6, Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 12, would mean that Year 10 would become an induction/orientation year to the senior phase of learning in much the same way Year 8 became an induction/orientation year to secondary education following promulgation of the state *Education Act 1964* . In this configuration, there would be a core (essential learnings/standards) curriculum framework for Years 1 to 9, and in Year 10, a common and agreed curriculum framework of core (English, mathematics, science) and optional or elective studies to enable students to explore their strengths and interests beyond the common and agreed curriculum framework. The Year 10 core (English, mathematics, science) studies would be organised and integrated with the equivalent Year 11 and 12 (English, mathematics, science) studies.
- *Configuration 4: Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase*
  In Configuration 4, Year 10 would be an integral component in the senior phase of learning with a suite of Years 10 to 12 syllabus documents across key domain areas. Seamless movement from the middle phase would be an important characteristic of this configuration. This configuration would represent a logical response to the current

policy context. The additional year within the senior phase would support scaffolded transitions to both indepth disciplinary studies and vocational and education training studies.

Configuration 1: Common and agreed curriculum framework for the compulsory years of schooling

In most, if not all Australian states and territories, the compulsory years of schooling have always been enshrined in legislation. In Queensland, 'free, compulsory and secular' education was a key provision of the first *State Education Act 1875* and from that time the curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling comprised a range of 'subjects' all of which were considered necessary if students were to enjoy what was then, and is still, referred to as 'sound general education'. It needs to be emphasised that only in comparatively recent times was this considered a 'cluttered' curriculum.

> And, if we desire to bring about the harmonious development of human capacities, we cannot omit any of the subjects prescribed in this revision of the syllabus. The subjects that are included in the curriculum are necessary – and they are necessary, not because they serve some directly practical or material end, not because they are mere accomplishments or conventional ornaments, but because they are calculated to widen the outlook and to develop those qualities of body, heart and mind that lead to the efficient and true fulfillment of function in life. (*The syllabus or course of instruction in primary and intermediate schools: Book 1*, Queensland Department of Public Instruction, 1952)

Comprehensive revisions of the curriculum for the compulsory years took place in the period leading up to 1952, the first major post-war revision, and again in the period 1980 to 1990, the latter referred to as the P–10 Curriculum Development Program.[9] The P–10 Curriculum Development Program with its framework of areas of knowledge and experience was abandoned by the Department of Education in 1990 following a change in government. A few years later, however, the review, *Shaping the Future* ('The Wiltshire Report') conducted by Wiltshire, McMeniman and Tolhurst (1994), recommended a further comprehensive revision of the curriculum, on this occasion focusing on a 'common and agreed framework' of eight key learning areas endorsed earlier by all Australian states and territories in the *Common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia* ('The Hobart Declaration') (Australian Education Council, 1989).

The Wiltshire Report (*Shaping the Future*, 1994) stated:

> There is widespread agreement throughout the state among teachers, students, parents, business and industry on the need for a core curriculum organised within Key Learning Areas initially and then by subject, with commensurate options and choice progressively fanning out in the later years. (*Shaping the future: Report of the review of the Queensland school curriculum*, Volume 1, 1994)

[9] In 1964 the school leaving age was raised to 15 and 'Grade 8' classes were transferred to secondary schools. This, together with the proposed introduction of decimal currency in 1966, required a partial revision of the curriculum for Grades 1 to 7. This was paralleled by the development of Grades 8 to 10 syllabuses by the then Board of Junior Secondary School Studies, one of the forerunners of the Board of Secondary School Studies.

The theoretical underpinnings of these developments throughout the eighties lay not only in notions such as 'sound general education' and 'common and agreed framework' but also in the idea of a 'core curriculum' which was carefully elaborated by the former national Curriculum Development Centre:

> One major challenge to Australian schools in the eighties will be to define core curriculum in such a way as to provide all students with learning tasks that are well-structured, flexible, socially relevant, future oriented and stimulating. A core curriculum outline must be common to all schools….As a nation, we need to work on this outline both modifying and refining it until it can serve adequately as a common framework. (*Core curriculum for Australian schools: What it is and why it is needed*, June 1980)

Subsequently, national statements and profiles were prepared and promulgated for each of the key learning areas in the common and agreed framework indicated by the *Common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia* ('The Hobart Declaration') (Australian Education Council, 1989) and later *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (MCEETYA, 1999).

At both state and national levels, there emerged a commitment to a common and agreed framework for the compulsory years of schooling. In Queensland, as in other states and territories, this framework was generally expressed in terms of a core curriculum, the development of which was later to become the major responsibility of the former Queensland School Curriculum Council (now the Queensland Studies Authority). This development resulted in the release between 1999 and 2005 of the Years 1 to 10 key learning areas syllabuses which together constituted a common and agreed core curriculum framework for the compulsory years of schooling.

The most critical feature of this common and agreed core curriculum framework was that it sought to ensure that students in Years 1 to 10 would experience a sound general education and that crucial decisions about future education pathways would be delayed at least until the end of the compulsory years of schooling. In this way it was believed that most if not all students would, by the end of Year 10, have achieved a range of worthwhile outcomes in as many areas of knowledge and experience as possible, and it was and can still be argued that this remains the most effective way to ensure continuing success in subsequent studies. Not to sustain this approach to the end of the compulsory years of schooling would leave far too many students without the comprehensive, well-rounded education they needed for continuing success in the future.

Configuration 2: Different curriculum frameworks for different phases of learning

The emergence of the notion of 'phases of learning' is a relatively recent phenomenon that seems to be as much about the re-conceptualisation of early childhood education as it is about the re-invigoration of senior secondary education. It also seems to be connected to new thinking about what is now called the 'middle years'. It is argued here, however, that there is more than one

perspective on what appropriately constitutes the middle years in terms of age and in terms of how young people are 'constituted'.[10]

> In 2002, the Queensland Government introduced a comprehensive package of educational reforms. The ETRF [Education and Training Reforms for the Future] began the process of reshaping Queensland's education [system] across the early, middle and senior phases of learning. (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning: Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, Draft, QSA, 19 July 2007c, p. 11)

The current orthodoxy, at least as far as the Department of Education seems to be concerned, is that the early phase of learning is Years Preparatory/1 to 3, the middle phase is Years 4 to 9, and the senior phase is Years 11 and 12, perhaps Years 10 to 12. These arrangements of the years of schooling seem to be assumed in a range of important recent initiatives:

- the development, dissemination and implementation of the Queensland Studies Authority's *Early Childhood Education Curriculum Guidelines* (2004)
- the promulgation of a *Middle Phase of Learning State School Action Plan* (2003)
- the development of a framework of essential learnings and standards for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 as a part of the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* (2005c)
- national literacy and numeracy testing also in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- the implementation of the *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF) (2002) initiatives.

There is a possibility, however, that these phases of learning are at best convenient and at worst not really representing too many educational realities. For example, there is a strong case for arguing that the cohorts of students in Years Preparatory/1 to 5 have much more in common with each other than they do with the cohorts of students in Years 8 and 9. Certainly, the acquisition and development of basic skills especially in literacy and numeracy have generally not run their full course until about the end of Year 5. Similarly, a comparison of the cohorts of students in the early years of the middle phase of learning (Years 4 and 5) with the cohorts of students in the later years (Years 8 and 9) will reveal that there is quite a number of significant differences between the two cohorts. For this reason, the middle phase of learning is probably best thought of in terms of lower and upper middle phases of learning.

Against this backdrop, there may also be a strong case for considering Years 6 to 10 as the middle phase of learning. There are several quite valid educational realities to be taken into account in this case. First, many students in Year 10 are still dealing with the uncertainties of adolescence and these may be continuing to influence their attention to their formal studies. Second, while many may have demonstrated a satisfactory level of achievement (Level 5 syllabus outcomes) by the end of Year 9, many others may not have. Third, most students entering Year 10 will not have satisfactorily concluded the critically important developmental learning sequences set

[10] This latter point relates to the ways in which developmental storylines, with their focus on brain research and physical maturity, predominate in much theory and practice associated with middle years. Subscribing to this essentialised view of young people, "renders invisible the lives of many young Australians including students from working class families, females, Indigenous students, those living in poverty – and the list goes on" (Nayler, 2006, p. 77). See lisahunter (2006), Nayler (2006) and Luke et al. (2003) for a fuller discussion of generative ways in which theory and practice could 'see' young people with the benefit of a sociological lens.

forward in the Years 1 to 10 syllabuses (in particular, they will not have demonstrated Level 6 or Beyond Level 6 outcomes). Finally, the majority of Year 10 students will still gain considerable benefits from the continuing exploration of the diversity of learnings provided through *all* of the (eight) key learning areas. To initiate a channelling, streaming or specialising of studies for students in Year 10 may have a significant deleterious effect on their achievements in the longer term.

Configuration 3: Year 10 as an induction year

There is a strong case for constructing Year 10 as an induction into the senior phase of learning. This case relates mainly to the building of a bridge into the senior phase across what for many students continues to constitute a significant social and intellectual leap. In our relatively recent Queensland curriculum history there is a precedent of moving a year level to a different stage of education. As flagged in the case for Configuration 1, the school leaving age was raised to 15 years of age in 1964 and 'Grade 8' classes were transferred to secondary schools. At this time there was a community expectation that all students should experience two years of secondary school education (though for some this period only amounted to one and a half years before they attained the legal leaving age).

As a consequence of the eighth year of compulsory schooling being constructed as a bridge, there was a strong sense among many that it was a staging ground, a space in which the real secondary school experience had not yet commenced. Many Queensland schools could argue today that they have successfully reconstructed this learning space, that is, 'Year 8' from a staging ground to a rich middle phase of learning informed by key learning area syllabuses. Rather than a curriculum disjuncture, as occurred prior to the advent of the Years 1 to 10 key learning area syllabuses, teachers and schools were able to plan teaching and learning experiences in a much more seamless way according to the core learning outcomes deemed appropriate. Many of these initiatives have undoubtedly been spurred on by responding to the challenge of alienation and disengagement (Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996) among students in the 'middle years' as they were then described. The key point here is that the construction of Year 8 as a bridge to the next stage of schooling was not unproblematic. This precedent is flagged here in order to avoid similar problems in Year 10 as a bridge to the senior phase of learning.

As was the case in the 1960s a particular set of perceived social, economic and political imperatives are currently operating with the aspiration at this particular socio-historic moment that 'all' students should participate and complete a *senior* secondary education. The value of such an aspiration is not being challenged in arguing the case for this configuration but the possibility of Year 10 as a 'lost' year between a Years 1 to 9 focus and a Years 11 to 12 focus is flagged.

Several characteristics are suggested as essential in any configuration that constructs Year 10 as an induction, as opposed to a fully-integrated component of the senior phase of learning. Firstly, it is proposed within this configuration that Year 10 curriculum would support students to reflect in systematic and rigorous ways on their learning journeys to date. This would involve students taking stock of their strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the essential learnings and standards embedded in the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* (QSA, 2005c). Other locally-significant curriculum priorities and

frameworks could also be used to support students' reflections. Importantly, students could be supported in very practical ways in terms of preparation for the disciplinary-based and vocationally-oriented studies that they would encounter in the subsequent years.

Many other state and international jurisdictions are currently grappling with where particular year-levels of schooling should be located (see Table 1). The work in South Australia is of relevance to both Configurations 3 and 4 and a snapshot of some of these ideas is provided in the boxed section, SACE Review.

Configuration 4: Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase

The central reason for advocating Year 10 curriculum becomes part of the senior phase of learning is to enhance the robustness of that phase of learning that, in turn, will support greater student participation until the end of Year 12. Such student participation is regarded as essential in order to build and maintain the civil society flagged earlier and to maintain and enhance Queensland's economic position in relation to its trading partners. Robustness is not considered here as being solely the result of extending this phase by one year – though the extension of time might be advantageous.

It is envisaged in this configuration that the collection of domain[11] syllabuses would describe the learning and assessment requirements for Years 10 to 12. The domain areas would be those identified through research and consultation as valued by the community. This configuration is based on schools having the flexibility to respond to student and local needs through contextually-responsive programs that:

- support young people to research, plan and develop their Senior Education and Training (SET) Plans
- promote successful outcomes for students through their engagement in the core domain learning for a disciplinary area prior to commencing specialist elective study within that domain
- familiarise students with new forms of assessment used in the senior phase prior to engaging in specialist elective study
- take account of the levels of attainment of students, who have not met the Year 9 standards in literacy and numeracy, and appropriately plan and implement particular interventions.

Integral to the building of a more robust senior phase of learning are three specific reasons for the inclusion of Year 10 as a key component of the senior phase of learning discussed in this section. These include the need for:

- a logical response to the current policy context
- scaffolded transitions to indepth disciplinary studies
- scaffolded transitions to vocational and education training studies.

[11] According to the QSA, a "[d]omain is a categorisation of learning organised around the fundamental ideas of a discipline. It makes obvious the learning that is common and connected and includes core disciplinary knowledge and skills, electives and extensions" (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning*: *Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, Draft, 19 July, QSA, 2007c, p. 3).

A logical response to the current policy context

The current policy context, which has been explored in the first section, is clearly having an impact on decision-making about Year 10 and its relationship to the phases of learning. It would seem that many of these policy initiatives are tending to *push* Year 10 into the senior phase of learning. They could be construed as reactive factors in some sense. There also exist, however, factors that *pull* Year 10 towards the senior phase of learning. Some of these factors are considered below.

Scaffolded transitions to indepth disciplinary studies

Statewide consultations conducted as part of the review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning confirmed the proposition that the transition from Year 10 to Year 11 continues to cause difficulties for students and their parents as well as for teachers. One factor contributing to this difficult transition stems from the sometimes overly-complex nature of the disciplines as they currently operate in Years 11 and 12.

As explored in Part A above, there is a clear commitment in the plans for the reconceptualised senior phase of learning for alignment across the disciplines in order to support student achievement through a focus on what might be described as the metalanguage of disciplinary studies. Specifically, there is a commitment articulated by QSA for newly conceptualised domain syllabuses with commonalities within domain areas (for example, within Science) and across domains (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning*: *Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, Draft, QSA, 19 July 2007c). In summary, Year 10 curriculum must build on the scaffolded disciplinary learning in the middle phase of learning and provide entree into the senior phase of learning.

Scaffolded transitions to vocational education and training studies

For many students a strong vocational pathway in their schooling years is a key foundation for post-school life, but for all students the application of their disciplinary-based learning into real-life contexts is vital. In the past, schooling cultures, no doubt supported by a two-tier (involving an Authority and Authority-registered hierarchy) system of syllabuses, have led to a vocational strand of study in Years 11 and 12. This pathway has been regarded less favourably than what might be regarded as a more academic pathway. The application of a vocational orientation across the senior phase of learning might better position all students, even those on an almost certain path towards university study, for future worlds of work. This orientation represents a departure from previous approaches to senior schooling and thus, warrants careful scaffolding over a period of time, optimally over a three-year senior phase of learning.

Finally, the transition from Year 10 to Year 11 has traditionally, and continues to be, one of the most significant that students must make in their schooling. That said, it is important that a move to incorporate Year 10 into the senior phase of learning does not create a difficult transition from Year 9 to Year 10. Even if Year 10 were to be incorporated into the senior phase of learning, a dominant characteristic of Year 10 could be the notion of bridging: that is, bridging from Year 9 into Year 10 and Year 10 into Year 11. Various key aspects of the review of the South Australian Certificate of Education address this issue of bridging (see below). In the next section we consider the broad conceptual positioning appropriate for reform of Year 10 curriculum.

SACE Review

The recently completed review of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) (The State of South Australia, 2006a) provides key insights into how the proposal that Year 10 be an induction to the senior phase might operate. The SACE Review provides for a "'learning space' for 15–19 year-olds...[in which students are supported] to engage in work, training, education, community and civic life in various combinations and ways, learning as they go" (The State of South Australia, 2006b, p. 9). The report significantly named, *Success for all,* proposes a reconceptualised SACE involving students gaining 200 credit points by completing two core Extended Learning Initiatives, two core Personal Learning Plan units, as well as an Approved Learning Program. While much can be learnt from an examination of the SACE Review proposals, the focus here is the way in which the South Australian Year 10 curriculum might be part of this proposed arrangement.

In order to strengthen Year 10 and create stronger connections between their current phase and the senior phase, the Review Panel proposes that:

> ...most students would continue a broad general education while starting a process of reviewing where they want to go next....during Year 10 students should be able to take two SACE required learning units (worth 10 credit points each) at Stage 1 level: one Personal Learning Plan and one Extended Learning Initiative, and gain 20 credit points towards the SACE before entering Year 11. (The State of South Australia, 2006b, p. 17)

The Personal Learning Plan, for example, provides an excellent example from which Queensland curriculum designers could learn much. The SACE Review proposes that plans are completed at Year 10 and again during Year 12. According to the Review:

> The Personal Learning Plan is a structured approach designed to:
> - help young people to make informed decisions about their education, training and personal development
> - involve students in learning to understand their strengths, weaknesses, interests and aspirations
> - include a 'strategic planning' element in which young people explore the range of possibilities open to them and plan to achieve their chosen outcomes
> - enable young people to explore the issues facing them in their personal lives, to clarify their aspirations and begin to plan the next stages of their journey in and beyond school. (*Success for all: SACE Review at a glance*, 2006b, p. 15)

It is proposed here that this aspect of the SACE Review is reflective of a broad conceptual positioning that would sit comfortably within the configuration that supports Year 10 as induction into the senior phase or indeed in the following configuration that advocates Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase. The Personal Learning Plan, presented in snapshot here, is reflective of the curriculum considerations outlined in the first section of this paper. In other words, a personal learning plan of this sort would support schools to respond to the diversity of 15 year-olds, align with the preferred "low definition/high trust" curriculum (Luke, 2007) and so on. Supporting students to gain credit towards their SACE qualification in Year 10 also supports this proposed configuration of Year 10 as induction, but arguably aligns even more strongly with the fourth and final configuration proposed here, that of Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning.

Section 3: Broad conceptual positioning to inform Year 10 curriculum

Importantly, despite the particular configuration taken up among the four presented here, or another that might be considered, it is the writers' contention that the conceptual positioning should resonate with the following:

- the presence of a minimally-defined curriculum with generic capabilities
- the permeability of entry and exit points into and out of the middle and senior phases of learning
- continued support for a sound general education
- pedagogical reform (included here given the generative view of curriculum that acknowledges the pedagogical role of the teacher in enacting the curriculum) and assessment *for* learning.

A minimally-defined curriculum

As explored in Section 1, Luke's concept of a "cool curriculum" is aligned with a "low definition/high trust" curriculum (Luke, 2007). For the development of Year 10 curriculum, and indeed curriculum across the senior phase of learning, the QSA could be guided by a minimally-defined approach to the intended curriculum that is evident in places such as Finland and Ontario, Canada, and noteworthy because it seems to achieve "high quality/high equity" on PISA results (McGaw, 2007a, 2007b & 2006). The spaces, which are available for teachers in the design and implementation of contextually responsive curriculum, and which are afforded by loosely delineated curriculum requirements, would seem to provide a generative way forward in terms of innovative curriculum for Year 10.

Reid's (2005) notion of capabilities, which he claims might, for example, focus on key elements, such as knowledge work, innovation and design, productive social relationships, active participation, intercultural understandings, interdependence and sustainability, understanding the self, ethics and values, and multiliteracies and communication, aligns well with the idea of a minimally-defined curriculum. Reid (2006) reminds us that a set of generic capabilities can play out differently in different contexts, but a collaboratively developed set, across Australia for example, could be the same set of capabilities. Not only would a generic set of capabilities provide the cornerstone for national approaches to curriculum, generic capabilities could form the basis of seamlessness across a P–12 curriculum framework in Queensland. Documents currently being developed by QSA suggest a strong alignment of generic capabilities across the essential learnings and the reconceptualised senior phase of learning syllabuses.

Permeability of entry and exit points into and out of the senior phase of learning

As suggested earlier, the notion of phases of learning has become commonplace across Australian jurisdictions and elsewhere. The key point to be made here is that phases of learning need to be permeable in terms of the ease of entry from an earlier phase (of schooling or elsewhere) and in terms of the ease of exit (to another phase of learning or elsewhere). The extensive national collaboration conducted by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association in the late 1990s yielded a set of principles suggested as useful for 'middle schooling'. These principles included a commitment to initiatives being "strategically linked [such that] a discrete phase of schooling is implemented as a stage within a K–12 continuum and connected to the early and later years" (Barratt, 1998, p. 31). Ironically, much middle phase of learning work in schools with its focus on transition has probably not been successful in forging seamless links between it and the early phase of learning on the one hand, and the senior phase of learning on the other.

A key conceptual consideration of a newly invigorated and enhanced senior phase of learning with Year 10 as an integral component must contain explicit links to many aspects of curriculum in other phases. It is proposed in the reconceptualised senior phase syllabus documents that the core domain learning in that phase will build the next steps in students' learning from their engagement with the essential learnings, ways of working, generic capabilities and standards identified in the key learning area syllabuses. Specifically, key aspects for careful linkage include the Year 9 essential learnings in QCARF and a well-

established barrier to the senior school, the disciplinary nature of knowledge in Years 11 and 12.

Continued support for a sound general education

The incorporation of Year 10 into the senior phase of learning does not necessarily mark an earlier beginning of the subject specialisation traditionally associated with the senior phase of learning. This claim is made on the basis that the statewide consultation undertaken over the past 18 months, as well as the six specially-commissioned research papers confirmed the need for a senior phase of learning that continued a sound general education. The commitment to the continuation of a sound general education is clear in the proposed reconceptualised senior phase of learning, especially within the articulation of generic competencies and the setting of a particular standard of attainment in terms of literacy and numeracy. The reconceptualised senior phase of learning is informed by the following understandings of a "broad and general education":

> Broad and general education includes the knowledge, understandings, skills and values for active citizenship in globalised, knowledge and service-based economies and sets the foundations for lifelong learning and includes high competence in literacy and numeracy and key discipline areas. (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning*: *Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, Draft, QSA, 19 July 2007c, p. 3)

Pedagogical reform and assessment *for* learning

Traditionally, pedagogies used in the teaching of the disciplinary-based subjects in the senior school have been associated with transmission approaches which assume the teacher to be all-knowing, the knowledge to be relatively fixed and the students to be passive recipients in the teaching/learning process. This is not to say that all, or even the majority of, teachers of disciplinary-based subjects in the senior phase of learning practise such pedagogies. It is feasible to assume, however, that traditional pedagogies probably persist across the year levels, with greater likelihood of this occurring in the senior phase of learning. As a result, consideration of pedagogical reform in the senior phase of learning is timely. For example, an approach more in tune with student and societal needs might be one which is based on assumptions of the teacher as a co-learner, knowledge as socially constructed and, therefore, open to interpretation and critique and the student as an active agent in the construction of meaningful knowledge. It needs to be remembered, of course, that expository teaching serves the needs of particular students in particular circumstances and is invaluable in a teacher's repertoire of practices.

Much of what currently constitutes assessment practices in the senior phase of learning is highly laudable, especially in terms of the professional collaboration involved in the monitoring and validation of Year 11 and 12 assessment, as well as the approval of school work programs and so on. It is feasible to assume that in terms of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning, broad patterns exist across the sectors of schooling. Assessment of learning, or summative assessment, appears to predominate in the current senior phase of learning. This is probably as a result of more traditional approaches to schooling generally being located at these year levels. Undoubtedly, the pressures associated with ensuring that the QSA-approved assessment requirements are implemented within what most senior phase teachers (and their students) would consider to be relatively short timeframes, contributes to the

focus on what must be done, that is, carrying out the summative assessment. Work in the middle phase of learning suggests that there is great benefit in assessing *for* learning (see Earle, 2005). As Earle says:

> Assessment *for* learning is designed to give teachers information to modify the teaching and learning activities in which students are engaged in order to differentiate and focus on how individual students approach their learning....The emphasis is on teachers using the information from carefully-designed assessments to determine not only what students know, but also to gain insights into how, when, and whether students use what they know, so that they can streamline and target instruction and resources. (p. 10, emphasis in original)

The point here can be made very briefly: more innovative assessment approaches are required for a newly conceptualised senior phase of learning – suggested in snapshot here through the concept of assessment *for* learning.[12] Such an approach is provided for in the reconceptualised senior phase of learning:

> Syllabuses [will]...have methods of assessment that:
> ...view all assessment as encompassing the dual and related goals of assessment of learning and assessment for learning. (*Queensland Studies Authority syllabuses for senior phase of learning: Disciplinary learning, standards, flexibility and continuity*, QSA, 2007c, p. 16)

The basis appears to exist in the plans for the reconceptualised senior phase of learning for more innovative assessment practices that are related to enhanced learning.

In summary, it is suggested that the conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum be informed by a minimally-defined curriculum, permeable entry into and exit from the senior phase of learning, as well as pedagogical and assessment reform. In the next section, we outline a preferred configuration, along with a justification for its selection.

Section 4: Preferred configuration

The preferred configuration is based on the arguments laid out in the curriculum considerations explored at the outset of this paper, the four possible configurations in relation to how Year 10 curriculum might be positioned within a P–12 framework, along with the possible organisational implications of Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning (discussed in Part B of this paper). Projecting as best we can in terms of what might support young people's learning, it seems apparent that Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning offers the greatest potential. There is, of course, no 'right path' but rather a pathway that holds student learning as its centre-piece, informed, as always, by pragmatic considerations.

An overarching concern was the conceptual positioning that would best support enhanced participation and completion to the end of Year 12 to serve the broad purposes of schooling.

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[12] It is noted that work related to reinvigorating assessment practices in the senior phase of learning will be informed by a specially-commissioned paper being developed by Professor Gabrielle Matters (ACER) and Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith (Griffith University). The Matters & Wyatt-Smith paper was not available at the time of the writing of this paper.

Those broad purposes of schooling, as they are understood in this paper, relate to the building and maintenance of a civil society, economic and social wellbeing for individuals and communities, as well as ecological sustainability generally. The arguments supporting this contention are briefly re-visited and expanded upon below.

In summary, the argument that follows is based on the contention that if Year 10 were aligned with the middle phase of learning, that year might be associated in the minds of students, their parents/caregivers and others with a vested interest in education as some form of end point in the schooling journey. Apart from the fact that a Year 10 Certificate is no longer issued, there are compelling social justice reasons, outlined earlier, for not emphasising the end of Year 10, the final year of compulsory schooling in Queensland, as a possible exit point from schooling. As outlined in an earlier section of this paper, the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* requires young people to stay at school until they complete Year 10 or until they reach 16 years of age, whichever comes first. Furthermore, they are then required to participate in education and training for another two years or until they have they have gained particular educational qualifications, also as outlined earlier. In short, the legislative context for compulsory education and training is set. Even without the issuing of a formal certificate at the end of Year 10, however, there is the strong possibility that Year 10 – if not incorporated into the senior phase of learning – would be perceived by some as a logical exit point. The inclusion of Year 10 into the senior phase, with senior phase assessment milestones throughout that year, would further reduce the perception of Year 10 as an end point.

Such insights reinforce the argument to incorporate Year 10 in the senior phase of learning in Queensland and to continue to bolster the school-based approaches to assessment that are potentially threatened by moves to a national curriculum. In summary, the research conducted by Vickers and Lamb (2002), cautions us to avoid constructing Year 10 as an end point in the schooling journey in any way. Based on this research, it is feasible to assume that it might be those most disadvantaged in our communities who would experience the most deleterious effects of constructing Year 10 as an end point.

Section 5: Curriculum implications

The stance taken in this paper is that all four configurations could feasibly constitute a pathway for learning among the diverse cohort of Queenslanders engaging in the Year 10 curriculum in any year. In terms of the curriculum implications for the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework project and the review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning, only those implications related to the preferred configuration, that is, Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning, are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Implications of Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase

QSA reform focus	Implications of Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase
Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework	• Syllabus materials need to reflect bridging* from the QCARF to the senior phase of learning. *The concept of bridging here relates to:

Project	• making explicit (to the syllabus reader) the commonalities between the elements of QCARF and the reconceptualised senior phase of learning in terms of generic capabilities and so on • making explicit (to the syllabus reader) the divergences between the elements of QCARF and the reconceptualised senior phase of learning, as well as justifying those differences • providing for the scaffolding of students' movement from one phase to the next with the focus on permeability of entry to, and exit from, the senior phase of learning.
Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning	• Specific spaces need to be found in the Year 10 component of the senior phase curriculum to support students' reflection of their learnings in relation to essential learnings and standards. • Specific spaces need to be found in the Year 10 component of the senior phase curriculum for students to undertake personal learning plans (see boxed section, SACE Review).

PART B: ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Overview of Part B

The purpose of Part B of this paper is to explore some of the organisational implications for students, schools and the community, especially families, of the particular preferred configuration for the arrangement of the intended curriculum for Queensland schools advocated in this paper. The preferred configuration is based on Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning.

Section 1: Background

Clearly, what has been outlined in Part A above indicates that the question being addressed is primarily one related to the organisation and integration of curriculum. Equally clearly, however, there is a distinct possibility that any significant change to the current organisation and integration of curriculum may result in the need for equally significant change(s) in systemic/institutional contexts of schooling.

Particular systemic/institutional contexts

There seem to be at least three particular systemic/institutional contexts that require examination:

- in the state education system there are some Years P to 10 schools, primary schools with secondary departments or 'high tops' (total 47 schools, students enrolled 687), some Years P to 12 schools, primary schools with secondary departments or (amalgamated) P-12 schools/colleges (total 36 schools, students enrolled 2 777) while, in other systems, there are some Years 1 to 10 schools
- in the Catholic and Independent education systems there are some primary schools whose students subsequently attend one or another junior secondary (Years 8 to 10) campuses, and then attend a senior secondary (Years 11 and 12) school/college. (At present, there are some 176 non-state schools offering primary and secondary education. The total Year 10 enrolments at these schools is 12 355 students.)
- in the case of students who attend primary schools with secondary departments in rural/isolated areas, they may elect to undertake Years 11 and 12 studies by attending one of a number of boarding schools or by enrolling in a school of distance education. (In February 2007, there were 230 full-time and 390 part-time students in Year 10 in schools of distance education.)

Apart from these, all secondary schools and other schools with secondary departments, campuses or sub-schools will need to make decisions about their current organisation and integration of curriculum in Year 10, and in Years 11 and 12, and the need for change(s) in aspects such as school and class organisation, timetabling, the availability and distribution of teaching spaces, records management and the delivery of ancillary services.

Current organisation and integration of the Year 10 curriculum

The intended curriculum, as distinct from the enacted and realised curriculum in Queensland is specified by way of a range of Years 1 to 10 syllabuses (with some variation in the case of certain vocational studies for which there are Years 8 to 10 syllabuses), and a range of Years 11 and 12 syllabuses.

The Years 1 to 10 syllabuses were originally released by the former Queensland School Curriculum Council between 1999 and 2001 and by the Queensland Studies Authority in 2004 and 2005, and are to be re-released by the QSA in 2009. According to the *QSA Quarterly* (QSA, 2007a), the "re-released syllabuses" will include:

- clear statements about what is to be taught
- strategies to assess student achievement of the essential learnings, using standards
- expected standards of achievement at key points in schooling.

Further, the QSA suggests that "the re-release complements the review of syllabuses for the senior phase of learning being undertaken" (*Key learning area syllabuses to be re-released in 2009*, QSA, July 2007a, p. 1).

While the question of whether the re-released syllabuses will be for Years 1 to 10 or Years 1 to 9 is yet to be finally determined by the QSA, the fact that the new curriculum framework for the syllabuses comprises the essential learnings and standards currently being developed for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (*Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*, June 2005), it seems reasonable to conclude that the re-released syllabuses will be for Years 1 to 9.

The Years 11 and 12 syllabuses are currently under review. The review is based on a conceptual and structural analysis for the re-development of the syllabuses for the 'senior phase of learning'. The review has been guided by four principles: coherence, rigour, flexibility, connections. In relation to the last of these principles, *connections*, the original proposal was "to build connections through a syllabus design that includes specific advice and guidance connecting the learning in the senior phase with past learning in Prep to Year 10 and future learning in further education, training, work and adult life" (*Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning: A proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses,* QSA, July 2006, p. 10).

Proposed organisation and integration of the Year 10 curriculum

In relation to "connecting to past learning in Prep to Year 10", the proposal in the review blueprint was elaborated as follows:

- Year 10 is a key education juncture. It is both a culmination of one phase of learning and a transition to a new phase.
- The development of coherence across and within learning…would use the essentials identified for Year 9 through the QCARF (Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework) initiative to make an explicit link with learning in Year 11.
- In addition, we must also consider that young people in Year 10 are at different stages of their learning journeys and need different programs to build on their strengths and work on their weaknesses as they prepare to move to the senior phase of learning.

- The purposes of Year 10 and the differing learning needs of young people towards the end of the middle phase of learning were confirmed through consultation: continuation, remediation, acceleration, specialisation.
- Transition notes could provide advice and guidance on best practice programs that support schools and teachers as they develop programs for a range of Year 10 learners.
- Year 10 is also a planning year. The new legislation requires young people to be registered with the QSA before the end of Year 10 and, if they have successfully completed appropriate learning, they can begin banking credits towards the Queensland Certificate Education.
- The transition from the middle phase to the senior phase could be strengthened by introducing a short course on career development, based on the MCEETYA Australian Blueprint for Career Development.

(*Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning: A proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses,* QSA, July 2006 p. 18)

In relation to "connecting with future learning", the proposal was elaborated as follows:

> In the same way that the learning in Year 11 needs to link with the essential learning and standards established for the end of the middle phase, so the learning in the Years 11 and 12 syllabuses needs to build towards the knowledge and skills required for further education, training, work and active citizenship. (*Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning: A proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses,* QSA, July 2006 p. 19)

It is interesting to note that the above statements about future curriculum program(s) in Year 10 seem to make a number of assumptions. The first is that there will be no acknowledgment of the current Years 1 to 10 syllabuses, in particular, the Level 6 and Beyond Level 6 core learning outcomes in these syllabuses. The second is that there will be some kind of connection between Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework (QCARF) Year 9 (end of Year 9) essential learnings and standards as defined in the soon to be re-released syllabuses.

In an effort to remove the uncertainty about Year 10, the QSA set forward its analysis of the issues at the June 2007 meeting of the Governing Body. The document, *Policy Decisions for Key Learning Area (KLA) Syllabuses* (QSA, 2007b), argued that:

> …it would seem appropriate that the KLA syllabuses be re-positioned to encompass the learning that takes place in Years 1 to 9. This would enable schools to plan meaningful programs for that period of a young person's schooling and for Year 9 to be recognised as a legitimate end point of a phase of schooling, with students having completed final statewide assessment tasks and the national testing requirements (in literacy and numeracy).

It is against this background that the next section explores some of the possible implications of reform to Year 10 curriculum.

Section 2: Implications of reform to Year 10 curriculum

In Part A of this paper, curriculum considerations that, it is argued, must inform any decisions in relation to the conceptual positioning of Year 10 curriculum, were presented. These configurations may be summarised as follows:

- Configuration 1: Common and agreed curriculum framework for the compulsory years of schooling
- Configuration 2: Different curriculum frameworks for different phases of learning
- Configuration 3: Year 10 as an induction year
- Configuration 4: Years 10 as an integral component of the senior phase.

This section outlines some of the possible intended and unintended consequences of the adoption of Configuration 4. Possible consequences are listed under the key headings: students, schools and community.

Students

Years 8 and 9 students

These students find themselves towards the top end of the middle phase of learning (upper middle phase of learning) yet very often have only recently been re-located, perhaps dislocated, into a relatively new institutional context. They are sometimes characterised in distinctive, not always complementary, ways. They are often unsettled and, while their home lives are still important to them, they are searching for new experiences in the wider community. Finding their own identities is often mixed with their efforts to identify with one or several peer groups.

For these students, the linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 may well mean they lose the worthwhile models Year 10 students can offer them, the positive influences Year 10 students can have on their attitudes and behaviours, and the effective leadership practices Year 10 students can provide in an increasing diversity of situations.

Alternatively, the linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 may mean that Years 8 and 9 students will perceive themselves as having their own distinctive identities, their own particular ways of dealing with issues and problems, and their own unique approaches to establishing and maintaining relationships with peers and adults. It could be an opportunity for learning how to take responsibility, and for gaining confidence about themselves and their place in the community.

Year 10 students

There are some 37 678 students enrolled in Year 10 (February 2007). Of these, some 687 are enrolled in state P–10 schools and 2 777 in state P–12 schools. The average age of these students is 14 years 8 months. Many of these students have emerged from the (upper) middle phase of learning with increased maturity and quite sound attitudes towards their secondary schooling experiences. Their peer group is very important to them and relationships with the opposite sex are beginning to be explored. They are more prepared than in previous years to participate in the life of the school and are quite prepared to adopt some leadership roles both in school and extra-curricular activities. Some of these students are finding the time to

start some form of part-time employment and they seem quite ready to begin thinking about and discussing their future career prospects. Others, however, may find themselves struggling with their studies and may be finding more satisfaction in out-of-school activities in the community.

For these students, the linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 may mean they lose many opportunities to consolidate their roles/positions in the school community, to provide some degree of leadership in a range of school and extra-curricular activities, and to start to have a sense of control over their studies exploring different ways to balance these with their increasingly important social and part-time working lives. More importantly, they may be persuaded to make crucial choices about their studies and/or begin specialised studies that, with greater maturity and experience, they might have perceived as inappropriate in terms of their post-school aspirations.

Alternatively, the linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 may mean that Year 10 students will perceive themselves as having a completely new beginning, or as the Pitman Report (2002) argues, a "fresh start" (p. 25) with their studies and their lives in general. The opportunity to begin to specialise in certain areas of the curriculum may lead to increased interest and enthusiasm: some will find the more academic (disciplined) studies are the way to go while others will find that more vocational studies are just what they want to do.

Special needs students

A significant proportion of students in Queensland schools is considered to have special needs. This group of students includes, but is not confined to, Intellectually Impaired, Learning Difficulties, Non-English Speaking Background Students and Gifted/Talented students.

The recent changes to the legislation, the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, and the proposed linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 to create a new senior phase of learning, highlight the value the education system and the community in general place on students enjoying the benefits of studies leading to Year 12 and possible matriculation. It also lifts the aspirations of students, and their parents, and this is equally true of students with some degree of learning impairment as it is of those generally referred to as gifted/talented.

Linking Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 may result in students with learning impairments losing opportunities to consolidate their achievements in a diversity of key learning areas, that is, the sound general education they have experienced to Year 9 or equivalent level. Similarly, gifted and talented students especially in Years 8 to 10, who have benefited from explorations in areas beyond the common and agreed core curriculum framework, may feel obliged to abandon these in favour of pushing ahead with the more formal studies of the senior phase of learning.

Of course, on the other hand, the kinds of arrangements that are currently in place for students with learning impairments will no doubt continue whether Year 10 is linked to Years 11 and 12 or not. Students especially those in special schools will continue to study towards their Certificates of Post-Compulsory School Education (from 2008, Queensland Certificates of Individual Achievement) rather than the Senior Certificate; they will continue to take advantage of the provision for extra semesters; and, in the case of students in secondary

schools, they will continue to undertake studies using modified curriculum programs and enjoy the benefits of a range of special considerations.

Similarly, in the case of gifted/talented students, there may be mixed benefits in linking Year 10 to Years 11 and 12. The opportunities they may have experienced in a Year 10 curriculum designed to promote consolidation and extension of knowledge and experience may be diminished, if not lost completely, in a Year 10 curriculum focussed too intensively on acceleration and specialisation via more academic (disciplinary) studies and/or vocational studies. Alternatively, for many of these students, this may well provide valuable opportunities for them to realise their aspirations at an earlier point than might otherwise have been the case previously.

Rural/isolated students

Unlike the great majority of Queensland students who receive their education at schools in the metropolitan area or in provincial cities and towns, rural/isolated students depend on schools of distance education and satellite-based schooling through schools of distance education, or a mixture of school-based and distance education/satellite-based schooling, or schooling at one of a number of private (or state) boarding schools, for their education. For these students, re-location to a new educational context may occur quite early, or as late as Year 10, depending on a range of factors including particular family circumstances.

Unlike most of their urban peers, rural/isolated students, especially those in what is currently labelled the middle phase of learning, need to cope with a range of emotional upsets caused not only by their developing maturity but also by the different circumstances of the new educational context in which they find themselves. Complicating matters further, the kinds of studies that typically characterise the senior phase of learning are seen as imposing on these students additional concerns.

Alternatively, it might be argued that for just these same reasons the adoption of a three- year senior phase of learning will give rural/isolated students a much greater opportunity to settle into their new educational context and thus improve their chances of achieving to the best of their potential. This may be considered particularly important and, in fact, outweigh the additional concerns, given the significance attached to studies leading to valued post-school destinations including continuing further education.

Indigenous students

Indigenous students may be found in rural/isolated communities and in a variety of urban environments. At present, apparent retention rates to Year 12 for Indigenous students remain low (in Queensland, about 57% compared with 80% for non-Indigenous students). The rate is worse for rural/isolated students than for urban students. Students tend to leave school at one of the two major transition points, Year 7 (to Year 8) and, at present, Year 10 (to Year 11). If Year 10 is linked to Years 11 and 12, it is possible that a significant proportion of Indigenous students may well continue to choose *not* to commence the senior phase of learning, and indeed leave school even earlier than at present (that is, at the end of Year 9). We make this claim cognisant that the legislation now requires completion of Year 10 (or age 16) and then compulsory participation to age 17.

Moreover, Indigenous students who do commence Years 11 and 12 do *not* obtain senior certificates at the same rate as non-Indigenous students (Indigenous <50%; non-Indigenous >80%), and the gap has widened since 2001. This may be because those from rural/isolated communities who have had to leave their homes to continue their studies in a new educational context, like so many other students in a similar situation, often have difficulty coping with homesickness, as well as a lack of understanding and skills to deal with the new educational context.

In both rural/isolated communities and urban environments, many Indigenous students require appropriate levels of pastoral care and academic, including remedial, support. If these were to be forthcoming in whatever educational contexts they choose, then an additional year (Year 10) included in the senior phase of learning might provide "both a bit of breathing space and something of an incentive for students who now see themselves in the 'big league'" (Kay Boulden, personal communication, 24 July 2007).

Schools

School culture

Leadership, and its distribution within school communities and the community at large, is one important feature of what is generally understood as school culture. Effective schools rely on effective leadership from the administration, from the teaching staff and from the students themselves. Linking Year 10 with Years 11 and 12 may have a significant effect on school culture.

Curriculum planning

There would seem to be little doubt that linking Year 10 with Years 11 and 12 may require schools to re-develop a number of existing school curriculum programs (work programs) for Years 8 and 9 and for Years 11 and 12. It may also require them to develop a range of new school curriculum programs for Years 8 and 9, and for Year 10 and/or Years 11 and 12. A critical feature of this work may include the exploration of new approaches to the organisation and integration of the curriculum (content and learning experiences), and the articulation of subjects within and across different courses of study. Extra-curricula activities (including sport, art/drama/music festivals and so on) may also require attention and, if necessary, adjustment to suit the altered circumstances.

Assessment, reporting and certification

Another important implication of linking Year 10 with Years 11 and 12 may be the impact it has on the assessment, reporting and certification regimes currently established in schools. There may be a need for schools to undertake comprehensive reviews and re-developments of existing assessment programs and practices. In large measure, this may of course depend on the assessment policy requirements and guidelines developed by the Queensland Studies Authority and, where appropriate, by the relevant school education authorities.

Pedagogy (learning and teaching)

Without doubt this is one area where there is a wealth of knowledge and experience, and considerable expertise, in schools. Even so, most schools will want to re-examine their pedagogical practices to ensure that the most appropriate and most effective learning and

teaching strategies are being applied in Years 8 and 9, and in Year 10 and/or Years 11 and 12. They will also want to re-examine the distribution of their teaching and ancillary services human resources to ensure that those best qualified to teach in Years 8 and 9 or Year 10 and/or Years 11 and 12, in fact, do so with all the appropriate materials and equipment required to ensure that learning and teaching are as effective as possible.

In particular, the expectations about the organisation and integration of the curriculum for Year 10 in the senior phase of learning will require teachers who have expertise in ensuring that students, where appropriate and/or necessary, can 'connect' with past learning, that is, consolidate the learning achievements made during Years 1 to 9, and with future learning, that is, prepare for the disciplinary and vocational studies to come in Years 11 and 12. In the words of the blueprint mentioned above, teachers will need to plan for continuation, remediation, acceleration and specialisation (*Review of the syllabuses for the senior phase of learning: A proposed blueprint for the future development of syllabuses,* QSA, July 2006).

Moreover, as highlighted previously, teachers will need to review their pedagogical approaches and ensure that they adopt an approach more in tune with student and societal needs and based on assumptions about teachers who are viewed as co-learners, knowledge as socially constructed and, therefore, open to interpretation and critique and the student as an active agent in the construction of meaningful knowledge.

Resources

As in all instances of significant structural change, the linking of Year 10 to Years 11 and 12 will not only impact on the organisation and integration of the curriculum but also create new and possibly quite different pressures on the allocation and distribution of the resources of schools and education systems. The following examples suggest some typical matters that may require consideration:

- The current class-size ratios are 1:28 in Year 10 and 1:25 in Years 11 and 12. It may well be that if Year 10 is linked to Years 11 and 12, there will be an expectation that the class-size ratio in Year 10 will also become 1:25.
- If schools generally adopt a textbook-based approach to the enactment of the curriculum, as often happens especially in the case of the core subjects (for example, English, mathematics and science), then there may be a requirement for new Years 10 to 12 textbook series to be available for students to purchase or otherwise acquire.
- In schools, libraries/resource centres play a critical role in the enactment of the curriculum and any significant structural change such as the linking Year 10 to Years 11 and 12, along with related change to the organisation and integration of the curriculum for the senior phase of learning, may require a major review of the curriculum materials and equipment currently available in such facilities.
- The physical resources of schools may also need enhancement and/or refurbishment, such as the need for additional classroom and extra-classroom learning and teaching spaces for both academic (disciplinary) and vocational studies.
- The human resources of schools, notably the teaching and ancillary services staff, may require training and/or re-training to enable them to provide appropriate teaching and support for Year 10 and/or Years 11 and 12 students as they undertake the distinctive study requirements of the senior phase of learning.

- It is reasonable to expect that if Year 10 is linked to Years 11 and 12 there may be completely new sets of expectations, new learning opportunities but also new needs and demands for support from guidance, counselling and other ancillary services staff.
- The demand for appropriate information and communications technologies has always been high in Years 11 and 12, and this may well increase dramatically if students in Year 10 are also to be linked effectively into programs requiring these technologies. Moreover, schools may well find that their data collections and analyses, record-keeping and reporting and certification functions all require greatly enhanced capabilities in information and communications technologies.
- One or all of the above may place additional burdens on students and their parents, and on schools, to allocate the financial resources necessary to give effect to these new structural arrangements.

Community

Parents/caregivers

Parents/caregivers have a major interest in the welfare and education of their student children, and where possible, are quite prepared to provide as much personal, material and financial support to them as may be necessary to ensure they enjoy the best educational opportunities possible.

Parents/caregivers generally have a diversity of views about the education their children are to receive, and these may be based on their own experiences with schooling as well as their hopes and aspirations for their children. They may see that by participating in a Year 10 that is linked to Years 11 and 12, this will provide strong incentives for their children to continue participating for the full three years of the senior phase of learning. Their support of the senior phase of learning may be influenced by:

- available finances
- other family resources
- logistics if schools are in different locations
- their own experience of schooling
- career prospects for their children.

Some parents/caregivers may well find it difficult for a host of all-too-familiar reasons to provide these kinds of support through to the end of Year 12. They may be concerned if they feel that by participating in a Year 10, that is linked to Years 11 and 12, this will provide strong incentives for their children to continue participating for the full three years of the senior phase of learning. The major concern may of course be financial and some assistance may need to be provided to support parents and families in these circumstances.

Parents/caregivers who acknowledge the benefits of a three-year senior phase of learning will have high expectations and may demand that as far as possible their aspirations and those of their children are realised as a result of the commitment they have made, and that the curriculum programs offered in the senior phase of learning are the most appropriate and the highest quality possible for going on to employment and/or further education. In particular, as shown in the consultations leading to *Queensland State Education 2010* (The State of Queensland, 2001) parents support:

> competency not age-based progression, more individualised timetabling and student choice, earlier vocational education, and tertiary bridging and seamless transition....[they suggested] modelling learning practices and processes in work environments, encouraging autonomy, innovation, adaptation to change, teamwork, networking, interpersonal skills and multi-skilling....[and] flexible time to complete senior, and the acquisition of skills for service and information-based industries.
> (*2010 Written submissions – Stage* two, The State of Queensland (Department of Education) n.d.)

See *Comments by parents/caregivers* below for an insight into the diversity of viewpoints in relation to the implications of Year 10 linking with Years 11 and 12.

Comments by parents/caregivers

Comment 1

Schools are more and more using a Year 10 bridge or link to further study or work under ETRF initiatives.

More and more students are opting for a 3 year senior program and there is no reason why Year 10 could not be one of the three.

Comment 2

My first comment would be in relation to P–10 campuses. There has been concern since ETRF was first mentioned that this eventuality would mean significant loss of students due to the pressure to integrate Years 10, 11 and 12. There has been some evidence of this with students persuaded to go to boarding school for Year 10. Flow-on effects to the P–10 school then reduce services to remaining students due to lower enrolment – it can mean the slow death of a school.

With the ever-changing nature of our society, it is unusual for anyone to have selected their future 'job' which may not have been invented yet. The opportunity to gain further general education rather than specialising at an early age would seem more appropriate.

Comment 3

At the moment year ten IS a TOTAL waste for a lot of students as nothing is really done as they are neither middle school nor senior. This needs to be fixed. Middle school really should never been split at 9/10. The compulsory versus the year split is an issue.

Comment 4

To have students commence their senior certificate in Year 10 and not offer them the full-time external learning or earning until Years 11 & 12 will take us back to days gone by where students who do not want to be there either won't be there or will become disruptive to others who do want to learn.

Should everything that is available to Years 11 & 12 now become available to Years 10, 11 & 12, it will have major financial ramifications on institutions such as TAFE and other RTOs for placements, facilities and resources. Schools will still need to maintain their teaching numbers so that they continue to offer a variety of subjects or risk higher disengagement from students who will refuse to partake in something they have no interest in whilst at the same time TAFEs & RTOs will be seeking additional funding to provide resources for the extra students or alternatively need to have larger classes.

...I believe that introducing a Years 10, 11 & 12 senior phase will create more havoc in a system that most of the public is still trying to come to grips with....[e]quality of education/opportunity will be harder to provide in rural and remote areas and as a consequence families may be forced to split up (children sent to private schools) or relocate just to give their child an equal chance. It is hard enough now to get this balance right without making it worse.

Anyway as I said before, pre-ETRF, this would have been great. A Years 8 and 9 offering as many 'core' subjects as possible for students to experience, and then in Years 10, 11 & 12 they get to choose 'pathway' subjects that they will ultimately develop their careers on.

Comment 5
[Our school] has implemented a Years 10–12 senior phase of learning for some time now. It took the step because it was a trial school in New Basics and because New Basics went to Year 9, it wanted to provide a positive and constructive year in Year 10 rather than a 'dead' year waiting for Years 11 & 12. Year 10 now provides an introductory phase into senior and allows students to bank credits for their QCE over a 3-year period. Students do not start on 'senior' subjects straight away. It allows students longer to complete their senior education.
Greg Donaldson (Queensland Council of Parents' and Citizens' Associations), personal communication, 1 August 2007.

In many ways, these are not unlike the expectations of employers in the industries and businesses found in the community.

Employers

Employers in small businesses and in larger business enterprises have a vested interest in the quantity and quality of the education and training undertaken by students in the years immediately prior to their search for initial employment. For the last 15 years at least, considerable research and action planning involving employers, employer organisations, education systems and schools have occurred with varying degrees of success. The Finn Report (AEC, 1991) and Mayer Report (AEC & MOVEET, 1992) of the early nineties[13] led the way in this and the long term impact of much of their work is still being felt in schools today. Finn identified a range of "key competencies" which quite early were adopted in Queensland as a broad framework for senior secondary curriculum.

In more recent times, the Business Council of Australia has undertaken or commissioned its own research to explore an assertion that "Australia risks creating an underclass of people who face long-term unemployment and chronic poverty unless [steps are taken to] curb the number of young people dropping out of school early…" (Business Council of Australia, 2003).

Again, in 2005, the Business Council of Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum released a report on other research that argued that "boosting the proportion of young people completing school or an apprenticeship to 90% by the end of the decade would increase workforce numbers by 65 000, boost economic productivity, and expand the economy by nearly $10 billion (in today's money)" (Business Council of Australia, 2005).

Beyond a focus on broadly-conceived competencies and increased retention rates, employers generally also require students leaving school to have the knowledge and understanding that can come from engagement with disciplinary and vocational studies, some grasp of workplaces, industries and businesses, and how they operate and contribute to the betterment

[13] Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) Committee 1992, *Putting general education to work: The key competencies report* ('The Mayer Report'), AEC and MOVEET, Melbourne.
Australian Education Council Review Committee 1991, *Young people's participation in post-compulsory education and training*, Report of the Australian Education Review Committee ('The Finn Report'), Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

of the community at large, some relevant work experience(s), and a measure of competence in the field of career education.

If a two-year senior secondary education has in the past been too narrowly focused on studies that lead to further education, then the prospect that a three-year senior phase of learning will permit an expansion of studies to include those that are vitally important to employers in industries and businesses, such as those mentioned above, will be of great interest to them and deserving of their support.

Community-at-large

Overall, the community-at-large will be vitally interested in the evolution of a three-year senior phase of learning. Whether individuals or groups in the community have an economic interest, a social interest, an educational interest, or some other interest, they will all be aware of the significant investment that will need to be made by the community. Perhaps more importantly, they will be seeking to ensure they receive an appropriate return on their investment.

As we have argued elsewhere in this paper, the contribution that this new development can make to a civil society, and indeed must make to *our* civil society, is possibly the greatest expectation that the community will have. It remains to be seen if this expectation will be realised in the years ahead.

PART C: SOME CONCLUDING WORDS – A GENERATIVE WAY FORWARD

Education, and particularly schooling, like any other social practice, is fraught with tensions. Those tensions are felt everyday in classrooms across Queensland in Catholic, Independent and State schools and systems. Some of the tensions include the need to support individual learning while managing the learning of a diverse group of young people. There is a tension between supporting students to do well on mandated standardised tests while also needing to tailor learning to what the teacher perceives as professionally 'the right thing to do'. A tension is also felt in terms of enacting a systemic, school-based, team-developed curriculum into meaningful learning experiences for the students for whom the teacher is responsible. The authors of this paper see that the notion of a minimally-defined curriculum offers a generative way forward in terms of informing the preferred curriculum configuration, that is, Year 10 as an integral component of the senior phase of learning.

One of the most powerful invitations to understanding gained during the inquiries made in relation to this paper during the time available, was the strongly-felt need among all of the school education systems in Queensland, Catholic, Independent *and* State, to retain as much flexibility as possible in the systemic context (where this applies) or in the individual school context, to enact curriculum that will respond best to their communities' needs and aspirations.

The conceptual positioning of Year 10 as an integral component in the senior phase of learning, with a focus on the broad purposes of schooling, including but beyond the economic imperative, offers the potential for enhanced learning for a new generation of young Queenslanders. The technical arguments, such as the need to scaffold students' learning of disciplinary-based knowledge and skills, along with knowledge and skills related to vocational

education have been laid out in this paper. Year 10 as a logical response to the current state policy contexts has also been considered.

A minimally-defined curriculum, which positions teachers as curriculum designers and implementers, has been flagged as a key underpinning concept on which to base such reform. Exactly what constitutes minimally-defined curriculum needs to be carefully considered and explored further than has been done to-date, especially in relation to the Queensland context. The well-founded commitment to high trust in teachers' professional judgements and curriculum decision-making also requires further consideration in terms of the provision of support. Such moves to realign curriculum power in this state are heavily contingent on significant resourcing to allow teachers the time and intellectual space to exercise the professionalism required.

Furthermore, cultures of collaborative and rigorous inquiry are needed in order for school education systems, schools and classroom teachers to explore what is needed for rich learning by their students. Thus, a major tension to be managed is that of the enactment of a prescribed curriculum to one that serves the interests of the range of students in Queensland's varied contexts. Reid (2004) evokes an understanding of the culture of inquiry that might offer generative ways forward when he says:

> If being an educator in the 21st century centrally involves the capacity to inquire into professional practice, then the notion of inquiry is not a project or the latest fad. It is a way of professional being. The question that needs to be asked is not whether educators should be inquirers into professional practice, but how they can improve the learning and wellbeing of children and students by continuing to build their inquiry capacities throughout their professional lives (p. 3).

Finally, whatever 'configuration' is taken up we need to be mindful that 'configurations' position some students well for schooling and broader success, while other configurations may not. The last word on the conceptual positioning of Year 10 could be given to Connell (2002):

> We need to focus education thought, not on competition, selection and therefore exclusion, but on how the educational enterprise can be made fully inclusive. The problem is how the large commitment of social and economic resources that an education system represents can be made to serve equally well all of the diverse Australian population. (p. 325–326)

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