

Secondary education

The grammar schools era 1860–1912

In 1860 Queensland's first Parliament passed the *Grammar Schools Act* which allowed for the establishment of a grammar school in any town where at least £1000 could be raised locally. The Act provided for a Government subsidy of twice this local contribution. When established, each school could be run by its own seven-member board, including a Government representative. The first grammar school established under the 1860 Act was the Ipswich Grammar School, opened in 1863. In the years 1863–1892, 10 grammar schools were opened, the last being the Rockhampton Girls Grammar School.

Queensland grammar schools followed the traditional English model, with curricula dominated by classical subjects like Latin and Greek. Because fees were charged, the children of gentlemen, the wealthy of the colony, were the only ones likely to avail themselves of grammar schools. These schools catered for an elite, in accord with the nineteenth century view that popular education beyond the elementary level was not desirable.

Provision for the award of scholarships to grammar schools was made in the 1860 *Grammar Schools Act*. The first awards were made in 1864 for the 1865 school year at Ipswich Grammar School (the only one then existing). Between 1865 and 1873 only about twelve such scholarships were awarded. Selection was on the basis of a personal examination by a senior officer (in 1864 the Colonial Secretary acted as the first examiner). The first formal Scholarship examination was held in July 1883. Until 1914 a fixed number of scholarships was awarded though the number varied over the years depending on the amount of money allocated. From 1914 this system was changed and all students obtaining 50 per cent or more in the examination, were awarded a scholarship to any approved secondary school (which by then included State high schools).

In 1891 a Royal Commission on Education advised that a 'system of secondary schools more directly controlled as to foundation and management by the State would be less expensive and quite as effective in the education of the youth of the colony'. Grammar schools would continue, but would be

supplemented by a State secondary system similar to the 'superior' school system in NSW, in which secondary classes were attached to primary schools.

Initially, the Department of Public Instruction opposed this extension of secondary education. The Under Secretary and General Inspector were both conservative men who believed that the Department had enough to do to implement compulsory, free and secular primary education. Furthermore, they felt that Queensland's economy was not ready for such an expansion of secondary education: 'The State can only absorb a certain quantity of highly educated labour and if it spends the years of its young people in the pursuit of higher education, there will be a loss as these young people find themselves forced to fall into the ordinary avocations of life'. Perhaps there were social reasons too for this fear of 'over education'.

Despite these doubts, the *Education Act of 1875* was amended in 1897 to allow additional subjects to be taught. Literature, science, algebra and geometry were added to the syllabus of sixth class, the highest in the primary school. Though this change affected a small minority of schools, it can be argued that State secondary education had thus come to Queensland.

Another area of development of secondary education was within the technical colleges. During the 1880s and the 1890s some of them provided night classes in grammar school subjects. By 1898 the Brisbane Technical College was providing a full secondary curriculum during the day, and in 1905 the South Brisbane Technical College opened a high school which prepared day students for the Sydney public examinations. In 1910 the Department of Public Instruction established separate day schools within the two Technical Colleges directly under their administration—Central Technical College, Brisbane, and Warwick Technical College. Though strongly oriented towards technical education, and consequently not regarded as the first State high schools, these schools did prepare students for the Junior and Senior examinations of the University of Queensland.

Development of state secondary schools 1912–1957

The huge task of bringing secondary education to all Queensland children was finally tackled in 1912. The State undertook to establish a free high school in

places with a likely attendance of 25 qualified students, provided that there was no other provision for State-aided secondary education (such as grammar schools) in these places. High schools were opened in six centres—Charters Towers, Gympie, Mt Morgan, Warwick, Bundaberg and Mackay—in 1912, while secondary departments were attached to the primary schools at Herberton, Gatton and Childers. General, commercial and domestic science courses were offered.



Photograph: Gympie State High School (1924).

These facilities were extended gradually to other parts of the State over the next twelve years. Between 1913 and 1918, new secondary departments were opened at Dalby, Kingaroy, Pittsworth, Southport, Wynnum Central and Emerald. Separate high schools were opened at Roma and Brisbane (1920) and Cairns and Townsville (1924). The Secondary Departments connected with the Brisbane Central Boys' and the Brisbane Central Girls' Schools were amalgamated from the 1st January, 1920 and designated 'The Brisbane Junior High School'. In 1921 this school was merged with high school classes at the Central Technical College to form the Brisbane State High School. In 1924 it moved to its present site adjacent to Musgrave Park, South Brisbane.

By 1924 there were five high school sections attached to technical colleges (Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Bowen, Ipswich and Central), making a total of 22 State secondary schools in Queensland. The next year, 1925, the technical, commercial and domestic science secondary sections of the Central Technical College were each given high school status and subsequently became separate high schools.

From 1925 until the later 1930s there was little expansions in secondary education, one significant reason being the depressed economic conditions of much of this period. Though several new secondary departments were provided, Ayr state High School, opened in 1937, was the only new high school. In 1936, the Maryborough Grammar Schools for Girls and Boys were taken over by the Department.



Photograph: Opened in prosperous times in 1883, the Maryborough Grammar School was taken over by the Department of Education in 1936 to become the Maryborough State High and Intermediate School for Boys.

An important development after 1928 was the creation of intermediate schools as links between primary and high schools. These schools, created in the wake of the 1927 Hadow Report in England, drew children aged 12 years from a ring of contributing primary schools. They offered a two-year course, with appropriate attention to science, manual training, domestic science, and the predominant economic interests of the local area. In retrospect, the intermediate school concept did not work very well, mainly because of the expense and organisational problems involved in providing separate schools for a two-year course. In 1936 there were only two separate intermediate schools in Queensland, though intermediate classes were attached to a number of high schools.

The first suburban, multilateral (offering a variety of courses) State high schools in Brisbane were opened at Wynnum in 1942 and Cavendish Road in 1952. Country high schools have always been multilateral, mainly because the size of their localities would not permit the provision of separate schools similar to the Commercial, Domestic Science and industrial High Schools in Brisbane.

Expansion of state secondary education 1957–1982

In August 1957 there were 37 State high schools, and 34 secondary departments attached to primary schools in Queensland, with a total enrolment of 15 444 (including correspondence students). After 1957, the Department further extended secondary education by liberalising the awarding of scholarships, opening many new secondary schools and instituting transport services for isolated students. By 1980 the number of State secondary schools in Queensland had almost tripled to 135 high schools and 68 secondary departments, while enrolments had increased to 105 427. In the same period, Queensland's population increased from 1 392 384 to an estimated 2 213 000.

Although this expansion was largely enabled by the more favourable economic conditions in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, the forces which helped to bring it about and shape its course were diverse and complex. Of the many demographic, industrial and economic movements, changes in community attitudes, and new perceptions of societal needs which occurred in the period 1930–57, the following had a particularly significantly influence on the demand for secondary education:

- The moderate increases in the State birth rate in the 1939–41 and the more rapid increases in 1942–47. These increases were reflected in the numbers completing primary schooling in the period 1952–60. Moreover, in the period 1949–59, the retention rates in the final year of primary schooling increased from 59 to 85 per cent.
- The relative affluence of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s throughout the western world. These were also periods of rapid scientific and technological advancement, which led to a demand for increased numbers of workers with special skills in the sciences and technology.
- An acceleration in the movement of the workforce from occupations in primary and secondary industries to occupations in service industries and the professions. As a result, a much larger proportion of the workforce was employed in clerical, administrative and professional positions.

By 1960 almost 80 per cent of 14-year-olds were remaining at school of their own volition, so that it could be said that the Watkin Committee's recommendation in 1961 that the leaving age be raised to 15 sought to recognise a *fait accompli*. The Watkin Committee (chaired by H. G. Watkin,

Director-General of Education) also recommended that this extension in the years of compulsory schooling should be coupled with a reduction in the age of transfer from primary to secondary school and the provision of new secondary curricula. These recommendations were largely implemented under the *Education Act of 1964*. Under this Act, secondary school curricula and examinations became the responsibility of two new administrative bodies, the Board of Junior Secondary School Studies and the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. During the second half of the 1960s these Boards kept the Junior and Senior syllabuses and examinations under constant review, in an effort to cater for the wider range of abilities and future vocations of the students then entering the secondary school. In some cases, as in certain of the Senior science subjects, such as physics, biology and chemistry, completely new courses were introduced.

In an attempt to provide for the large proportion of secondary students who did not intend to continue on to higher studies, a range of modified Junior courses was introduced in 1965. These included courses in English Expression, general mathematics, general science, social studies and homecrafts. The Radford Committee, appointed in 1969 to review the system of public examinations for Queensland secondary school students and to make recommendations for the assessment of students' achievement, suggested in its 1970 report that public examinations be replaced by a system of internal school assessment.

The Radford Committee's recommendations were enacted in the *Education Act Amendment Act (No.2) of 1970*. Consequently, the Junior and Senior examinations, first held in 1910, were held for the last time in 1970 and 1972 respectively. The Scholarship examination, first held in 1873, was held for the last time in 1962, and in 1963 Grade 8 became a part of secondary schooling. These changes meant that no Queensland school student in 1973 was required to sit for a public examination. The century long reign of the public examination was over. Freed from the constraints of public examinations, syllabuses could now be significantly revised and teachers given much more freedom in interpreting and teaching them.

Overall responsibility for implementing the Radford proposals was given to a Board of Secondary School Studies established in 1971. As it was some time before the new broad framework syllabuses could be prepared by the Board, most schools in the early 1970s continued to rely on the old, more prescriptive

syllabuses. Nevertheless, between 1971 and 1978, 70 new syllabuses were written, trialled, piloted, brought into full operation and in some cases revised. The new English syllabus, for example, had been written and trialled by 1973, and was progressively introduced to Years 8–12 between 1974 and 1979. In addition to syllabuses devised by the Board, some schools have constructed their own syllabuses for what then became designated as 'school subjects'. From 1981 further changes in assessment procedures will be progressively implemented on the recommendation of the Scott Committee, which was established by the Board of Secondary School Studies in 1976. The Scott Committee recommended that a competency-based system of assessing and reporting students' achievements be implemented.

One of the effects of the introduction of internal assessment and of broad framework syllabuses was a marked increase in the workload of teachers, with respect to curriculum development and assessment, as well as changes in the nature of the work that teachers were asked to perform. The Radford Committee anticipated these problems, as the following extract from its report indicates:

With added responsibilities for the delineation of courses and for assessment, teachers will have responsibilities broader and deeper than they have been expected to shoulder in the past in assessment of achievements and in curriculum development.

To meet these and other long-standing needs, the Department made provision (or extended existing provisions) for a large number of support services, some of which were school-based. Some of these provided professional, specialist support, while others provided non-professional support designed to free teachers from clerical and similar duties to allow them to concentrate on the professional aspects of their work with students. As described in the earlier section on primary education, these initiatives included the appointment of teacher–librarians, resource and remedial teachers, and teacher aides, as well as the extension of guidance and resource services and in-service education.

As with primary education, these developments have been accompanied by changes in secondary school architecture. In 1972 a detailed evaluation of secondary school building designs was commenced, and in 1973 Cabinet approval was granted for the planning of a new concept designed around a faculty-based campus. A new high school built to this design was opened at Craigslea in 1975, the centenary of the Department's establishment.