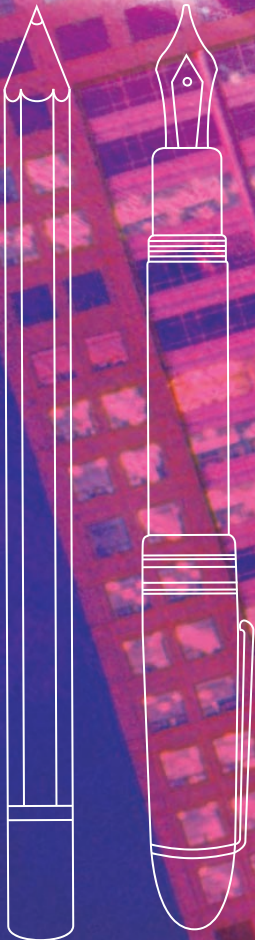


Boardroom to Classroom: the role of the corporate and philanthropic sectors in school education

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*Every
child,
every
opportunity*



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Author

Rosalyn Black, Foundation for Young Australians

Authorised by the Department of Education
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2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.

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For more information contact:

Sandra Mahar
Research Manager
Email: research@edumail.vic.gov.au

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Executive summary

This report delivers the findings of a research project carried out from 2008 to 2009. The aim of the research was to explore the trends in corporate and philanthropic involvement in school education in Victoria, Australia and internationally that are supporting improved outcomes for students. This included a search of the local and international literature and the collection of qualitative data through forums with the corporate and philanthropic sectors, school leaders, policy-makers and leading agencies as well as interviews with representatives of leading corporate and philanthropic sector organisations.

The research was guided by questions including:

1. What are the trends in corporate and philanthropic involvement in government school education, in Victoria, Australia and internationally, that support improved outcomes for students, including those students who are underperforming in literacy and numeracy, at risk of leaving school early, or who are less likely to enter university or to succeed in further or vocational education?
2. What is the scope of existing practice in Victoria?
3. What are some good examples of next practice at the system, regional and school level in Victoria, Australia and internationally?

The first finding of the research is that the involvement of the corporate and philanthropic sectors has proven and potential benefits for the educational outcomes of students in Victorian government schools, particularly students whose outcomes are lower than desired, as well as for the capacity of schools to improve those outcomes. These benefits include additional capital resources such as information and communication technologies; new or improved learning spaces; and funding for needed or new staff and programs to improve student learning outcomes. They also encompass additional human and knowledge resources through mentoring and skill development programs for school leaders, and initiatives to support teacher learning.

The second finding of the research is that the willingness and capacity of these sectors to contribute to the work of government schools has never been greater. This is due to the growth and refinement of philanthropic and corporate social responsibility practice; an increasing recognition by both sectors of the importance of school education in meeting their social and economic goals; and growth in the number of quality intermediaries that link schools to companies and foundations. While no formal measurement has been made of the current involvement of either sector in Victorian government schools, the research suggests a climate in which such involvement is growing.

The examples of Victorian practice provided by this report fit within the spectrum of practice that currently operates elsewhere in Australia and internationally. On the one hand, this practice is extremely diverse in its purposes and forms. On the other, it is shaped and characterised by a number of common themes and issues that manifest as tensions between sometimes opposing forces. These include:

1. Innovation and sustainability. While corporate and philanthropic involvement in government schools can spearhead innovation, sustainability of school education initiatives funded by foundations or seeded by companies remains an issue.

2. School change and system change. There is a growing trend for companies and foundations to broaden their involvement beyond individual schools to strategies for widespread system reform or policy change. While this represents an important opportunity for government, there are unanswered questions about the effectiveness of such involvement and the desirability of opening education policy to external influence
3. Diversity and evaluation. Corporate and philanthropic involvement in government schools takes different forms and serves different purposes. While this can maximise its responsiveness to particular school and student needs, it also contributes to great variability in the quality of delivery as well as difficulty in evaluation or measurement
4. The role of intermediaries. Credible partnership brokers and non-profit organisations can help schools make the most effective use of the opportunities represented by corporate or philanthropic involvement. They can mediate cultural barriers and ensure consistent quality of delivery and direct opportunities to the areas of greatest need.

1. The context

There is growing recognition that partnerships are adaptive and can cut across traditional boundaries and divisions. In a fast changing and complex society, this flexibility and adaptability can bring together additional resources and capabilities to test new approaches to social problems (Department for Victorian Communities 2007).

New social partnerships

The high degree of philanthropic and corporate involvement in school education in countries such as the United States and United Kingdom is a function of a number of factors including a conducive taxation and legislative environment, a long-standing culture of community engagement in public education and a policy climate that invites this engagement. The United Kingdom has for some time championed systematic collaboration with the private sector as a lever for school innovation and system improvement (Hargreaves 2003), although few foundations in the UK directly attempt to influence policy (Carrington 2003). In the United States, both the corporate and philanthropic sectors have a long-standing role in influencing both the practice and policy of school education, sometimes driven by high profile initiatives such as the *No Child Left Behind Act 2001*, which elevate public concern about the competitiveness of the country's public school system and welcome community support to boost its standards (Hills & Hirschhorn 2007).

By comparison, philanthropic and corporate involvement in public education in Australia is embryonic, although it is growing rapidly. This growth reflects a wider international trend towards cross-sectoral partnerships that combine resources in new ways to address intractable social issues (Loza & Birch 2005; Parker & Gallagher 2007; Robinson & Keating 2005). This trend is reflected in the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda. School education and partnership are both expected to be central elements of this agenda, providing a new potential framework for corporate and philanthropic involvement and contribution to the work of schools.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Curriculum Corporation 2008) commits all Australian governments to working with all school sectors and the broader community to achieve educational goals for young Australians. The Declaration includes a commitment to promoting a range of partnerships as a way of connecting young people with their communities and in bringing mutual benefits to stakeholders.

The trend is also reflected in a number of key Victorian Government initiatives. One of these is *A Fairer Victoria*, a policy action plan to address disadvantage – including educational inequity – through collaboration with non-government and local community agencies (Department of Planning and Community Development 2008). Another is the Vulnerable Youth Framework, which is being developed to direct and strengthen action across state and local government and communities, including schools, to better respond to the needs of vulnerable young people. It is also reflected in the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2008) and its focus on partnerships, both between schools, parents and communities and between government and non-government schools. As an earlier report for the Victorian Government notes: 'There is growing recognition that partnerships are adaptive and can cut across traditional boundaries and divisions. In a fast changing and complex society, this flexibility and adaptability can bring together additional

resources and capabilities to test new approaches to social problems' (Department for Victorian Communities 2007).

One of the effects of this trend is that individuals and agencies are more willing to take up the social role of government where they feel it is lacking, especially at the local community level and where social inclusion is an issue. The Australia 2020 Summit in early 2008 was one example of this desire to strengthen civil society by encouraging Australians to solve social problems outside the structures of government. In turn, this means that what was previously the domain of governments has increasingly become that of other sectors (Cardini 2006; Parker & Gallagher 2007; Robinson & Keating 2005). While international expenditure on public education remains overwhelmingly public (OECD 2007), the traditional roles of government, business and philanthropy are slowly changing, with a greater degree of what has been called 'sectoral blurring' (Bernholz 2000) and shifting divisions of responsibility for key social areas including school education. There is now a recognised 'three-way relationship of private wealth, public policy, and non-profit action' (Bernholz 2000). This is not always seen as a positive development: Plane (2006) points to the level of critique in Australia regarding 'the failure of public private partnerships to fill the vacant space in governance in the areas of education, health, housing and social welfare'.

Regardless of how it is viewed, this three-way relationship is driving changes in the philanthropic sector. Other factors include the expansion of the sector due to new wealth, new forms of changemaking such as social entrepreneurship, a growing public awareness of philanthropy and what has been called 'a democratization of philanthropy' (Bernholz 2000), with new structures and mechanisms enabling smaller donors to enter the philanthropic space. Some of the strands of theory and practice informing the sector's work, such as venture philanthropy, are drawn from models traditionally used by business, further blurring the line between the sectors (Bernholz 2000).

Similar forces are changing the way that companies operate in relation to society, including its schools. It is firmly established that a good corporate social responsibility profile has multiple benefits for companies including increased effectiveness and productivity, a more positive workplace culture, a greater ability to engage and retain quality employees, an enhanced skills base, better relationships with key stakeholders and an improved bottom line (Cronin 2001; Suggett Goodsir & Pryor 2000). As a result, corporate social responsibility is now accorded the same importance as other core business practice (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs 2007) and large businesses now dominate the Australian giving landscape (Department of Family and Community Services 2005). In 2001–02, companies represented by the Business Council of Australia committed a minimum of \$195 million to social and community programs. Over the same period, company employees contributed 219,100 staff hours to volunteer and community groups (Business Council of Australia 2004).

New school partnerships

A corresponding trend is seeing schools enter into relationships with an increasing number and range of external agencies including corporate and philanthropic organisations. In many instances, these relationships are prompted by the need to improve outcomes for

Schools in highly disadvantaged contexts are likely to be fragile at times and therefore a strong relationship with local people and organisations can be invaluable when the going gets tough ... Drawing more people into the community of learning is central to economic prosperity and can possibly tackle social exclusion (Michalak & Jones 2008).

students in contexts where disadvantage is a barrier to educational engagement, attainment and achievement: 'Schools in highly disadvantaged contexts are likely to be fragile at times and therefore a strong relationship with local people and organisations can be invaluable when the going gets tough ... Drawing more people into the community of learning is central to economic prosperity and can possibly tackle social exclusion' (Michalak & Jones 2008).

The involvement of external agencies is also motivated by some schools' desire to be central rather than separate from their local community (Harris & Chapman 2002) and by their recognition of the interrelationship between young people's educational success and the capacity of the community to support it (Michalak & Jones 2008). This involvement is associated with numerous direct benefits for schools including additional physical, human and knowledge resources. Qualitative data obtained by this project through consultation with school leaders identify specific areas in which companies and foundations could make a needed difference, including:

- the provision of information and communication technologies
- skill development and training for school leaders including business management and planning
- funded time for teachers to observe good practice in high-performing schools
- new or redesigned learning spaces
- salaries for specialist staff or for the creation of new, supplementary roles within the school
- programs designed to improve student learning outcomes.

This report recognises that not all corporate or philanthropic involvement in schooling takes the form – or is intended to take the form – of partnership. At the same time, this involvement loosely falls into the category of cross-sectoral partnership, that is, collaboration between different sectors for a common purpose. For this reason, the report considers but does not focus exclusively on the partnership literature.

Education is the focal point for IBM's community involvement. Reinventing Education is a global program through which IBM develops partnerships with government to support school improvement throughout the world. Its central plank is the contribution of IBM's expertise and technology to help teachers investigate and share ways in which they can integrate information and communication technologies into their daily teaching practice.

Grants are offered to partners in education who will drive change and school reform through the innovative use of technology in teaching and learning. The grants also seek to transfer knowledge and replicate or customise successful technological solutions. A United States education summit hosted by IBM, the President and business leaders, resulted in a national agreement to provide final year students with an electronic portfolio to facilitate their application for employment.

IBM Learning Village software applications facilitate online communication, collaboration and curriculum planning to assist the educational community to share and build on the learning experience of principals, teachers and students. This occurs not only at the local level, but across the global Reinventing Education network. Using these tools, students, teachers and parents have been able to create rich learning communities where all stakeholders are part of the educational enterprise. Other initiatives include employees volunteering their time to act as mentors to young people in enterprise development activities.

Reinventing Education is now operating in Victoria. One of its initiatives to date is a partnership between IBM and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that supports the professional development of teachers and involves access to computer hardware, software and technology support services.

2. Philanthropic involvement in school education

Philanthropy in Australia

While there is little precise data about the size and nature of the Australian philanthropic sector (Philanthropy Australia 2003), there are an estimated 5,000 philanthropic trusts and foundations in Australia that give up to an estimated \$1 billion per annum for a range of social purposes including school education. Structurally, Australian trusts and foundations (both commonly referred to as foundations) fall into five broad categories:

- Private: endowed by private individuals or families
- Business sponsored: similar to the private foundations but established by business
- Operating foundations: run their own programs but may also make grants to others
- Community foundations: receive funds and endowments from a variety of sources
- Government sponsored or initiated foundations (Philanthropy Australia 2001).

Australian philanthropy is on the rise, with considerable growth during the last decade in the overall number of foundations as well as in the community foundation movement, business philanthropy and the generational continuity of philanthropy within families. A growing number of Australian companies are creating philanthropic foundations, legal entities that operate independently of the parent company. As Liffman (2007) notes, 'some commitment to supporting community ventures (is) almost "de rigeur" in the business sector'. For this reason, this report will discuss corporate philanthropy for schools in the context of philanthropic rather than corporate involvement.

There are numerous interpretations of the social role of philanthropy. According to sectoral peak body, Philanthropy Australia (2001), philanthropy can redistribute resources from the more to the less affluent, promote innovation and contribute to policy and practice change. The role of Australian foundations spans this spectrum. Some include activities that reflect earlier definitions of philanthropy, acting for the public good through welfare or charity, often in the form of scholarships or additional provisions for groups or individuals in need. Some are in fact limited by their legal status to services such as these that provide direct and immediate relief to alleviate poverty and suffering.

Others encompass some of the more recent philanthropic forms such as creative, collaborative, venture or social change philanthropy or reflect the growing shift to youth philanthropy (Bernholz 2000). This shift can be seen in the number of young people being groomed for philanthropic roles as intergenerational wealth and family foundations increase. It also expresses itself in youth philanthropy initiatives like those of the Kellogg Foundation and The Foundation for Young Australians, which give young people a central changemaking role in areas including school education.

The division between corporate and philanthropic activity has already been blurred by the emergence of corporate philanthropy and the growth of financial services firms such as Goldman Sachs JBWere that manage the philanthropic activity of business (Bernholz 2000). The landscape is likely to be further changed by the emergence of social entrepreneurs, independent change agents who generate new approaches to social needs. The existence of organisations like Social Ventures Australia is likely to see a growth in this new class of changemakers, who frequently work with both philanthropy and the private sector to scale up innovative responses to entrenched problems. The scope of activity of Social Ventures Australia includes programs that aim to improve school retention and academic achievement for young people at risk of leaving school early or who have already disengaged from education.

The majority of Australian foundations are located in Victoria (Philanthropy Australia 2003). The fact that many foundations restrict their grantmaking to the state or territory in which they are located suggests that Victoria is the focus of activity for the majority of Australian foundations. Not all philanthropic activity occurs in the context of formal foundations. In 2004, according to the Philanthropy Australia website, over 13 million Australians or 87 per cent of the adult population gave a total of \$5.7 billion in donations. This report, however, is concerned with the impact of philanthropy on school education. Given that the great majority of philanthropic giving for school education takes place through the medium of foundations, these will be the central focus of the report.

The Fund for Public Schools is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving New York City's public schools by attracting private investment and encouraging greater community involvement in the education of the city's children. Its activities include working to secure critical funding for system-wide education reform initiatives, facilitating strategic public-private partnerships, managing a targeted set of programs to support city schools and building public awareness of the work of schools.

Together with the New York City Department of Education, the Fund conducts an alumni program that encourages former attendees and graduates of public schools to volunteer, donate money or in kind gifts, raise funds or advocate for their school. It also engages the wider public in similar activities. The Fund encourages corporate involvement through sponsorship for its key programs and offers multiple opportunities for foundations to partner with it.

The Fund is the primary vehicle for advancing the public-private partnerships established by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel I. Klein in 2002 as a critical means of supporting public education reform. It has secured unprecedented investment from foundations, corporations and individuals, raising more than \$230 million to date.

The Fund's initiatives include Keep It Going NYC, a public awareness campaign designed to encourage all New Yorkers to get involved in schools. The campaign uses television, radio, print media, outdoor advertising and the internet to spread its message. It also conducts Shop for Class, an annual two-week period during which participating retailers across the city pledge a portion of their revenues to The Fund to support public school libraries, and The New York City Mentoring Program, which partners organisations with high schools to provide more than 40 mentoring programs to public school students in need of positive role models (Fund for Public Schools 2007).

Philanthropy and school education

Education – including school education – is a priority focus for Australian philanthropy. Almost half of the respondents to a survey of Australian philanthropic activity grant funds for education purposes (Philanthropy Australia 2003). Most philanthropic giving for school education is directed towards the provision of services to students or schools to overcome the impact of disadvantage. This includes:

- Initiatives to alleviate poverty e.g. breakfast programs and scholarships
- Initiatives to enrich the infrastructure of schools in disadvantaged areas e.g. improvements to school buildings and the provision of information technology or other equipment
- Initiatives to improve educational outcomes, in particular for Indigenous students e.g. literacy, numeracy and school retention programs.

Funding and service provision is usually made available to schools through the medium of a non-profit organisation. This is in part because most Australian foundations can only fund organisations with a charitable purpose, usually reflected in their Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) and Income Tax Exemption (ITEC) status (Falkiner-Rose 2007). This charitable status is unavailable to Australian government schools. It is also in part because non-profit organisations with knowledge and credibility in particular communities are an ideal mechanism for targeting philanthropic intervention where it most needed and in the way that is most likely to succeed (Commonwealth of Australia 2000).

The disparity in charitable status between independent and government schools in Australia is an ongoing source of contention. Under Australian law, independent schools are deemed to be charitable organisations because they are seen as non-profit bodies that provide a public benefit and are accepted as having a dominant purpose – the advancement of education (National Council of Independent Schools' Associations 2000). Government schools are not entitled to endorsement as charitable organisations. They can apply to the Australian Taxation Office to set up DGR Funds which provide income tax deductions only for donations made to school building, library or gift funds.

Qualitative data gathered through discussion with the philanthropic sector identify this taxation status as the biggest single barrier to Australian philanthropic involvement in the work of government schools. The view is that most rapidly growing structure for philanthropic activity in Australia is the Prescribed Private Fund, a structure used by families, individuals or companies to establish grant-making foundations. According to the data, this significant area of private funding is precluded from supporting government schools because of their lack of charitable status.

The qualitative data also indicate that this is a common source of concern amongst members of Philanthropy Australia, who recognise the centrality of public education in meeting many of their goals but cannot direct their grant-making towards it. A former trustee of one high profile independent school has recently suggested that the charitable status of independent schools be made dependent on their offering a sufficiently generous bursary scheme or fee discounts for students in disadvantaged circumstances.

A smaller number of philanthropic agencies direct their efforts to supporting education research, shaping public opinion and helping to drive change at the policy level, often through demonstration projects. While this kind of activity remains minimal in Australia compared to the United States, shifts in the theory and nature of philanthropic practice may see it burgeon here as well. These shifts include a greater understanding of the importance of prevention and early intervention approaches and the need for research to inform them (Commonwealth of Australia 2000).

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

Internationally, a number of impediments lie in the way of increased philanthropy for Indigenous communities. These include a fundamental cultural gap between the way in which foundations operate and the way in which Indigenous communities function and obtain information. In the United States, for example, Indigenous communities are generally neglected by foundations, forming less than a twentieth of all foundation funding and falling largely under the domain of community-based organisations. In Australia, too, Indigenous groups are reportedly unaware of grant opportunities and ill-equipped at seeking them out while foundations do not always understand how their contribution should complement traditional cultures (Scaife 2006).

Despite these barriers, there is a view that: 'Partnerships between philanthropic foundations, development-oriented NGOs and Indigenous organisations represent an exciting and important approach that addresses some of the seemingly intractable problems of Indigenous communities' (Schwab & Sutherland 2002).

These problems include the challenge of improving educational outcomes for young Indigenous Australians. Qualitative data obtained through consultation with the philanthropic sector show that Indigenous education outcomes are an important focus for Australian philanthropy. This is reinforced by a recent report by Doyle and Hill (2008) which concludes that philanthropy can play a central role in improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, but only if this is done through multi-faceted interventions that engage with students' lives outside as well as at school. The report proposes three main areas through which philanthropic investment in the education of Indigenous students can have the greatest impact:

- services that build on or complement the core school and program funding provided by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments
- services that help students and their families to access the education facilities and programs provided by government and non-government schools and not-for-profit organisations that are already supported by government funding
- research, policy development and advocacy aimed at improving Indigenous schooling and learning support services (Doyle & Hill 2008).

Partnerships between philanthropic foundations, development-oriented NGOs and Indigenous organisations represent an exciting and important approach that addresses some of the seemingly intractable problems of Indigenous communities (Schwab & Sutherland 2002).

The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation works to support young Indigenous people to achieve in academic and sporting fields and to enhance their skills, potential and positive aspirations. The Partnership for Success Program is its central initiative.

Established in 1997, Partnership for Success enables students to compete effectively for employment, further or higher education when they leave school. It targets Indigenous students who show academic promise and have the capacity, interest and potential to complete their secondary education. Most participating students attend school regularly and are likely to have experienced a moderate level of disadvantage.

While each Partnership for Success project is tailored to meet its community's particular needs, each project provides intensive and targeted support through tutorial and vocational education assistance, access to tertiary motivational programs and a study skill program from Year 8 to Year 12.

At each site, the Program sets up an enrichment centre, which is available to students four afternoons a week and is used for visiting speakers and family events. The project provides an after-school environment where students receive tutoring and support as well as assistance with personal and family issues and career pathway planning. All students have Individual Learning Plans which are prepared in partnership with their teachers. Personal and cultural development programs are offered in non-school time.

There are approximately 300 current participants across 10 sites in regional areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia (Doyle & Hill 2008).

3. Corporate involvement in school education

The school-corporate landscape in Australia

Corporate involvement in schools – including government schools – is increasingly supported by Australian public policy. The Victorian Government endorses partnerships between schools and other agencies including business to improve educational opportunities for young Victorians (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2008). This endorsement is replicated across other state and territory governments, with some identifying partnership between schools and business as a policy objective (Department of Education and Training and the Arts 2007; National Industry Skills Committee 2008). For example, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, in conjunction with the Western Australian Primary Principals Association and the Western Australian Government, has launched a Business/School Partnership Program designed to broaden student learning experiences.

At the national level, initiatives to drive new business involvement in schools include the 2007 creation of the Schools-Business Alliance by the Australian Government and the strong policy nexus between schooling and work that is reflected in the Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda and the papers that inform it (e.g. Dawkins 2007). Some state and territory governments including Victoria are also moving into public private partnerships for school education, usually in a bid to improve buildings and facilities in government schools.

Internationally, corporate involvement in schools operates at different levels of engagement, ranging from cooperation, where the relationship is informal, through to collaboration, which involves the whole school and the whole company in a long-term partnership guided by the commitment of senior leadership in both entities and entailing significant resources (Shinners 2001). It also ranges from reasonably simple to complex educational purposes including:

- volunteers from the business community going into the classroom to assist student learning
- companies bringing teachers into the workplace to upgrade their skills
- companies working with school leaders to better manage schools using business management principles
- schools and companies working toward changes in the education system
- schools and companies working with public officials at the local, state, and national level to bring about policy change (Hood & Rubin 2004).

In Australia, corporate involvement in school education tends to include:

- advocacy for new education policy. This emerging role is discussed in greater detail later in this report
- alliances between schools and companies instigated by government initiatives promulgating collaboration with industry. These include

regulated industry partnerships and geographic clusters of businesses and schools

- public-private partnerships, which are generally larger in scope and are initiated or managed by government authorities as part of regional or systemic policy initiatives
- individual school-company partnerships.

In the past, this last category has tended to be dominated by ad hoc arrangements occurring in the absence of government policy (National Industry Skills Committee 2008). More recently, intermediary organisations are driving their creation in ways that are better linked to government frameworks and policy priorities (Jane & Griffiths 2008). The suggestion from the literature is that state governments, including Victoria, could do more to formalise this involvement by actively facilitating the development of partnerships by schools (Modoo et al. 2008).

Employee volunteering programs and wider partnerships with the non-profit or community sector are gaining in momentum in Australia and are now seen by some corporations as central to their corporate vision (Hext 2006).

Corporate social responsibility

Companies' motivations in interacting with schools are diverse and often overlapping. Where some companies involve themselves in schools to conduct market research, advertise or expand their customer base, many are motivated by a desire to demonstrate good corporate social responsibility, which has been described as 'the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, as well as the local community and society at large' (Suggett & Goodsir 2002). One of the strongest trends in Australian corporate social responsibility practice is a focus on the local community (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs & Business Council of Australia 2000). This follows an international trend for companies to target their support in geographical areas of greatest need (Business in the Community 2006), which sometimes overlap with the areas in which they do business. Companies located in rural or remote areas are particularly likely to focus their efforts on local community initiatives including schools (Cronin & Zappala 2002).

Another rapidly growing trend in Australian corporate social responsibility practice is corporate volunteering (Volunteering Australia, 2006). Corporate employees, especially younger employees, now expect that their company will provide opportunities and support for volunteering in the community. More than 60 per cent of Australian companies provide up to three paid days per year for staff volunteer activity and nearly a third of companies have a dedicated member of staff responsible for coordinating and supporting this activity (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs 2007). As one study notes: 'Employee volunteering programs and wider partnerships with the non-profit or community sector are gaining in momentum in Australia and are now seen by some corporations as central to their corporate vision' (Hext 2006).

Schools – particularly government schools – provide a natural vehicle for all of these priorities. They offer multiple opportunities for quality employee volunteering. They are located in the local community and can serve as a hub for activity in that community. As one study has observed, 'working with schools provides a particular congruence for (corporate social responsibility) activities because schools are so central to communities' (National Industry Skills Committee 2008).

They also offer a vehicle for targeted investment in areas of greatest need.

Such an approach is supported by the research literature, which suggests that the greatest gains from school-corporate partnership are to be made in the most disadvantaged schools and regions and that corporate involvement can improve the social support and capital available to young people growing up in these contexts (Cardini 2006; ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001). These young people tend to have limited links with adults who are employed, university educated or living outside the area and limited access to educationally beneficial networks and connections (Pope 2006; Tennant et al. 2005). Companies are particularly situated to widen this access through exposure to corporate workplaces and mentors (Stokes & Turnbull 2008). It is not surprising, therefore, that school education is becoming an increasing focus of corporate social responsibility practice. 'There is a strong business case for corporate support of education. While there are many ways for companies to display their corporate social responsibility commitments, school-business partnerships that aim to support education can generate the most social capital and strengthen communities. In turn, this aids Australia as a nation to compete in the new knowledge economy' (Social Compass 2007).

In a variegated practice landscape, the challenge for companies remains 'how to leverage off their assets and skills to make a difference in a school setting' (Jane & Griffiths 2008). The suggestion from the research literature is that the most effective form of corporate involvement in schools is a partnership designed to improve the quality of education for students (Business in the Community 2006). As one recent paper states: 'The reasons schools establish partnerships are numerous and varied but are connected strongly with the expanding role of schools to provide improved educational provision and nurturing the whole child within changing and diverse economic and social environments' (Modoo et al. 2008).

There is a strong business case for corporate support of education. While there are many ways for companies to display their corporate social responsibility commitments, school-business partnerships that aim to support education can generate the most social capital and strengthen communities. In turn, this aids Australia as a nation to compete in the new knowledge economy (Social Compass 2007).

The Stronger, Smarter Realities Project is funded by the Telstra Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund to create systematic and transferable change in the education of young Indigenous Australians. Initiated by the Director of the Indigenous Education Research Institute in Queensland, Dr Chris Sarra, the three-year project engages school leaders and key supporters from schools with high numbers of Indigenous students and provides them with the skills and capacity to improve learning outcomes for those students.

The project has four key objectives:

to build a critical mass of educational leaders to create positive changes in Indigenous education throughout Australia

to promote the improved student learning outcomes brought about by educational leaders and their schools

to create a sustainable attitude and belief about the ability of Indigenous students, their teachers and communities to achieve outstanding results through quality education

to use technology to disseminate positive stories.

The project identifies effective leadership strategies and supports participants in leading the implementation of school-based teaching and learning programs to improve Indigenous student outcomes. It promotes the effective use of evidence and data gathering to inform planning, decision-making and action research processes for school transformation.

The project is based on the 'strong and smart' philosophy which produced a 94 per cent drop in unexplained school absenteeism from Queensland's Cherbourg State School when Dr Sarra was its principal. The philosophy aims to instil Indigenous students with the belief and willpower to achieve.

The project is underpinned by action research undertaken by the Institute in conjunction with the Queensland University of Technology.

Business must work cooperatively with the governments responsible for education and with schools to make sure that they are finding and adapting new and better ways to provide a high-quality education to every student (Business Council of Australia 2007).

Boosting skills

Corporate involvement in schools is increasingly motivated by the need to boost Australia's skills capacity. Companies see partnerships with schools as a way of addressing their own future recruitment needs, as well as helping to reduce national skill shortages or contributing to local economic development needs (National Industry Skills Committee 2008). The number of young people not in education, training or employment (Lamb & Mason 2008) represents a serious challenge to Australia's ability to meet employers' need for skilled workers and is generating a strong corporate interest in the nature and the future of schooling. One in five chief executive officers of leading Australian corporations identifies the quality of education as a high priority for action by the Federal Government (Business Council of Australia 2004). As one business leader has stated, 'there are significant costs to business if we do not address ... the lack of education and job skills among young people' (Chaney 2007). The sector has also identified school education as a priority for its own action: 'Business must work cooperatively with the governments responsible for education and with schools to make sure that they are finding and adapting new and better ways to provide a high-quality education to every student' (Business Council of Australia 2007).

This is captured in the message of the recent Boyer Lectures delivered by Rupert Murdoch (2008). The fourth lecture of the series issued a call for corporate involvement in primary and secondary education, especially where disadvantage is having an impact on student outcomes. Key business groups such as the Australian Industry Group and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry strongly endorsed this message.

A new Australian initiative which began in February 2009 will provide a framework and practical guidance for more schools and communities to work together on specific issues that address student learning needs. Schools First is an initiative of National Australia Bank in partnership with The Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Council for Educational Research.

The initiative is intended to build stronger partnerships between schools and their local communities across Australia. In particular, it aims to:

support the development of successful school-community partnerships focused on positive outcomes for students, as well as for teachers, parents and community members

assist schools in raising student attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

develop and strengthen local school networks

create employment and training opportunities

build capacity within local communities

document best practice models

develop sustainable partnerships with business to develop students' skill levels.

Schools First recognises that responsibility for the learning and development of young people needs to be shared across the community rather than vested solely in schools. It will dedicate \$5 million a year for three years to provide financial recognition for effective partnerships between schools and their communities as well as financial support to build stronger school-community partnerships.

Criticisms of corporate involvement in schools

There is still a degree of contested ground surrounding corporate involvement in schools. According to qualitative data gathered through discussion with the corporate sector, recent Victorian press attention to the issue of corporate-school partnership has mostly been negative. Critics warn against power imbalances between schools and companies, the commercialisation of schools and the increasing role of the private sector in what is traditionally a public sphere. Other concerns, particularly in the Australian context, include the inequitable capacity of schools in different socioeconomic settings to secure and sustain productive partnerships with the corporate sector and the effects of competition between neighbouring schools for partnerships or for public grants facilitating corporate involvement in schools (Davies 2006; ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001; Plane 2006).

Most of the debate centres on the commercialisation of schools through corporate sponsorship (Molnar 2001). While good corporate social responsibility practice assumes an alignment of interests and purposes between the company and its partner for mutual benefit (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs 2007), there are still concerns that corporate partners may use their access to a captive audience of students for overtly commercial purposes that at best limit learning outcomes and at worst have a direct negative impact on children and young people (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001). There is particular concern about activities that:

- force students to view advertising in the classroom or use them as market research subjects
- promote unhealthy food and drinks
- masquerade as educational materials or programs without providing educational substance
- invade students' privacy as a condition of participation
- take place without the informed consent of parents (Larson 2002).

One concern is that schools may not be able to easily distinguish between genuine educational partnerships and more commercial arrangements. In response, many US state governments now issue guidelines for schools to evaluate the desirability of proposals from the corporate sector. One set of guidelines advises that 'if there is no direct [and measurable] educational benefit to children, then the relationship is not an educational partnership' (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001). There is also concern about what Youdell (2008) calls privatisation in and of public education through corporate involvement. This includes importing ideas and practice from the private into the public sector, engaging the private sector to deliver public education services or using the private sector to design or deliver public education. As Youdell (2008) argues: 'These approaches make education a 'commodity' owned by and benefiting the individual rather than a public good that benefits the society as a whole. This conceptual shift changes fundamentally what it means for a society to educate its citizens'.

The Coalition for Community Schools is a US initiative to create community schools that engage the community to improve student learning. Cross-sectoral partnerships between schools, business and other organisations committed to improving outcomes for children and young people are at the heart of the community school model. Community schools are open to the community all day, every day, and on evenings and weekends. They receive their funding from a number of sources including philanthropy and corporate funders.

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of more than 160 organisations in the areas of schooling, community development and human services as well as local, state and national networks of community schools. The Coalition mobilises the resources of various sectors and institutions to create a united movement for community schools. It disseminates information, connects people and resources and educates the general public. It is supported by a number of philanthropic agencies including the well-known Carnegie Corporation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

An evaluation of the schools operating within the Coalition has found that the model supports significant improvement in student performance, greater family engagement with schools, better functioning schools in a range of areas including curriculum innovation and pedagogy and greater community engagement in the school. It also promotes new forms of school leadership that cross the boundaries of education to engage government, public, private and community-based agencies to implement large-scale, community-wide education reform strategies (Blank, Melaville & Shah 2003; Blank, Berg & Melaville 2006).

4. Innovation or sustainability

The reality is that foundations working on educational reform tend to think of themselves as being more in the model development business. We say we'll fund this thing and get it up and running, and then it's up to the government to figure out how to spread it (Schwartz, in McKersie 1995).

New solutions or sustained practice?

One of the biggest unresolved issues with relation to philanthropic and corporate involvement in government schools is the question of who is responsible for the sustainability of initiatives funded or seeded by this involvement. This is a particularly pertinent issue for philanthropy. Over the past decade, a strong international view has emerged that the chief role of philanthropy is to generate new solutions, particularly in areas where government has failed and where prevention and early intervention are needed (Commonwealth Government 2000). This view argues that 'at their best, foundations are risk-taking, innovative funders of causes that others either neglect or are unable to address' (Anheier & Leat 2006). Even partially failed initiatives like the Annenberg Challenge (described in further detail elsewhere in this report), are attributed with leaving a legacy of innovation: 'The impetus to do something different often comes from outside, and the Annenberg partners will be in a position to nudge the system even when the Annenberg money has gone' (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation 2000).

An earlier report for the Australian Government (Commonwealth of Australia 2000) included an observation by Philanthropy Australia that foundations have the flexibility to 'run ahead of popular public opinion' in promoting innovation and social change. Qualitative data obtained through consultation with the philanthropic sector suggest that philanthropy has a different risk profile to government, which makes it ideally placed to drive new educational solutions. In line with this thinking, philanthropically-funded initiatives for school education are increasingly guided by the notion of philanthropy as a source of seed funding for new ideas that can be taken up by the school system. As one study observes, 'the infusion of new ideas, more than actual dollars, is what has been valuable in most education philanthropy' (Hills & Hirschhorn 2007).

An earlier study of philanthropy and public education in Victoria noted that 'philanthropy situates itself in sowing, leaving the cultivation and harvesting of innovation (which occur after a time delay) to other institutions' (Black & Church 2006). The same study noted that it is more common for Australian philanthropy to fund pilot projects in schools than to provide second round funding for existing initiatives, no matter how effective these might be. It identified an 'overriding perception in philanthropy that continued support of best practice in public education is the domain and responsibility of government' (Black & Church 2006). Both the literature and the qualitative data show that many foundations still assume that government will maintain the school initiatives they seed: 'The reality is that foundations working on educational reform tend to think of themselves as being more in the model development business. We say we'll fund this thing and get it up and running, and then it's up to the government to figure out how to spread it' (Schwartz, in McKersie 1995).

Dependency or exhaustion?

Foundations also tend to avoid long term or core funding for school programs in order to maximise the impact of limited funds, discourage dependency and avoid being used as a substitute for government expenditure (Liffman 2007). The qualitative data reveal a concern that the impact of funds granted directly to schools can be lost in the volatility of the school environment: changes to leadership, staffing, curriculum, pedagogy or school priorities are seen as a risk factor for foundations wishing to make long-term grants to schools. Because of this, they often prefer to direct their grant-making through non-profit organisations, which are seen by the philanthropic sector as more stable and accountable than schools themselves.

A similar issue pertains to corporate involvement in schools. Qualitative data obtained through discussion with corporate social responsibility agencies note that there is an unresolved question regarding whether companies should be involved in education for the short or long term, but that there is a movement towards longer term commitment to improve student outcomes. Policy-makers and lead agencies indicate that school principals want such long-term partnership opportunities, although school leaders indicate that the challenge of sustainability becomes greater for schools the more that a company or foundation supports central aspects of the school's operation.

Short-term support from external agencies can have negative consequences for schools, especially where funding is too small to support the effective development and management of the initiative. This can leave the school attempting to meet those costs from its own limited resources, conducting the initiative at a lower level than intended or facing the almost certain knowledge that it will not continue once the funding runs out (Carrington 2003). It encourages a situation where schools – especially schools already struggling to meet the needs of disadvantaged students – will constantly enter into projects that they cannot sustain in order to inject needed resources and opportunities into the school (Black 2007). Qualitative data gathered through discussion with school leaders indicate a trend for schools in low socioeconomic areas of Victoria to be more involved in external partnerships than schools in more affluent areas. While this seems to be a positive trend, some of these schools are juggling large numbers of partnerships and relationships with no assurance of quality or sustainability. This may create innovation fatigue in teachers, drain school capacity and have a limited impact on student outcomes. As one school principal has said: 'There are too many organisations providing money for projects. This encourages many schools to adopt any number of short-term programs just to get their hands on some money' (in Black 2007).

A short-term philanthropic or corporate involvement in schools also limits the capacity of the external agency to bring about change. Carrington (2003) notes that a 'long-term funder can adopt the positive role of "critical friend" more easily (and probably productively) than can a funder who is not prepared "to be there for the duration"'. At the same time, data obtained through consultation with the corporate sector show that it is sometimes the schools that pull out of the arrangement, leaving their corporate partners frustrated. A change in school leadership is one of the biggest risk factors for partnerships with schools.

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The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) was created in 2004 by a group of senior business leaders whose vision was to inspire, challenge and engage businesses to have a greater positive impact in the community. After extensive consultation, the ABCN decided to focus on education and provide mentoring, partnering and support programs to those students and schools that would benefit the most. In Victoria, the majority of schools with which ABCN works are in the northern and western metropolitan suburbs of Melbourne, with a growing number of schools located in the western suburbs.

ABCN's Partners in Learning program matches business leaders and senior executives with leaders of schools facing significant challenges in their student population, resource allocation and community engagement. Begun in 2005, the program operates under two strands, one for principals and chief executive officers and one for senior teachers and executives.

Partners in Learning aims to promote the sharing of expertise through regular one-to-one meetings between business leaders and school leaders. Partners in learning agree to meet at least eight times a year. Discussion topics may include leadership, delegation and accountability, strategic planning, change management, target setting and action planning, financial budgeting and expenditure, human resource management, appraisal and performance related pay.

The intended benefits for business partners include a greater understanding of issues facing schools and how business can support positive change. The benefits for educators include new solutions to the challenges of schools and new networks with other industry professionals.

Developed from the successful Partners in Leadership mentoring program conducted by the United Kingdom's Business in the Community, the program also promotes greater understanding between business and schools and is intended to have a positive impact on the capacity of schools and the school system. In 2008, the program operated in 59 Australian schools (Australian Business and Community Network 2005).

5. Changing schools or systems

The trend in philanthropy

The substantial reform of the New York public school system, which was recently identified as a potential model for elements of the Australian Government's education revolution, is strongly underwritten by philanthropic support. As such, it serves as a microcosm of a larger trend with regards to school education. Where earlier models of education philanthropy focused on individual schools or small local initiatives (Hess 2005), there is a growing view within the sector internationally that philanthropy is most effectively employed in addressing 'larger, systemic school reform rather than marginal strategies' (Born & Wilson 2000).

US foundations are increasingly viewing public policy and school reform as a way to leverage their assets for the greatest impact, sometimes as a result of frustration over the outcomes of individually funded school programs. This is part of a wider movement towards 'larger, longer, multi-component, often place-based, and community-driven initiatives designed to achieve more impact and more learning to improve outcomes for children and youth' (Weiss & Lopez 2000). Some foundations now work directly with legislators and policy-makers to influence systemic change (Ferris, Hentschke & Joy 2006) or fund lobbyists and think tanks to drive education policy directions (Hess 2005). Other activity includes working with school district leaders to support the design and creation of new public schools 'that are unencumbered by existing structures and staff' (Grantmakers for Education and The Philanthropy Roundtable 2004) as well as networks of schools.

A similar shift is under way in Australian philanthropy. In an earlier survey, 68 per cent of respondents indicated that they would not fund political activities (Philanthropy Australia 2003). A study of philanthropy and public education concluded that 'most people fund public education for charitable reasons, not for the deeper reasons of system change or changing learning' (Black & Church 2006). By contrast, more recent statements by philanthropic leaders in Australia and Victoria show an increasing orientation towards policy change:

'There is an independence and a neutrality about the philanthropic sector which means that it is ideally suited to be brave in funding risky projects or in drawing together, into a single process, participants who might traditionally be adversaries' (Myer 2006).

'Foundations ... can be a vehicle by which individuals, families and corporations seek, through working together and making a commitment over time, not only to bring about positive change in the lives of those experiencing disadvantage, but also to seek to influence social policy through private means and solutions – rather than through public discourse and public goods' (Webster, in Black 2008).

'Philanthropy's advocates assert that it has a unique role in social experiment, in supporting risky, untested or controversial ideas, and in providing the venture capital for social development ... Leverage, demonstration and pilot projects – 'pump-priming' – are the real strategies of philanthropy' (Liffman 2007).

This shift is accompanied by the growing traction of social change or social justice philanthropy in Australia. This movement aims to achieve

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lasting change by addressing the underlying causes of intractable social issues. It is based on the belief that 'the most effective way to assist disadvantaged people may not simply be through the provision of services to individuals, but through the reform of public policy, institutional practice and community attitudes which impact on whole groups of people' (Wyse, in Richardson 2005). Changemakers Australia is an example of this shift. Specifically established to encourage and resource greater philanthropic activity for long-term, structural change, its activities include the development of partnerships between philanthropic, community and government organisations to improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups. As it explains: 'Charitable organisations are best known for providing direct help to those in need, but equally important are their efforts to alleviate social problems through advocating for systemic change' (Falkiner-Rose 2007).

Victoria has already seen examples of foundations helping to seed new education policy directions. The Linking Schools and Early Years project was established to connect early years and school provision for disadvantaged children before the Victorian Government made its commitment to this direction through the formation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Consultations with the philanthropic sector show that foundations operating in Victoria are particularly interested in initiatives that link schools with their local communities to build lasting capacity in disadvantaged areas and to generate new approaches to schooling. Yuille Park Community College, which combines educational and other services for all residents in the Neighbourhood Renewal area in Ballarat was cited as an example. This trend is at odds with the concurrent view that philanthropy should address the problems which arise when the education system doesn't work for an individual, but that intervention in the system itself is the province of government.

The Linking Schools and Early Years Project is funded by The R E Ross Trust and run by the Centre for Community Child Health in Victoria. It brings together a wide range of players including the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development and Human Services, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne, the Universities of Melbourne and New South Wales and The Foundation for Young Australians. The project aims to bridge the gap between early years services and primary schooling and meet the needs of children entering school in communities where the need is greatest.

The project focuses on schools in three areas of Victoria: Hastings, Footscray and Corio-Norlane. It aims to ensure that in each area, children and families make a smooth transition between early years services and school, that early years services and schools actively connect with families and that schools are responsive to the individual learning needs of all children.

The project builds on existing initiatives and works in partnership with organisations in the three communities to ensure that it reflects local needs and knowledge. Each site has a Partnership Group designed to comprise representatives from each key stakeholder organisation including the schools, their feeder early education and care services, local government and local family and children's services.

In addition, an extensive consultation process has been undertaken at each of the three sites. This involved school principals and teachers, kindergarten and childcare practitioners and parents or guardians at each of the schools and early years services. The consultation findings continue to inform the development of the site action plans.

This long term project, running from 2007 to 2012, is an example of philanthropic investment in an area that research has identified as determining the wellbeing of children and young people and that intersects with key Victorian government policy.

The trend in the corporate sector

There is an equivalent trend in the corporate sector towards more systemic involvement in school education. In the United States, companies are moving away from individual school assistance and the adopt-a-school initiatives of the 1990s and towards support for change at the district or systemic levels, where they believe they can have the greatest impact (Hood & Rubin 2004): 'Every day, our business leaders manage complex bureaucracies, leverage finite resources, lobby policy-makers, and lead change efforts. Just as they seek to improve underperforming business units, corporations need to bring their expertise to bear on improving the US's underperforming educational system' (Hills & Hirschhorn 2007).

The emerging willingness of Australian or Australian-based companies to influence education policy is evident from the work of the Business Council of Australia. The Council is an association of the Chief Executive Officers of 100 of Australia's leading corporations, representing a combined workforce of 1,000,000 people. It was established in 1983 as a forum for Australia's business leaders to contribute to public policy debates that increasingly include school education. The Council's Education, Skills and Innovation Task Force promotes the need to reform school education and lift school completion rates, in particular by strengthening the teaching

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profession. Within the past two years, in conjunction with key education sector agencies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Council has released significant papers recommending new policy directions with regards to these issues.

Fountain for Youth is a non-profit charitable organisation set up by Ian Thorpe to alleviate and treat illness and disease in children. Its role includes advocacy for the needs of ill children and the creation of alliances with the corporate sector and general community to raise awareness and funds to improve children's health and education. In this context, education is seen as a crucial pathway to better children's health.

With the support of Northern Territory schools, Fountain for youth is introducing Literacy Backpacks to promote reading by Indigenous children and their families. The backpack idea was pioneered in native American communities in the United States as a way of helping parents become positive role models to stimulate their children's interest in reading. The Australian project is based on research that revealed high levels of illiteracy amongst the target audience and a significant number of homes without any reading materials.

Families participating in the project are asked what reading materials they would like to receive on a regular basis. Teachers order books and educational resource materials suited to student reading levels. Teachers, students and parents pack the Literacy Backpacks with reading material that is of interest to all members of the family, including books, a variety of magazines and Indigenous newspapers, audio books and videos of school texts.

With funding from the Australian Government, the corporate sector and the public, Fountain for youth began delivering Literacy Backpacks in the latter part of 2005, beginning with 370 children and their families in small and remote communities in southern Arnhem Land. The project has expanded significantly since its inception, with a project officer now appointed through the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training. The goal is to deliver the Backpack project to as many as 1,300 children in remote communities.

Benefits and risks of systemic involvement

Some of the literature is clearly supportive of the trend towards corporate and philanthropic involvement in education policy: 'school reform, like new business ventures and new philanthropy, can benefit as well from the entry of new wealth, new partners and new perspectives' (Born & Wilson, 2000). However, there is also a strong groundswell of concern about the educational ideologies that drive such involvement. In the last two decades, many large US foundations have seen school choice as a key policy lever for change within the public education system. These foundations are providing significant funds for school choice and voucher movements, both by financing clusters of Charter Schools throughout the country and by providing resources to conservative education think tanks and public policy advocates in support of this agenda (Hess 2005; Minstrom & Vergari 2003).

There is also concern about the effectiveness of external intervention in systemic school education reform. One of the largest philanthropic initiatives for public education in the world to date is the Annenberg Challenge. This program granted US\$500 million during the 1990s to

fund a national, multi-pronged school reform effort including large urban and rural grants, arts education programs and an endowed national school reform institute initially led by educationalist Ted Sizer. Its goals were as extensive as its investment: to reform the entire American school system. The Challenge was predicated on the belief that external agencies could work successfully within and with school systems to achieve 'systemic reform from within using money from without' (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation 2000).

This ambition is widely held to have failed. Like another extensive initiative conducted by the Ford Foundation from the 1950s to the 1970s, the results of the Challenge are mostly seen as disappointing (Loveless 2005). While it is acknowledged to have prompted innovation in some schools, to have seeded some future reforms and to have made a difference to the learning of some students, its failure to meet its primary goals was recognised while it was still in operation (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation 2000). Explanations for this relative failure are mixed. Foundations are criticised for being 'too reliant on the status quo and yet too willing to rely on outside experts to change local practices' (Loveless 2005). Either way, these examples represent a warning for school systems that 'untried private solutions to present problems might actually do more harm than good' (Whitty 2000).

6. Measuring the impact of involvement

Despite its widespread use, the term 'partnership' is defined in a loose way not only in practical but also in theoretical terms. Practically speaking, partnerships differ enormously from one another in terms of the number, sector and type of partners involved, their scale and their objectives (Cardini 2006).

The looseness of partnership

Despite the continued prevalence of partnership as a policy solution, critics have cautioned against its use as an indiscriminate panacea (Coulson 2005) and have warned against the spread of 'partnership-itis' without clear and measurable outcomes (Department for Victorian Communities 2007). As one study notes with regards to education partnerships in the United Kingdom: 'Despite its widespread use, the term 'partnership' is defined in a loose way not only in practical but also in theoretical terms. Practically speaking, partnerships differ enormously from one another in terms of the number, sector and type of partners involved, their scale and their objectives' (Cardini 2006).

Qualitative data obtained through discussion with school leaders, policy-makers and leading agencies suggest that many Victorian government schools do not have the knowledge and capacity to engage in effective and sustainable partnerships with external agencies. Similarly, there is great variation in the quality and effectiveness of philanthropic and corporate involvement in schools. Both the literature and the data propose that any such involvement should be subject to accountability and able to meet the indicators of quality partnership (ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001) including:

- a shared vision underpinned by clear and realistic goals
- shared decision-making and responsibility
- a long-term commitment with adequate resources
- good mechanisms for communication
- equality and trust between partners (Department for Victorian Communities 2007).

Starting from one pilot project in 2001, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation now conducts the Kitchen Garden Program for Year 3 to 6 children in schools across Australia, including 27 Victorian schools. Many of the participating schools are located in disadvantaged areas, which represent an important audience for the program's central aim of combating childhood obesity.

The Kitchen Garden Program is embedded in the primary school curriculum, combining active, hands-on learning with improved nutritional and social outcomes for children. Children spend a minimum of 40 minutes a week in an extensive vegetable garden which they have helped design, build and maintain on the school grounds according to organic gardening principles. They also spend one and a half hours each week in a kitchen classroom preparing and sharing meals created from their produce.

In both the kitchen and the garden, children work in small groups under the supervision of specialist staff and their classroom teacher. The program also attracts volunteers from the community and builds school-community networks through the wide range of organisations that donate their time or resources to its operation.

The Foundation's long term goal is to integrate the Kitchen Garden model and approach to food education into the primary school curriculum across Australia. In Victoria, the program is conducted in partnership with the State Government's Go for your life health strategy and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Strategic Partnership Program. Its future growth in Victoria will also be supported by funding from the Australian Government as part of a national rollout. Beyond these key government partnerships, the program also attracts significant support from both foundations and companies, as well as other organisations and individuals.

Philanthropy and measurement

The philanthropic sector is troubled by a general lack of substantial evaluative literature about the impact of its grantmaking (Hannaway & Bischoff 2005; Bernholz 2000; Cohen 2007). Most of the evaluative literature is produced by and aimed at the sector itself, with success often measured by compliance rather than achievement (Carrington 2003). As leading philanthropic figures have noted: 'Evaluation is an area lots of funders – not just philanthropic – have struggled with. It is hard to move away from things like service delivery and counting how many people you have assisted and find ways to measure those intangibles – the longer-term changes that have occurred' (Wyse, in Richardson 2005).

'Foundations do not face the same competitive pressures that non-profits and private companies face. They have the ability to stay in business regardless of public opinion about their work and whether or not they are successful. This independence is an asset for providing leadership and taking risks but is a liability for assessing results' (Porter 2005).

Where foundations are responding to pressure to increase their accountability, some are creating measurement tools that may not be appropriate for determining their impact in complex areas such as school education. As one study observes: 'These tools are often appropriate for determining impact when grants are made to specific

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programs where outcomes are measurable and where the causal link between program and outcome is obvious ... However, increased foundation interest in student academic performance, coupled with increased interest in program impacts, has led foundations to support programs that might improve student achievement, even when those programs address only a fraction of the influences on student learning' (Ferris, Hentschke & Joy 2006).

The Goldman Sachs JBWere Foundation is a Prescribed Private Fund with a mission to develop meaningful partnerships with organisations that demonstrate excellence in their projects for disadvantaged youth. The Foundation also provides broader based community grants, using the resources and skills of its people to support initiatives with significant benefit for the community.

The Goldman Sachs JBWere Foundation has identified three organisations supporting disadvantaged youth in Australia that it currently supports with significant multi-year grants. These organisations have been identified by the Foundation as displaying innovation in their approach and achieving significant success in their programs to date.

One of these is Education Foundation, now a division of The Foundation for Young Australians. Its Cityscape program provides Year 9 and 10 students from Victorian government schools with a week of rich learning in the Melbourne Central Business District that raises student learning expectations and aspirations. Most of the students who attend the program are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The cost of participation in the program, while relatively minimal, represents an insurmountable barrier for many of these students.

The Goldman Sachs JBWere Foundation has committed to support a scholarship program for 3,300 students to attend Cityscape over three years. In addition, it supports the program through the involvement of its staff.

Companies and measurement

Similar concerns are raised about corporate involvement in school education: 'historically, corporations have been weak in measuring the impact of their education efforts' (Hills & Hirschhorn 2007). Almost 40 per cent of companies that responded to one survey acknowledged that their corporate social responsibility measurement approaches were 'not very accomplished' (Centre for Corporate Public Affairs and Business Council of Australia 2000) and there is little evidence available about the impact of business involvement on student outcomes (Hood & Rubin 2004).

The qualitative data reinforce the finding that there is insufficient measurement of the value and impact of corporate-school partnerships or other forms of involvement, either for the company or for the school. The data also endorse the findings of the literature that the innovation and flexibility that can come with corporate involvement in schools must be balanced against the need for accountability and responsibility (National Industry Skills Committee 2008).

The qualitative proposes a need for the proper evaluation of individual partnerships and for the effective measurement of the impact of corporate involvement across the Victorian school system. It also proposes that this responsibility should extend beyond the education

bureaucracy, because that without a more joined-up government approach to the role of companies and foundations, their impact on school education and related policy priorities will remain underutilised. This call is supported by the literature, which shows 'a shift from the discussion about measuring impact to understanding the processes of increasing value and building capacity' (Bernholz 2000).

Reaching a consensus

A strong message from the qualitative data is that any future action to increase or better measure corporate and philanthropic involvement in Victorian schools should be guided by a clear consensus, driven by policy, about the:

- purpose of involvement by other sectors in the work of schools
- kind and degree of impact expected from this involvement
- most effective forms and models of involvement
- aspects of school education in which companies and foundations should have a role and those aspects in which they should not.

In this regard, the data are again supported by the research literature, which suggest that the resources of external sectors are used in differing ways in schools, not necessarily because this meets specific needs but because there is no consensus about what purposes they should serve. The literature proposes both that that the role of external agencies in schools be better defined by the educational sector (Hood & Rubin 2004; Whitty 2000) and that these agencies be more clear about their own motivation for involvement in schools (Hills & Hirschhorn 2007). This finding is in turn supported by data obtained through consultation with school leadership, who argue for a clearer delineation of which educational functions should be funded by government and which could be supported by external agencies such as companies and foundations.

At the same time, the literature warns that other systems have not done well at reaching such a consensus. Despite the enormous activity it has generated, the United Kingdom's partnership policy, which includes partnerships between schools and other agencies, remains troubled by loose definitions and a variegated landscape of practice (Cardini 2006). Unless Victoria can do better, the literature suggests that the multiple definitions and expectations of education partnerships 'may lead to difficulties in making judgments about what kinds of activities to implement, how to implement them, and what results to expect from them' (Jordan, Orozco & Averett 2001).

The HSBC Group is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations. The HSBC Education Trust was established in 2001 to provide a platform for the Group's educational projects in the United Kingdom, which provide learning for primary and secondary students in economically deprived areas.

One of HSBC's areas of support has been the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the lead body delivering the specialist schools program on behalf of the UK's Department for Children, Schools and Families. Its mission is to raise educational standards through a network of innovative and high-performing secondary schools that operate in partnership with business and the wider community.

Support from companies, individuals, trusts and foundations is vital to the operation of the program. Some of these support a number of schools. Others form a close relationship with a small cluster of schools who work with one another and with their sponsor. Others again forge an exclusive partnership with a school, either for reasons of geographical proximity or on the basis of some mutually identified common ground. Sponsorship includes in-kind as well as financial support.

HSBC has strongly supported the specialist schools movement from the beginning, funding over 100 schools to the sum of almost £3 million to date. In particular, it supports schools bidding for business and enterprise, language or sports college status as part of the movement. HSBC works with the schools in their local communities and, in addition to financial support, provides an HSBC sponsor governor to the school.

7. The role of the intermediary

Mediating the power imbalance

The literature makes it clear that while cross-sectoral partnership may help address issues including educational inequity, creating and maintaining effective partnerships is not easy (Department for Victorian Communities 2007). One of the most predictable challenges in the relationship between schools and companies or foundations is inequality of power and control. This is a common negative characteristic of cross-sectoral partnership (Coulson 2005; Plane 2006) and is likely to be exacerbated when one of the partners is a government school in a disadvantaged community. This observation has been made in relation to education partnerships in the United Kingdom: 'Sector partners are presented as different but symmetrical organizations, each one with its own neutral advantages that are combined through partnership with other partners' characteristics. The practice of partnerships is quite different' (Cardini 2006).

The qualitative data are unanimous in stressing that any involvement in schools by these sectors must be fully championed by school leadership and that staff involved in these relationships or resulting projects must be adequately supported and resourced. It also emphasises the importance of intermediary support for schools and, where needed, for companies and foundations.

This is particularly important in disadvantaged contexts. Philanthropy is by definition concerned with redressing disadvantage, including educational disadvantage. The corporate sector is also strongly motivated to overcome the impact of disadvantage through its involvement in schools. However, data suggest that companies are poorly equipped to work with schools in such contexts; independent brokers and non-profit organisations are needed to provide support. This is borne out by the research literature, which argues that 'the existence of an effective broker is ... a success factor, by playing a pivotal role in guiding the parties through the process and in monitoring the arrangements' (National Industry Skills Committee 2008) while warning of the 'lack of resourced capacity builders on the ground to form the alliances across the sectors, to break down the silo divisiveness and defensiveness' (Plane 2006).

Partnership brokers such as the Australian Business and Community Network can mediate the power imbalance between schools and companies or foundations. For example, all partnerships created with or through Australia Cares adhere to 10 principles of engagement that are agreed and signed by all parties before any program development or involvement. These principles include purpose, commitment, respect, understanding, trust and agreement. Non-profit organisations such as the Smith Family, the Beacon Foundation and the Ardoch Youth Foundation – to name just a few – can also play a vital role.

Credible intermediaries can also address the concern raised during consultations with school leaders that there is not always a good match between what schools need and what is on offer from companies or foundations. The data suggest that the role and function of intermediaries needs to be further developed to improve these various levels of compatibility and fit and to assess and match appropriate companies or foundations with schools. As a recent study observes: 'forging partnerships is not an area that can, or should, be mandated,

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but it does need to be effectively facilitated' (National Industry Skills Committee 2008).

The UK's City Academies is one of the largest initiatives to date involving the corporate and philanthropic sectors in public education. Introduced in 2000 to transform secondary education, the Academies recreate under-performing secondary schools in communities marked by poor educational performance.

The Academies are publicly funded, independent local schools established and managed by sponsors including philanthropy and business. These contribute capital funds for the building of the school and appoint the majority of the school's governors. Some provide significant additional funding towards other areas such as uniforms and additional facilities. The sponsors also provide Academies with a broad range of expertise, both directly and through their connections.

The resources provided by sponsors give the schools the potential to better meet student needs. Sponsorship is seen to contribute significantly to school improvement overall: sponsors have 'an unremitting focus on improvement and consistently challenge the Academy's leadership and staff in this area'. Academies have also used their independence to recruit a broader range of staff, including non-teaching professionals who can offer additional support and expertise to children and families.

The British Government is committed to having 200 Academies open or in train by 2010, with 60 in London. There are currently 83 academies open in 49 local authorities, with a further 50 to open in each of the next three years (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008).

Mediating cultural barriers

Consultations with the corporate and philanthropic sectors suggest that the second chief obstacle to the greater involvement of these sectors in Victorian government schools is cultural difference. Companies, foundations and schools are dramatically differing organisations with different resources, purposes, structures and internal cultures. This can make it difficult to achieve the common language, priorities and purposes that are intrinsic to a successful partnership (Business in the Community 2006; Cardini 2006). As one paper notes, 'the clash between organisational cultures may present difficulties for collaboration' (Department for Victorian Communities 2007).

An additional barrier is that, as one study notes, 'there is a culture in some schools that mistrusts business and its motives for engagement' (National Industry Skills Committee 2008). These barriers must be overcome if companies and schools are to construct genuine and sustainable partnerships as opposed to 'occasional forays into schools for special programs and activities' (Becton & Sammon 2001). A working relationship must be able to develop based on a shared commitment to improve the quality of students' lives and learning and a shared sense of ownership (Allen 2007; ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management 2001; Hood & Rubin 2004).

In some cases, additional measures are needed to cross cultural barriers. One school operating in a very low socioeconomic area of Victoria regularly attracts corporate volunteers who serve as mentors for students. Through sometimes painful experience, the school has learned that this initiative only operates successfully once the school has trained the volunteers in working with young people in poverty.

Brokers and intermediaries are ideally placed to provide needed cultural training for companies working with government schools.

Mediating access and building capacity

In an echo of the wider research literature, the qualitative data obtained by this project suggest that the type, level and quality of corporate and philanthropic involvement differ significantly between Victorian schools. This is partly because the decision to engage external support is left almost entirely to the discretion of schools and partly because some schools, particularly those operating in areas of low financial and social capital, need additional resources to help them effectively identify, establish and manage external partnerships.

This is reinforced by findings from the literature that the neediest schools often lack the readiness to be helped by external agencies, whether because of their leadership, history, organisational culture or simply because of the overwhelming nature of the challenges they face (Black 2007; Cardini 2006). Even if the legislative environment was changed to permit foundations to grant funds directly to government schools for educational purposes, it is doubtful that many schools would have the ability to deal directly with their external partners. If schools are to be able to best utilise external support, their capacity to make use of this involvement must be improved. Intermediary organisations can help bridge this capacity gap as well as training schools to identify, initiate and maintain the best fit opportunities for external involvement in their work. This should include training schools in selecting and establishing corporate partnerships that meet ethical guidelines and avoid overt commercialism.

Non-profit organisations already fulfil elements of this role where they are funded by foundations to deliver services into schools. An important part of the role of such organisations is identifying and engaging schools that most need these services. Quantitative data obtained through discussions with school leaders show that many schools operating in disadvantaged contexts would not have the time or resources to locate or access these opportunities if they were not directly approached by a non-profit organisation. The data also point to the important role of local community service organisations and Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) in brokering connections between schools and external agencies.

Research shows that Australian companies are now developing similar partnerships with non-profit organisations (Cronin & Zappala 2002), and that such organisations have a major role in brokering partnerships, whether this be supporting the creation of a partnership between a specific company and school or rolling out a particular program across a number of companies and schools (National Industry Skills Committee 2008). Without these intermediary agencies, companies will continue to focus their efforts only on the schools that are already committed to partnership and already have the capacity to engage in it. At the same time, research warns that there can be differences in the 'effectiveness, quality and capacity of different brokers' (National Industry Skills Committee 2008).

Discussions with policy-makers and leading agencies indicate that government also has a role in building the capacity of schools to work with companies and foundations, whether directly or through an intermediary. This role potentially includes setting clear guidelines for quality partnership, providing professional learning for schools in

partnership development and maintenance and communicating examples of effective partnership in practice. The data are inconclusive, however, about the degree to which policy frameworks for corporate and philanthropic involvement in government schools would strengthen practice in schools that are not engaged in effective partnerships without restricting the activity of schools that are already doing well.

As part of its ongoing advocacy work, the Doxa Youth Foundation has developed a 10-point plan to highlight what it believes to be the key priorities in keeping young people connected to education. These include: ensuring that teachers are trained to engage young people, particularly in the middle years; funding alternative school settings that have been shown to work; ensuring that schools have access to support services in the community; and ensuring consistent government policies to maximise student engagement in school.

One of the Foundation's key strategies is the Doxa School. Located in West Melbourne and Bendigo, the Doxa Schools offer supportive education for young people who have become disengaged from school. The schools provide six months in an alternative school setting where intensive educational and personal development support is available. Once students return to school, the Doxa School provides a further 12 months of support through a mentoring program.

An independent evaluation of the West Melbourne school recognises that some of the barriers to school retention, such as family conflict or economic disadvantage, are unlikely to be changed by a six-month placement in an alternative setting. Despite this, the school shows a high degree of impact; the majority of students tracked by the evaluation stayed at school for at least another two years after attending the program, even though many still disliked mainstream school and thought they were under-performing at school.

Together with the mentoring program, the intensive and caring support provided by volunteers and staff is one of the most valued aspects of the school experience for students. The opportunity for young people to feel supported by a number of significant adults is seen as critical in The Doxa School's success, as is the School's ability to work with students to address the barriers to their educational participation. This includes monitoring students' behaviour in an educational setting as well as conflict and anger management (Murphy & MacLean 2006).

Scaling access to opportunity

Another strong message emerging from the qualitative data is that the resources and opportunities represented by external agencies should be available to all Victorian government schools. Otherwise, they will only reinforce or aggravate the discrepancies that already exist between schools. There is concern that private sector involvement in public domains can actually have a negative effect on equity of provision (Ellison 2006). Both the literature (Whitty 2000) and qualitative data suggest that any private involvement in public education should not only aim to raise achievement but should also aim to improve equity. Through consultation with key stakeholders, school leaders in particular expressed a view that an equity focus is needed in any initiative to increase corporate or philanthropic involvement in Victorian schools.

Both the literature and data also identify the importance of scaling up successful models of corporate and philanthropic involvement. In particular, the data highlight the need to break down the patchiness of current involvement, where support is offered to varying degrees of quality and on an ad hoc or localised basis, which means that many schools miss out on needed opportunities. Consultations with the philanthropic sector pointed to the parallel experience of the public hospital system. Once seen as the exclusive responsibility of government, public hospitals now attract massive funding from philanthropic sources, but this support is not evenly distributed. Instead, an informal league table of hospitals means that some attract far greater resources than others. The philanthropic sector data warn against the entrenchment of a similar situation in relation to government schools.

One of the many reasons that foundations tend to deliver their funding through non-profit organisations is the capacity of these organisations to deliver proven programs and interventions across a number of schools and areas. For this reason, one discussion paper proposes that non-profit organisations 'are probably the best places to start in looking at large-scale innovations' in relation to successful models of corporate and philanthropic involvement in schools (Jane & Griffiths 2008). School leaders suggest that scaling up should not simply mean a greater number of schools operating in isolation or competition. Rather, new resources should be shared across a geographic cluster or network of schools. This is in line with the recommendations of the literature: 'It seems highly likely that inequities in corporate, philanthropic and individual support are likely to arise when the individual school becomes the focus for external support. ... Whilst relationship building is a critical factor in cementing linkages between schools and external agencies, the ability to establish such relationships is not equal' (Cole, in Black 2008).

Some Victorian government schools already employ or allocate a staff member with responsibility for fundraising and the creation of partnerships with external organisations. The data suggest that these roles are better located within a cluster, network or regional grouping of schools or provided by a broker serving a network. In this way, they could build capacity for a number of schools instead of heightening competition and differential outcomes between schools. There is no current mechanism for schools to identify externally-offered opportunities and that schools need better information about what is available to them. A broker or intermediary could provide this mechanism.

It seems highly likely that inequities in corporate, philanthropic and individual support are likely to arise when the individual school becomes the focus for external support. ... Whilst relationship building is a critical factor in cementing linkages between schools and external agencies, the ability to establish such relationships is not equal (Cole, in Black 2008).

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