"Enhancing community awareness of home-schooling as a viable educational option."

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(See Appendix #1)

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Abstract

This study addressed community perceptions of home-schooling as a viable educational option in New South Wales. The term home-schooling was used to cover three broad areas - Distance Education, Other Academic Curricula, and Natural Learning (or Unschooling), with the determining factor being that the student was educated at home rather than in a school. It was seen that enrolment with Distance Education is subject to certain conditions. The legal situation dealing with requirements for registration as a home-schooler in NSW had been subject to debate, however there were guidelines, given by the Office of the Board of Studies, that parents were expected to comply with in order to receive registration.

Surveys were distributed to 135 home-schooling families in New South Wales, 68 were returned, giving a response rate of 50.37%. Of those surveyed, seven were interviewed to gain a greater knowledge of the perspective of home-schoolers regarding awareness among the general community. The survey indicated that home-schoolers typically hear about home-schooling from personal contact with other home-schooling families. It was also established that more than 50% (64% Mothers, and 53% of Fathers) of home-schooling parents have completed some form of tertiary training. Moreover, respondents with tertiary training showed a greater likelihood of continuing with home-schooling through to the end of secondary education level (in contrast to those who elect to send their children to school after the completion of primary education at home). The respondents did not report that their home-schooled children had any social skill problems. Indeed all situations showed a range of social interactions.

While it was beyond the scope of this study to analyse in-depth the specific details of the variety of situations, it was seen that successful home-schooling contexts form a varied and diverse sample of Australian families. The findings of this study indicated that there was no specific situation was that would serve as a model for successful home-schooling although there were three broad styles, which may be defined as structured, semi-structured and informal. Respondents listed several factors as requiring consideration before commencing home-schooling. A strong commitment to the children and their education was seen to be the most essential quality for potential home-schooling families. A strong trend existed showing that home-schooling families utilise community resources and depend on other families for ideas and support. It was seen that legal requirements differ from state to state, however the underlying philosophical basis of home-schooling may be implemented into any situation. Interviews demonstrated a felt need for greater community awareness of home-schooling as a viable option. Recommendations were made that further study in this area be directed towards official governmental acknowledgment and greater public awareness of home-schooling as a **valid** educational option.

Chapter 1
Outline of the Problem

Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim.

White (1903, p.13)

Outline of Problem

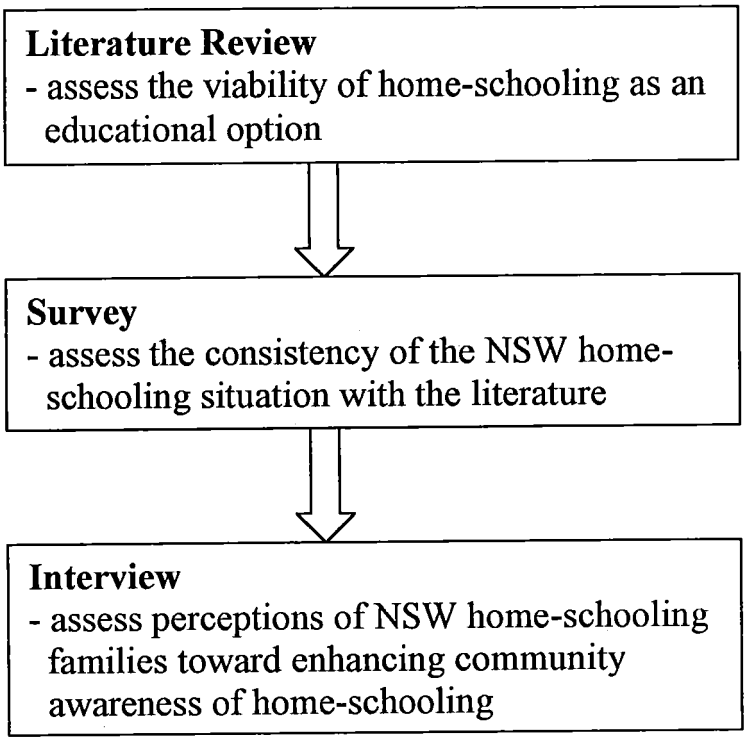
"Home Education" is listed as an education option for families in New South Wales (Education Reform Act of 1990). Despite this fact, there is little public acknowledgment of home-schooling by the New South Wales Government. The New South Wales Department of Education and Training does not list home-schooling on its Webpage (NSW DET 1998), and there is just one mention of Distance Education on this site. There is no recognition of the "Home-school Board" on the Board of Studies homepage. In an attempt to contact the "Home-school board," it was necessary to try several times. The operators at the Department were unable to direct the researcher to the appropriate office within their own department. It is evident that little is known regarding home-schooling as a viable option in New South Wales.

There has been controversy in recent years regarding the implementation and enforcement of guidelines for home-schooled families. This and other factors provide anecdotal evidence that with regard to teachers and general community members, those who are aware of home-schooling tend to hold a negative viewpoint. The researcher was schooled at home through the New South Wales Department of School Education Correspondence School and faced this community negativity as a child.

The general community needs to become aware of the realities of home-schooling. There is also a need to demonstrate that home-schooling does occur, it is legal and it works. Home-schooling would benefit from greater community involvement and support. For this to occur, the community must be made aware of home-schooling as an appropriate and acceptable educational choice. Before information can be presented to the general population it must first be gathered from the home-schooling

community. While there has been research into home-schooling, there were no other studied located dealing with enhancing community awareness, therefore it was seen that this is a significant step. It is anticipated that it will provide a greater understanding and acceptance of home-schooling in NSW, thus broadening the scope of educational options available to the general public.

The study consisted of three main sections as seen below.



The structure shown above also forms the basis of this document. The literature review (Chapter 2) includes a rationale for the study. These two are combined in order to provide a basis of understanding for the importance of the study. Following the literature review is an outline of the methodology (Chapter 3) used in conducting the study. The survey and interview findings are shown in Chapter 4, which leads into a discussion of these results in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 summarises the conclusions of the study and outlines recommendations as well as areas identified for future studies.

Chapter 2
Literature review// Rationale for the Study

To simply assume that school is an education is rather naïve in this day and age, it seems to me. *Real education* can be given in schools and *is* in some schools, but can also be twisted so that it prevents and "turns off" any curiosity in the basic areas of the search for real knowledge. To assume that we send our children off to school, and that is IT, is shirking the responsibility...which no one else is going to take.

Schaeffer (1975, p.170)

LITERATURE REVIEW/ RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

> **"On September 16, the United States Senate, by unanimous consent, officially passed Senate Resolution 183, designating the week of September 19-25, 1999, as National Home Education Week" (Legislative Alert,p.1).**

The public acknowledgment by the United States Senate, encapsulated in the above quote, recognises home-schooling as being a valid educational option. "Several highlights of the resolution state that: parents have the fundamental right to direct the upbringing of their children; family participation and parental choices in pursuit of educational excellence are important; and training in the home strengthens the family and guides children in setting the highest standards for their lives which are essential elements to the continuity of morality in our culture" (Legislative Alert, 1999,p.1).

The terms used to describe home-schooling are many and varied. These include home-schooling, home school, home education, non-school education, natural learning, home learning, and many more. For the purposes of this study home-schooling is broadly defined as education taking place in the home rather than in a school. With the exception of direct quotes, 'home-schooling' is the term that will be used throughout this document.

WHAT IS HOME-SCHOOLING?

In this study the term home-schooling is used to cover three broad areas - Distance Education, Other Academic Curricula, and Natural Learning (or Unschooling), with the determining factor being that the student obtains his/her education at home rather than in a school.

Distance Education

What is Distance Education?

The New South Wales Department of Education has a system of Distance Education Centres, in 11 locations around New South Wales (NSW Dept. Ed., 1989, p.1). These centres are usually attached to local primary schools. There were 760 students enrolled in Distance Education at a primary school level in New South Wales in 1997 (School Statistics, 1999). The teachers involved in Distance Education have the same training and qualifications as those in the mainstream school system. Each teacher is responsible for a number of students and sets the work for each of these students. The teacher marks and assesses and also determines the curriculum for the student. The parent is involved as a supervisor of the student. There is frequent contact (depending on the parent) between parent and teacher and the parent's input is called upon in determining the suitability of the work for each student.

Benefits

Three prominent aspects of Distance Education are the "...high quality, individualised programs...," the relationship between teacher and parent, and "excellent learning materials and resources (NSW Dept. Ed., 1989, p.1)." This program provides for families who wish to keep their students at home for a variety of reasons, but are quite happy with the curriculum of the mainstream schools. As it is quite flexible, it does allow for parental input as to the suitability of materials, content etc. The parent does not have to be involved in selecting the material, simply in the implementation. It also provides an external motivator for when students are searching for authority

beyond the parents. Distance Education is also helpful for those parents wishing to send their child to a mainstream high school, as the curriculum will be the same.

Legal Requirements

The New South Wales Government specifies certain restrictions on parents wishing to be involved in the Distance Education program. Hartley (1998) lists three conditions for enrolment with Distance Education.

- *Medical Reasons.* Students who are unable to attend school for medical reasons may be eligible to enrol with Distance Education. They are required to obtain a doctor's certificate indicating that they are unable to attend school.
- *Travelling.* Students whose parents are travelling around Australia or overseas may be eligible for Distance Education. Often these students will be children of itinerant workers or those who are travelling for long periods of time. The requirements for a 'traveller' is that they be travelling for at least six months of the year (in Australia), or at least 12 months (for overseas students).
- *Isolated.* If a student lives three kilometres or more from the nearest school bus pick up point they are eligible for Distance Education.

Interaction with Students

Hartley (1998) outlines the types of interaction provided by the Distance Education Centres (DEC). Each DEC is involved in Field Schools and Mini-Schools for their area. Mini-schools are held twice each year. These involve students travelling to the DEC where they are able to meet with their teachers and other students. They participate in local school activities as well as social and sporting activities. Excursions are arranged, as are visits by various community figures such as fire and

ambulance teams. Field schools are similar to mini-schools, except that they are smaller, being in regional areas, rather than at the DEC. As these programs are not central, these field schools attract fewer families. Home visits are conducted involving one or two teachers from the DEC. These teachers will visit with the family, thus gaining a greater understanding of the student's background and situation, as well as allowing them individual time with the students. Reading tests and other assessments often occur at these times for benchmarking of individual students in accordance with Australian benchmarking practice. Tele-conferences, in which several students are linked by phone at one time, are used to allow students to share news and participate in group discussions. They are also used for the reading of dramas and stories, quizzes and other interactive sessions. Tele-conferences occur at least once per week, possibly more depending on the teacher and the type of programs being run.

Academic Curriculum Programs

For those families not eligible for Distance Education yet wanting an academic curriculum, such packages are available. One example of such a resource is

> The Australian Christian Academy [which] is an educational institution in the State of Queensland offering curriculum and support to Home School families around Australia and the South Pacific region. Nearly three thousand home educated students are currently using the A.C.E./School of Tomorrow curriculum with the Australian Christian Academy (ACE, 1999).

Lists of such educational structured academic curricula are available through various home-schooling websites and resource books (books4homeschool, 1999; Hubbs, 1994). There are other curricula that follow a traditional academic format dealing with core subjects and set skill levels. KONOS (1999) is a Christ-centred curriculum,

developed on the concept that all education should be focused on character formation. Kumon (1999) is another example of this type of character development curriculum. There are many such curriculum packages available through the Internet including Christian curriculum centres: Cadron Creek Christian Curriculum (1999), Christian Curriculum Cellar (1999), Covenant Home Curriculum (1999), Curriculum Associates (1999), Emmanuel (1999), Hilltop Homeschool (1999), Shekinah Curriculum Centre (1999), Sonlight (1999), and Student of the Word (1999). Each of these has its own style of curriculum development and focus. It is difficult to find information on non-Christian academic curricula for home-schooling. This could indicate that non-Christians involved in home-schooling are seeking an alternative from the academic curricula, while Christians seek alternatives due to social reasons, however this is beyond the scope of the current study and is an area that may benefit from further research.

Natural Learning

> Natural Learning is children learning within the setting of the family and local community, from the immediate experiences of their lives, rather than in school, by correspondence or set curricula. Many home schoolers in Australia use this approach rather than a formal schedule and curriculum for their children (Sparks 1998, p.1).

Sparks (1998) refers to Peacock as being influential in Australia's Natural Learning Community. Peacock (1998) outlines the basic philosophy of Natural Learning as being a philosophy of education that involves children learning within a safe relationship (either family, or wider community) setting. Cole (1998) speaks about Natural Learning as involving students learning from their environment with no set structure or curriculum. Turner (1996) describes natural learning (or 'unschooling')

as a structure providing children with "learning opportunities and learning tools" (p.1).

The Natural Learning philosophy steers away from traditional set curricula and focuses on the development of each individual. Families involved in Natural Learning traditionally do not follow a set program, but continually monitor the children as they learn and work in order to provide them with the skills they are needing to face each new phase of learning. Within the structure of Natural Learning, 'progress is determined by developmental stages rather than chronological age (Peacock, 1998, p.1).' This allows each child to be an individual, without placing on him/her the stress of having to conform to a pattern set by their 'average', same-age peers.

The philosophical basis of Natural Learning may be summed up with the comment that "Home education is a family group working together toward a common goal and having fun on the way as they learn and grow together (Peacock, 1998, p.2)."

REASONS FOR HOME-SCHOOLING

The literature indicates a variety of reasons given for parents electing to educate their children at home. Peacock (1997) describes the essential motivation behind each of these reasons as a difference in values between parents and schools. The motivators given may be categorised into two areas. The first rises from dissatisfaction with the mainstream schooling system, leading families to embark on a search for alternatives. Home-schooling is one of these alternatives. The second category springs from the parents' view of the home as the best environment for the education of the children.

In the second category the parents consider home-schooling as a better alternative rather than as a solution to a problem. In this case there may be no real objection to the school system itself. Reece (1999) describes these two categories as reactionary and visionary. Those reacting to negative influences and those striving for a goal or standard. There are undoubtably many families who, if a continuum were to be developed with these two ideologies at either end, would fit at all levels along the continuum.

The two groups mentioned also show associations with motivating factors seen in international human migration patterns. The terms used to describe such motivations are "Push" and "Pull" factors. Push factors describe 'negative conditions that impel the decision to migrate" (Hahn, 1985, p.84). Pull factors are "the presumed positive attractions" (Hahn 1985, p.84), that draw people to the destination. Due to this association, the terms "Push" and "Pull" factors will be used in defining these broad groupings.

Push Factors

Current Issues in Education

A survey of three major newspapers was undertaken in order to gain an indication of some of the issues found in Australian education. This was done to assess whether the claims made by home-schoolers internationally are applicable to Australia. This survey found that there is a large range of current educational issues including: lack of preparation for the workforce (Denney, 1999; Harvey, 1999), truancy (Jamal, 1999), outdated educational systems (Armitage, 1999), playground safety (Thorp, 1999), gender issues (Raethel, 1999), sexual abuse on school grounds (Towers & Gough,

1999), arson (Connolly, 1999), teachers without adequate skills (Jacobsen & Raethel, 1999), teacher's strikes (O'Reilly, 1999), teacher shortages (Bantick, 1999; Barrow, 1999).

Dahm (1996) suggests that the issues home-schoolers object to about the mainstream system are actually the same issues as mainstream educators have regarding their own system. This shows that home-schoolers are not merely 'plucking at straws', they simply have a different solution to the problem than the system is able to produce. The problems of large class sizes, the loss of the individual into the 'average', and time spent on discipline rather than actual learning are given as examples of these shared complaints" (Dahm, 1996, p.69). The essence of the home-schooling issue is distrust. "Parents do not trust schools to keep their children safe in a society that they see becoming increasingly violent and unhealthy...They don't trust the schools to give their children the individual time and attention necessary to assure learning of basic skills" (Dahm, 1996, p.69).

Schools are becoming more and more dangerous. Trimboli & Bonney (1994) cite incidents of aggravated assault and non-aggravated assault on New South Wales school premises. They observe that such incidents "...increased by 36.8 per cent between 1990 and 1992. The average annual increase was about 17 per cent" (Trimboli & Bonney, 1994, p.1). With increasing reports of violence and bullying, teachers are simply unable to control the behaviour that occurs in schools. One example of this is the account of a small girl sexually abused in a primary school, by other students. The law cannot deal with the two boys responsible, because they are less than ten years of age. The school bears no responsibility, because as the

Victorian Premier stated regarding the case "...it's very hard to keep a physical eye on children all the time" (Towers & Gough 1999, p.3). While such instances occur outside of schools, it is less likely that these events will be overlooked in a home with a few children than in a school with several hundred children.

Discrimination

Pike (1992), a public school teacher, describes the circumstances which led to selecting home-schooling for his children. Pike (1992, p.564) relates the injustice served to adopted non-Caucasion children in the local school system. It is suggested, that while teachers were never intentionally discriminatory, their response to the children's behaviour and performance showed that "It was simply *expected* that they wouldn't measure up."

Delayed Development

Gough (1999) reports on the growing concern that children are suffering from large amounts of close work at a young age. This article suggests that starting children on school tasks at a young age may cause eye problems. A comparison is made between Australia and Asian countries that have long had a tendency for intense academic work. The findings of this study support Moore's (1975) concern that beginning school early may actually have a negative effect on the students. Moore (1975, p157) claims that over-stimulation at a young age may cause children to 'stall on a learning plateau' that could last for life. Peacock (1998, p.1) argues against starting children at school early, quoting research suggesting that "most children are not ready for schoolwork until the age of about eight years and boys may be ready even later. That

does not mean that they cannot do it but rather that they pay a price in health and are later handicapped by the lack of a solid foundation."

Disabilities

Students who suffer from developmental delays are disadvantaged by traditional schooling, which classifies students into age groups. If these students are unable to perform what is considered appropriate at their age, then they are seen as having a disability of some kind. Teachers are often hesitant to take such students, as they are difficult to teach when enrolled in the mainstream classroom. This is not always the situation, but often such a situation 'will require considerable effort on the teacher's part" (Foreman 1996, p.6).

Individual differences

Children with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder may find it difficult working in the mainstream classroom. Dahm (1996, p.69) suggests that the needs of these children may not be easily met in the classroom as they need short focused lessons to capture their attention. This is followed by the comment that such children may benefit from home-schooling, which allows them to "...learn without the constant reminders to sit still or pay attention that can lower their self-esteem." This idea is supported by Carey (1998, p.11) who quotes a home-schooling parent who selected this educational option due to their son's need for activity and time outdoors. It is stated with regard to this child, that "'he'd just bounce off the walls' in a traditional school."

Strain from early beginnings at school

In the late 1970's, Moore began challenging educational authorities in the United States. There were growing trends encouraging parents to start children at school early. Moore (1985) argued that children were suffering from the large amounts of time spent in formal schooling and close tasks, and quotes research suggesting that, on average, children under the age of eight do not have the reasoning skills required for reading and writing. With reference to Elkind, Moore (1985) states that starting school at a young age fosters 'burnout' in young children, thus, rather than enhancing their abilities, early school starting may actually inhibit children's academic potential. Children who begin formal schooling at an early age often become weary of the schooling process. Their still developing minds and senses are not able to cope with the intensity of the formal schooling process. Rowler is quoted as claiming that "[A]ll of the learning necessary for success in high school can be accomplished in only two or three years of formal study skill" (Moore, 1985, p.63).

Board of Studies (1993, p.15) states that, although some children may "...benefit from delayed entry..." into the school environment, they must be enrolled by their sixth birthday. In light of such information, parents seem to have little choice in deciding when their child may begin school. Parker (1987, p.19) states that parents may choose when to send their children to school, however it is clear that this choice is only until their sixth birthday. This appears to leave little option for parents who believe that at six years of age, their child is not ready for formal schooling.

Parsons (1985, p.61) argued against a regulated time for beginning children at school. The concept was that children should begin school when they are ready to commence

learning. "This approach would allow primary teachers to manage family-style classrooms, in which experienced students would help the newcomers learn social and academic skills" (Parsons 1985, p.62). Parsons' (1985) intent was that children should not have to wait until a specific age, but this logic may also be extended to beginning later.

Unrealistic Age Expectations

When the age expectations of school are compared to other areas of life, they are quite unique. Children begin walking and talking at different ages. Marriage is recommended not at a specific age, but rather, when it is appropriate for the couple involved. Death does not occur at a set age. Even in education there is an inconsistency. Those individuals who go on to complete education at a tertiary level are given greater flexibility to work at their own pace. Some graduate with a PhD at 23 years of age. Others achieve their doctorate just before – or even after – they retire. Age is clearly not the universal measure of achievement and yet the school system feels justified in placing that parameter on its students.

Gifted Children

Catering for the full spectrum of classroom ability is often beyond the ability of the classroom teacher. This is an area that home-schooling parents are concerned about. Dahm (1996) states that home-schooling assists gifted children as they are able to be extended towards their interests, without the hindrance of the classroom structure.

Pull Factors

There are many families who have not recognised negative issues within schools as crucial factors affecting their decision to home-school their children. In many cases parents rather than feeling that "They are doing badly", will approach home-schooling with a "We can do better" perspective. In many cases these are Christian families who feel that it is their responsibility as parents to train their children. Other parents quote educationalists who state that children who have individualised attention will achieve higher academically than those who are working in a large classroom. Education is not simply the inclusion of a child into an educational institution. It is not a process of training an individual to fit a specific role in society. Education is the life-long development of a person. It involves fitting students with the tools required to face what life sends their way. There is no set method to ensure this end. Each child is different. Every person has a unique life and therefore requires unique training and skills to prepare him/her for that life.

Parents as Educators

Board of Studies (1993) provides information for parents of children approaching the legal age for enrolment in school. This information deals with such topics as selecting the appropriate school and ensuring ease of transition for parents and child. It becomes clear that the accepted parental role in education is to select an appropriate school and enrol their child by six years of age. This is contrary to much educational research that details the essential role of parents in the education of their children.

Topping (1986, p.1) comments that "...there is a sense in which parents acting as educators must be a phenomenon as old as human culture itself." It must be noted that

while Topping speaks about parents as educators, the parents are not seen as holding the primary role in the educational process. Parents are simply supporters and enhancers of the task undertaken by the official education system. A similar attitude is shown by Finn (1998, p. 20), who quotes Wang (1993) as showing that "...the home environment is among the most important influences on academic performance." Finn (1998) uses this argument to persuade parents to work with their children at home *after school* to enhance their learning. Harvey (1994) encourages parents to influence the success of their child at school by teaching them at home before they reach school age.

O'Brien (1990, p.109) states that children will improve as parents take a greater interest in their education. This is supported by Kong (1991, p.26) who begins with the comment; "We all know that children benefit when their parents play a starring role in their education." As the article continues, however, it is clearly seen that while the parents may play the lead part, the school system directs the drama. Once more Kong (1991) is encouraging teachers to work together with parents, to get the parents involved, ***not*** to give the parents the responsibility for the education of the child.

There has been much written regarding the important role of parents in education. Authors such as Amm & Juan (1994), Finn (1998), Harvey (1994), Herwig (1982), Kong (1991), Newman (1994-95), Sternberg (1994), Strickland & Morrow (1990), and Topping (1986) all argue that parents need to be more involved in the process of their children's education. It must be noted however that none of these authors encourage the idea of parents taking full responsibility for the education of their child,

simply that they be involved. The school is always present as the source of education, with some assistance from the parents.

There are numerous additional authors who speak on the issue of parental involvement in education (Berger, 1981; Booth & Dunn, 1996; Green, 1968; Haigh, 1975; King & Watson, 1976; Stacey, 1991; Swap, 1987; Wallat & Goldman, 1979; Wolfendale, 1983; Woodhead, 1981), in each case it is clear that parents are an important element in the child's education. However not one of these authors addresses the possibility of allowing the parent to educate their own children.

It is clear that the education system as a whole is hesitant to relinquish the control that it currently holds over the lives of students. This control is challenged by Maglen (1992, p.28) who argues "...if decision makers in the Ministry and the systematic schools are so convinced about the merits of modelling school learning on that which occurs in the family, surely we can accept the arguments of those who go one step further and wish to educate their children at home."

Individual Instruction

Clay (1993) speaks of the challenge that results when children arrive at school with different backgrounds and ability levels. Inherent in this is the concept that children will eventually need to perform at the same level. The comment is made that teachers are forced into working with large numbers of children, due to the formal education system, however it is clearly stated that individual instruction is the ideal situation for children. In a study of previously home-schooled adults, this individualised working

program is cited as one of the important aspects of the home-school experience (Knowles & Muchmore, 1993).

Teacher/Student Relationship

Croft (in press) showed that the teacher/student relationship forms a significant portion of the basis of learning. Students learn best from a teacher that they either like or respect. It is unfortunate that this situation is not often able to occur in mainstream schools. Teachers face difficulty in forming relationships with students because of large student numbers. The fear of litigation due to charges of sexual impropriety has a significant effect on the way in which teachers interact with students. Teachers are warned against having too great a contact with students due to a concern that their actions may be misunderstood and misconstrued (Nolan & Spencer, 1997).

Individualised Learning

Home-schooling, due to its nature, allows a greater flexibility for each student. Children are able to learn at their own pace and according to their own abilities. This is recognised in a University of Michigan study of previously home-schooled adults. These individuals told how the self-directed curriculum and individualised learning, allowed through home-schooling, were major factors in aiding their development (Hubbs, 1994, p.5).

Benefits of Home-Schooling

The Australian Christian Academy (ACE, 1999) list the benefits of home-schooling as including:

- Encouraging close family relationships
- Individual attention and assessment
- Students learn confidence and strength of character
- Absence of negative peer influences (p.3).

OBJECTIONS TO HOME-SCHOOLING

Concerns Expressed

Two often raised concerns regarding home-schooling are academic achievement (Carey, 1998; Carins, 1997; Latham, 1998) and socialisation (Carey, 1998; Knowles & Muchmore, 1993). Home-schoolers report questions specifically concerning their right to apparently deny their children opportunities and skills that critics see as essential for dealing with modern society (Cole, 1998). However, it is clear that home-schooled children are not actually deprived in either of these areas. There have been a variety of studies dealing with these specific issues and it has been shown that schooling at home does not negatively affect the social or academic skills of the children. Several studies indicate that students who have been home-schooled tend to show above average results in their literacy and numeracy levels.

Socialisation

Socialisation has been an often discussed point of concern with home-schooling. Many fear that a child will suffer from the lack of 'normal' socialisation, specifically, with their school friends. Guterson (1992, p.52) suggests that when the question of socialisation is raised, it often means "How do you expect [your children] to understand people well enough to get ahead in the world if you don't send them to school?" It is important that children are taught the social skills needed for life, however it would be absurd to suggest that school is the only place to learn social skills.

Scherer (1998, p.8) speaks about the toxicity that results when society is segregated into age groups, indicating that there should be greater levels of interaction between the different age groupings. The African Proverb *It takes a whole village to raise a child* emphasises this need for community which lies in direct contrast to the unnatural age segregation prevalent in the mainstream school system. Children are placed with peers of their own age thus limiting their opportunities for learning from other age groups. Same-age peers take on the traditional role of parents for many children, having more contact with each other than their parents. This means that these children are deprived of the value of learning from the experience of other, older members of the community.

Carey (1998, p.12) suggests that rather than facing a lack of socialisation, "home-schooling tends to foster a kind of spectrum socialization...not spending the bulk of your time with people your own age but being able to socialize equally well with kids younger than you, kids older than you, and adults." Lines (1996, p.66) also notes that "No conclusive research suggests that time spent with same-aged peers is preferable to time spent with people of varying ages." Indeed Metts (1996, p.73) comments that home-schooled children benefit from '...intergenerational social interactions rather than primarily age-segregated ones." Metts (1996, p.73) goes on to elaborate in stating that these children "...are not only socialized, they are also civilized and sensitive." The intergenerational view of community is supported by many home-schooling parents, who believe that their children are experiencing a more valuable socialisation than schools are able to provide, because they have a greater opportunity for interaction with a wider variety of people.

Home-schooled families tell of their community activities, commenting that "Our program emphasizes being a part of our community. We take frequent field trips and rely heavily on our community's abundance of gifted resource people" (Terpstra, 1994, p.58). Other sources detail the community base of home-schooling. Lines (1996, p.66) tells of the strong bonds that home-school groups develop , commenting that there is a "...high level of sharing, networking, collaboration and cooperative learning."

In relation to the issue of socialisation, Hubbs (1994, p.4) quotes a University of Michigan study, conducted by Knowles, of 53 adults who were taught at home. Specifically addressing socialisation Knowles (in Hubbs, 1994, p.4), comments

> Public school educators and other critics ...question whether home-educated children will be able to become productive, participating members of diverse and democratic society. But I found no evidence that these adults were even moderately disadvantaged in either respect.

Children who are prepared for the pressures of society will be far more able to deal with these pressures than those who are not prepared. It is argued that parents who home-school their children, using the natural learning method are preparing them for these stresses in a positive and loving atmosphere, before the children are left to face the responsibilities themselves (Peacock, 1998). Indeed Peacock (1998) further argues that social contribution is enhanced by having children engaged in educational activities that by their nature are beneficial to the community.

Parents will select to send their children to school even when they feel that they are not ready, simply because they want them to be with children their own age. The need to be with same-age peers is a socially constructed need. More specifically, it is a need constructed by traditional educational systems. Society itself does not operate on such a level. In the workplace, each individual interacts and works with persons of a range of age groups, indeed they may not associate with anyone their own age. Holtrop (1996, p.75) asks the question, "...how many adults deal with just their own age group at work, church, clubs or leisure events." Holtrop (1996) argues that the social skills required for life are those skills used in dealing with people of a variety of age groups.

Addressing the mainstream education system, Mullens (1999, p.25) focuses on the McGaw Green Paper, initiating changes in the NSW HSC in which "McGaw...explicitly states he is not interested in the social role of the school environment." This is in direct contrast to the home-schooling families mentioned above who deal specifically with the social aspect of their children's education.

Academic Issues

Academic issues also are a cause of concern for those opposing home-schooling, however, this concern is ill-founded. Lines (1996, p.66) quotes Ray & Wartes (1991) in stating that "...virtually all the available data show that scores of the tested home-schooled children are above average, and comparable to the higher achievement pattern of private school students." Latham (1998, p.85) draws attention to research suggesting that home-schoolers when compared to United States national norms, 'were typically about the 60th percentile in math, science and verbal skills."

The US Senate (Legislative Alert, 1999, p.2) also recognises the academic achievements of home-schooled children, acknowledging both the numerous studies demonstrating that home-schooled children achieve highly on nation-wide tests and a specific study conducted in March 1999. This study recorded home-schooled students as scoring in the "70th to 80th percentiles among all students nationwide who took those exams (p.2)." The study also indicated that "25 percent of home schooled students were studying at a level one or more grades above normal for their age (p.2)." In addition, other studies were referred to showing that home-schooled children performed extremely well at college level "with the average grade point average of home schoolers exceeding the college average (p.2)."

WHO CAN HOME-SCHOOL?

Areas to be addressed

There are two areas that must be addressed in determining who is able to home-school. Firstly, the legal issues must be looked at because the governing bodies differ between states and therefore laws regarding home-schooling are also different. A second area of consideration is the personal capability of the parent – and particular family involved – to home-school effectively.

Legal Issues

The laws relating to home-schooling differ in each state of Australia, however, in each state legislation focuses on the measurable dimensions of education, particularly "enrolment and attendance"(Jackson, 1999, 38). The New South Wales Education Act (1990) sets out a procedure for enrolment as a home-schooler. This procedure

involves the advice of an 'authorised person' regarding the application. The Minister is to make the decision on the basis of information given by the 'authorised person'. The Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS) has added to this requirement by developing a list of guidelines to be implemented by 'authorised persons' when investigating potential home-schooling situations (OBOS 1998). These guidelines include procedures for contacting and visiting the family involved. Points assessed in considering a potential home-school are:

a) Teaching/learning programs (including past programs in the case of applications for renewal of registration)
b) Provision for a record of learning activities (and past records in the case of application for renewal of registration)
c) Provision for records of student achievement and progress in the key learning areas (and past records in the case of application for renewal of registration)
d) Educational facilities and equipment
e) Premises and the home building in terms of light, ventilation and suitability for educational purposes
f) Evidence of the teacher/instructor's commitment to undertake home-schooling (OBOS 1998, 3).

The guide also outlines the key learning areas that are required to be covered and the requirements for curriculum coverage and recording. There has been conflict surrounding these guidelines. Dr Julia Boxx refused to comply with Board of Studies guidelines, which were claimed to have no legislative authority. Dr Boxx challenged the legal right of the OBOS to require such detailed information as outlined in the guidelines (Raethel, 1997). The Boxx family won the case and were granted re-registration (Webb, 1997). The perspective of the Boxx family is not held by all home-schoolers. Hardy (1998) suggests that the legal right of the OBOS is not the essential issue, rather this is a focus on irrelevant aspects. Hardy (1998, p.5) claims

that neither the Guidelines, nor the Board of Studies provide the necessary input into ensuring that home-schooled children are provided with the highest quality result. Instead, it is suggested that if committed parents follow their natural responsibility of care for their own children, "the controls are unnecessary".

A brief outline of legal details relating to home-schooling in each state follows, to provide a broader perspective of home-schooling in Australia.

In Queensland the law dictates that home-schooling must be carried out by a teacher registered with the State (Jackson, 1999).

Northern Territory legislation states requires compulsory attendance and enrolment unless an exemption is given by the Minister for a set time period (Jackson, 1999).

In Western Australia "there have been amendments made to the home education sections of the upgraded Education Act; these are still being formed into legislation" (Jackson, 1999, p.35).

The South Australian Education Act is under review, although current legislation tends to follow a school-like approach (Jackson, 1999).

The Australian Capital Territory is working under the 1935 Education Act, which requires parents to provide 'regular and efficient education' for their children.

Victoria, dictates that parents are required to ensure that the child is being provided with an education comparable with what they would receive in a school, however the parents are given freedom in selecting how this education may be implemented (Jackson, 1999).

In contrast to the other states which offer little or no support to home-schooling families, Tasmania provides an "active public support programme for home educators" (Jackson, 1999, p.43). This is further supported by Carins (1997, p.54) who comments "Tasmania has shown leadership in the recognition and management of home education". Carins (1997, p54) illustrates this point with reference to the Tasmanian Education Act 1994 which has given home-schooling the standing of "the third mode of education in Tasmania." This recognition assures parents a freedom of choice and ensures that "Home educated students are not disadvantaged when pursuing employment and training" (Carins, 1997, p.55). There are other benefits to home-schoolers that have emerged as official recognition is increased. "Registered home educated students are able to seek financial assistance through the provisions of Austudy, Abstudy, Isolated Students' Assistance Allowance, Student Spectacle Allowance and Bus Pass Concessions within the normal eligibility requirements" (Carins, 1997, p.56).

Parental Capability

While educating a child may seem a daunting task to many parents, it must be realised that their role is as a guide to assist their child in gaining the basic skills for education. Once the child has developed these skills their education becomes their own responsibility. As the child becomes more capable of maintaining his/her own educational progress, the role of the parent becomes less intense (Peacock, 1998).

Many parents are able to teach their own children. Research supports the fact that parents do not need teaching qualifications in order to effectively educate their own children right through the school years (ACE, 1999).

Concerns regarding education may emerge from one's personal definition of education. In order to recognise their ability to educate, one must first be aware of his/her own ideology of education. Society in general views the terms 'education' and 'school' as synonymous. Lean (1968, p.4) summarises this view in the statement "When we want a loaf of bread or a carton of milk we go to the grocery store for it. When we want 'education,' we go to school for it." In much of western society education/schooling is viewed as a commodity – indeed one that many are prepared to pay dearly for.

This view of education as an object or commodity is a narrow viewpoint, challenged by many educators. Illich (1972, p.7) comments that "most people learn what they know outside of school." This statement is supported by Lean (1968, p.5), who quotes John Dewey. "Schooling is a part of the work of education, but education in its full meaning includes all the influences that go to form the attitude and dispositions (of desire as well as of belief), which constitute dominant habits of mind and character." Barry & King (1993, p.6) tell of the teacher's duty to "nurture students", thus enhancing the "maximum intellectual, social, physical, emotional and spiritual growth."

Each of these authors describe a philosophy of education that deals with more than the content of schooling. Education is a preparation for life and a development of the whole individual. This is the education that home-schooling parents are able to provide for their children.

Considerations for Potential Home-schoolers

Carey (1998, p.14) is open about the effort required,

> Home-schooling is not for everyone. It takes time, patience, dedication, energy, skill and love. If even one of those is lacking, it will not work.

This comment is supported by Dahm (1996, p.71) who states that

> For the majority of families, in fact, home schooling is not a workable situation. It requires major lifestyle changes that many families are not able or willing to make.

There are no promises that home-schooling will be an easy road. Riemer (1994, p.54) stresses the need for potential home-schoolers to "carefully examine their commitment to the idea." stating that "the cost and sacrifice must be measured against the benefit." Latham (1998, p.85) comments on the time and responsibility that is involved with a decision to home-school, emphasised by the statement: "clearly home schooling is not for everyone;"

While these comments focus on the difficulties of home-schooling, they form part of a balanced view of home-schooling. Riemer (1994, p.54) also states that "Parents who decide to live by certain principles will find a way to make home-schooling work," concluding with "...I can assure those who make the choice to home-school that it's worth it."

Home-schooling should not be assumed to be the only educational option. It is not the intention of the supporters of home-schooling to disregard the main-stream system as a valid educational choice (Jeub, 1994). It is important to note however, as Jeub (1994, p.52) continues to state: "Home schooling, too is a healthy educational

choice." In a world where parents are struggling to do the best for their children, it is important that those who wish to home-school have the freedom to choose that option.

Community Awareness of Home-schooling

"Many people in Australia do not know that they have any choice but to send their children to school at the required age" (Cole, 1998, p.19). By this statement Cole (1998) is suggesting that there is another option. This option is listed in the New South Wales Education Reform Act 1990, Part 5, 22, which states:

> It is the duty of the parent of a child of or above the age of 6 and below the age of 15 to cause the child:
>
> a) to be enrolled at a government school or registered non-government school at all times when the school is open for the child's instruction or participation in school activities; or
>
> b) to be registered for home schooling under Division 6 of Part 7 and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.

Board of Studies (1993) lists home-schooling twice, both times when referring to NSW law. However, there is no direction given as to how one might find more information about home-schooling. It is clear that parents are given a legal right to educate their children at home, but there is little encouragement for them to act upon this right.

The official figures state that there are 534 students currently enrolled as home-schoolers in New South Wales (HERLIN, 1999) in addition to the 760 Distance Education students (School Statistics, 1999). Despite this fact, there is still little known about home-schooling in Australia. Most people simply are not aware of its

existence as an option for their children. Many more are unsure as to what it means, and insecure about their abilities to educate their own children.

Although home-schooling is officially recognised as an educational option in New South Wales, there is little information to advertise this fact. In essence home-schooling is allowed but not encouraged. It is advisable however that those who are concerned for their children's education be made aware of **all** the options available to them.

"United States home educators and home instructed students should be recognized and celebrated for their efforts to improve the quality of education (Legislative Alert, 1999, p.2)." Providing that home-schoolers in New South Wales are consistent with the high standard shown in the United States, this comment should certainly apply to them. Official recognition and encouragement should be directed both to those families currently involved and those who would appreciate the opportunity to become involved in home-schooling.

Aim of the study

This project was undertaken in order to assist families who are investigating educational options by providing them with an understanding of home-schooling as a viable educational option. It was intended that this project will provide information of possible home-school options thus enabling families to select carefully the system and style most suited to their unique situation. Another intention of the project was to assess the availability of resources for home-schoolers in New South Wales. It was intended that this information would be compiled in an 'ideas and options' kit to provide assistance for parents who are interested in home-schooling their children. Rather than giving a model for developing a home-school environment, this kit was intended to provide ideas and assist parents in analysing the available educational options and selecting which option might be most appropriate for their particular situation.

Chapter 3
Methodology

There is no perfect school in every respect, and there is no mother or father who can shrug off the responsibility to have the home be part of the education of their child...

Schaeffer (1975, p.174)

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

a) To conduct an extensive literature review of material related to home-schooling;

b) To locate home-school group leaders willing to be involved in the survey;

c) To obtain information from Board of Studies regarding legal aspects of home-schooling;

d) To mail surveys to each group leader to distribute to home-schooled families;

e) To follow up surveys with phone calls to the home-school group leaders in order to increase response rate 2 weeks after the original mailing of surveys;

f) To make second follow up phone calls 1 week after step d);

g) To analyse results of surveys using a process of triangulation;

h) To contact those who had stated willingness to be interviewed;

i) To conduct phone interviews;

j) To compile data; and

To analyse data using a combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures.

Literature Review

An extensive literature review was conducted utilising the libraries of Avondale College, the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney, the New South Wales State Library and Macquarie University. Information was obtained from New South Wales Board of Studies regarding legal aspects of home-schooling.

Population

The population was identified as being families in New South Wales who do not send their primary school aged children to school. This population includes registered and unregistered home-schooling families as well as families enrolled in distance education.

Many of these families felt that the right and responsibility of educating a child belonged with the parents and not with the Government. They did not see that the Government should be able to dictate to them whether or not they were able to educate their children. This prevented them from seeking registration through the Government Home School Board. There were others who disagreed with the philosophy of the education system. They subscribed to such ideas as "natural learning", and student responsibility for learning. With these families it may be difficult to gain accreditation as a home-school, as there was no intention of developing a school-type environment. They saw their approach as an alternative to schools rather than a relocation of school.

It was unknown how many families this population includes. The official figure given by the OBOS for those registered with home-schooling in New South Wales was 534

students (HERLIN, 1999). Strange (1998) however, commented that due to the numbers of unregistered families, it was not possible to accurately assess the number of home-schooled students in Australia. Despite this difficulty, Strange estimated that there were approximately 9015 home-schooled students in New South Wales. This figure was calculated by comparison with New Zealand home-educators and did not include Distance Education students. There were 760 primary students enrolled through Distance Education centres around New South Wales (School Statistics, 1999).

Sample

A list of possible contacts was obtained through the Australia Home Education Web Page (Herlin, 1999). The respondents were randomly selected from a list of Home Educators Group coordinators in regions around the state. One leader was randomly selected from each region in order to give a general coverage of the whole of New South Wales. Phone contact was made with these group leaders to seek their assistance with survey distribution (see Appendix #2). Surveys (160) were sent to these coordinators who then distributed them to home-schooled families in their local area. The final sample distribution consisted of 135 families.

Instruments

Survey

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. This was developed by the researcher, as there was no standardised survey to cover the areas addressed in this study. The questionnaire was used in order to gain information from large numbers of

people in a short space of time. These surveys were directed to parents, because they are the ones responsible for the education of home-schooled students.

The aim of the survey was to identify some of the characteristics of the home-schooling community in order to enable beginning home-schoolers, and those who were interested in home-schooling, to develop a greater awareness of the home-schooling situation. The survey had a quantitative element, and consisted also of qualitative questions. This project was designed to demonstrate that home-schooling can be successfully undertaken by a wide variety of individuals and in many different situations. Therefore, the purpose of the survey was not to analyse the number of people who followed a particular style of schooling, but to identify the variety of styles which were possible. The anticipated result would consist of a number of different home-schooling situations.

A consent form was attached to each survey to outline the rights of the respondents as required by the Avondale College Human Resources Ethics Committee (see Appendix #3).

Survey Structure (see Appendix #4)

1. Geographical Location of Home-schoolers.

This question referred to the location of the family and was designed to provide an indication of areas that may be used in developing home-schools. Anecdotal evidence suggested that social views tend to see home-schooling as particularly relating to the isolated areas of the state, therefore this question was designed to investigate where home-schoolers actually do live.

2. Education Levels of Parents/Guardians

Question 2. detailed the formal education completed by each of the parents/guardians. This question was designed to address the misguided concept that only *formally* trained teachers are able to teach children.

3. 4. 5. Details about the Children

These questions provided an indication of the number and ages of the children involved in home-schooling in order to gain an understanding of the family structure.

6.Parent's Occupations

This question was designed to discover what areas of the workforce have chosen to home-school. The question was aimed at determining whether homes-schooling parents were trained teachers or members of other professions.

7. Local Resources

This question was designed to assess whether home-schooled students had access to the same resources as students in a mainstream school.

8. Ownership of Decision to Home-school

The aim of the question was to assess the input of the family in selecting the type of schooling including an evaluation of how much input the students had in choosing to home-school.

9. Motivation

Motivation was one of the key areas of interest. This question sought to identify specific reasons for families beginning with home-schooling. It was anticipated that these reasons would differ between families, however, there may be general trends in motivation.

10. Supervisor

Question 10 served to identify who was the main educator of the children.

11. Other Educator

This question was designed to provide insight into the number of persons involved in the education of the children.

12. Time

The question asking how long respondents had been home-schooling served to assess several points:

a) Whether there had been a growth in the number of home-schoolers in recent years.

b) Whether families stayed with home-schooling for a length of time,

   And,

c) Whether perceptions changed with time spent involved with home-schooling.

13. Initial Contact

Question 13 was another focus question for this study. It was intended that the kit would focus on the areas that were used for contact.

14. Assistance

This question was included to determine the level of assistance needed when beginning a home-schooling situation. It was also intended to identify key resources that may be shared with other beginning home-schoolers.

15. 16. 17. 18. 19. Schooling systems

These questions assessed the function of current correspondence schooling systems. They were designed to evaluate whether parents saw these systems as a necessary element in home-schooling, or whether they preferred to operate their own system. It also identified resources for sharing as in question 14.

20. High School

This question was included to assess what home-schoolers think regarding secondary schooling. It was anticipated that some would choose to home-school for the first few years, allowing their children sufficient time to develop in the home environment until it was considered that they were ready to go to school. It was expected that there would be others who elected to keep their children at home for reasons other than delayed maturity.

21. School Type

It was intended that this question would identify the school systems that receive the most support from home-schooling families.

22.23. Own age peers

Responses to this question showed same-age interactions of home-schooled children.

24. 25. 26. Cross age peers

This question was designed to assess the role of home-schooling in providing interaction with peers of other age groups.

27. 28. 29. Computer Technology

The purpose of these questions was to identify the attitudes of home-schooling families regarding use of computers/computer technology in an educational context.

30. Timetable

This question was designed to identify whether the home-schooling families surveyed operate a structured or non-structured program for their children. It was decided not to ask families which style they preferred, instead it was decided that a timetable would show the answer more consistently. Using this method the researcher would be able identify the results consistently, rather than each family having a different idea of what is structured and what is not.

31. Study Areas

This question was intended to explore whether home-schoolers operated under the same basic structure or whether they worked to their own style. It was expected from anecdotal evidence that though there would be many different layouts, they would fall under three main categories consistent with the timetable groupings as follows.

a) Formal, where students had a school room set aside which was used for their lessons.
b) Semi-formal, in which students worked sometimes at a desk, and sometimes in other areas; and
c) Unstructured, where students worked everywhere throughout the house, depending on their needs at any particular time.

It was expected that these study layouts would match the timetables to a certain extent. Families with a structured timetable were anticipated to use a formal study area. Similarly, it was likely that those who operated an informal program would use whatever area would suit the situation.

Enhancing Response Rate

It was not possible to deal directly with the respondents due to the distribution method (ie. the distribution through a third person), however follow up phone calls were conducted to those who distributed the surveys. This step was taken in order to encourage subjects to return their surveys. Individuals and families completed the survey in their own time without interaction with the researcher. The survey was anonymous and returned by post. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was included with each survey to enhance response rate.

Interview (see Appendix #5 & #6)

Interviews were chosen as a means of gathering information in order to allow a greater understanding of personal perspectives. Participants were asked to provide

their name and address only if they were willing to be interviewed. While the option was given for respondents to send address sheets under separate cover, all of those parents willing to be interviewed returned their name and address with the survey. This procedure was adopted to ensure the privacy of the families who did not wish to be identified and to facilitate contact with potential interviewees. Interviews were conducted with those who expressed willingness to be contacted. This interview focused on a range of questions which emerged from the survey results as requiring further explanation.

Seven parents were interviewed, representing 4.8% of the sample and 10.3% of the survey response. Each interview was approximately 20-30 minutes long and consisted of 10 questions (see Appendix #6). Care was taken to ensure that the main questions were focused but not limiting (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.204). These questions dealt with issues rising out of the survey responses. The interview was used to assess apparent trends and to explore new areas of possible research direction.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed according to the variety of information received. Some of the information was used quantitatively to provide an overview of the data i.e. ages, locations, number of children, education level etc. However the bulk of the work dealt with identifying factors and methods relating to the home-schooling situation. This study followed the format of a descriptive study. The data were qualitatively analysed according to a set of questions determined by observing the trends which emerged from the surveys as significant to the study, through a process of "Triangulation" with other members of the research group at Avondale College. This

process identified trends found in the data and was used to develop the interview questions.

All copying of survey responses, for those who were involved in the triangulation process, was done in the Education Department Photocopy room at a time when there would not be people using the room in an endeavour to ensure that the confidentiality, of the surveys, was maintained. Five copies were made of each survey, which were then distributed among a select group of researchers at Avondale College. The group read the surveys and noted any apparent trends. A group meeting was held at which time the trends were shared and a collaborative assessment was agreed to as to which trends were significant.

Chapter 4
Findings



RESPONSE RATE

The response rate to the surveys is shown in **Table #1.**

Number of surveys posted to home-school coordinators	160
Number returned undelivered	16
Actual number given to home-schooled families	135
Number returned completed	68
Return Rate	**50.37%**

Table #1

A return rate of 50.37% was highly acceptable considering the type and distribution style of the survey, including:

- The length of the survey – 5 pages
- Time and thought required in completion of the survey
- Distribution style which included posting the surveys to a third person – local home-school group coordinator – for delivery among home-schoolers. This was done to ensure anonymity of subjects who may not have been willing to offer names and addresses.
- Inability to follow up subjects due to the third-person distribution. This meant that phone calls could not be made to encourage returns.
- The "Unknown Researcher" effect caused by posting surveys through a third party.

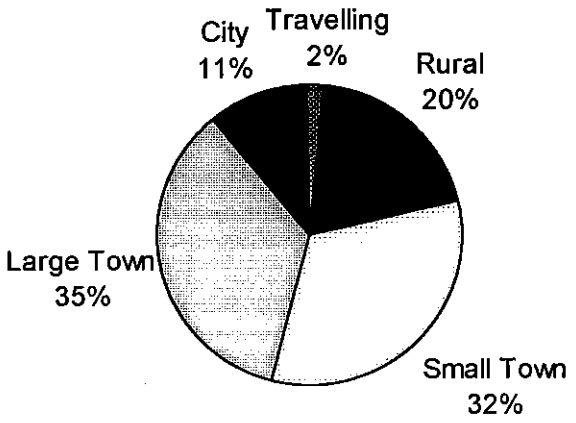
SURVEY FINDINGS

This analysis of the qualitative aspects of the survey results incorporated a process of Triangulation which was undertaken to identify trends in the data. The themes given were consistent among those who analysed that data. The findings of the surveys shown below are set out question by question.

Question 1

Location

With regards to location, the results showed that home-schooling was not restricted to any specific location type **see graph #1**.



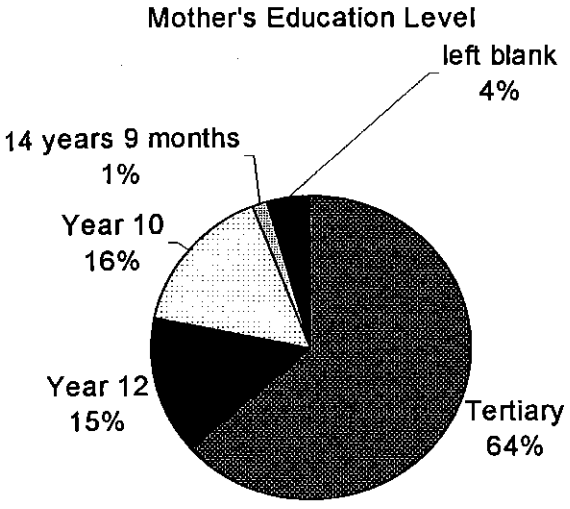
Graph #1

Question 2

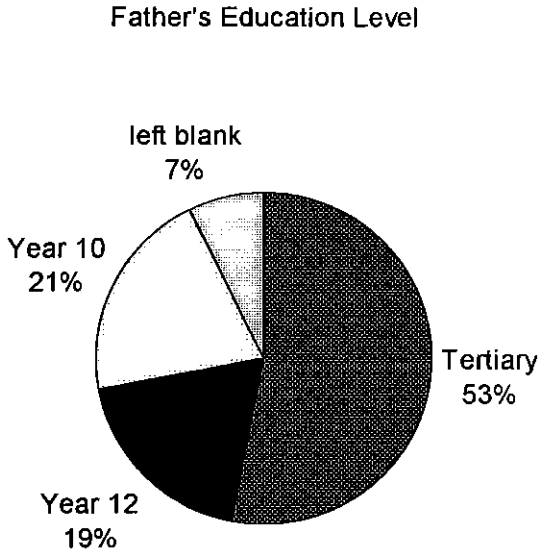
Education levels

More mothers than fathers had tertiary education **see graphs #2 & #3**. In both cases tertiary education represented the overwhelming majority of subjects. Of the remainder, there was an almost even division between Year 10 and Year 12 levels of

educational achievement. In most cases when the mother was the only one with a tertiary qualification that qualification was a T.A.F.E. (Institute of Technical and Further Education) course rather than being a university degree.

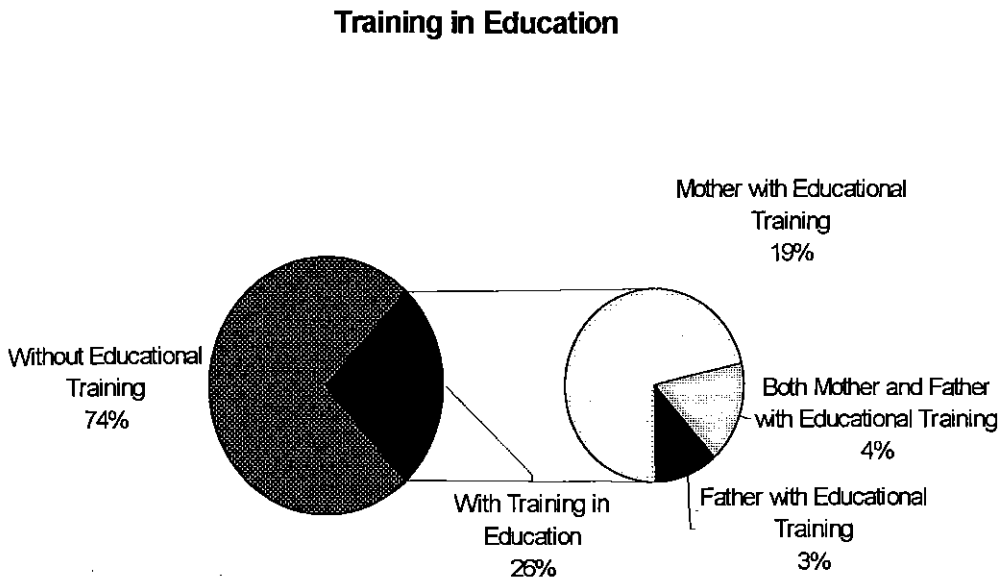


Graph #2



Graph#3

One parent added a note in response to this question. "[The] question of parent's education...is extremely limiting because it shows where the parents WERE not where they ARE. Eg. In the 20 years since leaving school at 15, a father may have taught himself animal husbandry, to build a house and keep a market garden. Or he may speak three languages and record CD's [sic]. (Same is true for mum's of course!)"



Graph #4

The majority of parents did not have training in education **see graph #4**. Although the question asked for completion of education levels, several parents listed educational training with the stipulation that it was undertaken, but not completed. Therefore the results have been listed as educational training, not educational qualifications. Of those parents who had had educational training, most were mothers. In 4% of cases both parents were trained in education. In only 3% of families was the father the only one with educational training.

Question 3

How many children do you have?

There was a total of 223 children in the 68 families that responded. This was an average of 3.5 children per family, representing a large family when compared with the Australian average of 1.9 dependent children per family (ABS, 1999).

Question 4

How many children are being home-schooled?

There were a total of 158 children being home-schooled, an average of 2.3 home-schooled children per family. An area of possible future research would be to assess which children in the family were home-schooled and which were not.

Question 5

How old are your children?

The results of this question were not reliable and therefore were omitted. The survey question did not cover all age groups. In some cases extra categories were added by the respondents. Other respondents were unsure whether to include children who were not currently being home-schooled.

Question 6

What are your occupations?

Mother's Occupation (See table #2)

The section entitled Home Duties included responses such as: home duties, home educator, housewife, couturier (teacher at home), mother, and teacher. Five respondents left this section blank, but because in each case the mother was listed as the main supervisor for the children, they were placed in the category of Home Duties.

Home Duties	50 (74%)
Home + Career Listed	9 (13%)
Career Listed	9 (13%)

Table #2

Where a career was shown the responses listed were: Rural Contractor, Massage Therapist, Clerical, Accountant, Midwife, Lecturer, Secretary/Business Partner, Artist and Psychologist.

Where a career was shown as well as home duties, the responses were: Part Time TAFE (College of Technical and Further Education) Teacher in Welfare, Secretary/ Farmer, Home Office, Nursery Worker, Part Time LOTE (Languages Other Than English) Teacher, Distribution Supervisor, Accounts/Typing etc, Home Business (Mail Order), and one respondent replied "Mother and a number of others".

Father's Occupation (See table 3)

Teaching		9
Clergy		3
Self-Employed		6
Contractors		3
Agriculture/Gardening		2
Fitting & Turning		4
Cabinet Making		2
House Painting		2
Electrician		2
Consultant		2
Engineer		3
Business/Finance		5
Unemployed		1
Other	**(See Below)**	15
No occupation listed	**(See Below)**	
	Father as Supervisor of Children	2
	No Father in Family	3
	Involved in Education of Children	3

Table #3

If there was only one response for any given occupation they were listed independently of Table #3. These responses included: Agricultural Employment

Agent, Travel Agent, Electronics Technician, Plumber, Power Plant Operator, Car Detailer, Technician, Driving Instructor, Shiatsu Therapist, Professional Photographer, Social Worker, Supervisor/Chemist, Development & Programs Manager, I.T. Industry (unclear whether I.T. represents Industrial Technology, or Information Technology), and Telstra Technician.

In the cases where there was no Father's occupation listed, the Father was Main supervisor (2 instances), Not present in family (3 instances), and Involved with children's education – not main supervisor (3 instances).

Question 7

What resources are located within 1 hour of your home?

Except for zoos and universities there was an overwhelming response that each of the resources listed in the survey was located near the homes of home-schoolers. There were a variety of responses listed in the 'other' section. These included: national parks; TAFE; historic houses; museums; art galleries; "everything in Sydney"; gymnasium; support group; the ocean; Christian library; civic theatre; movies; music centre; aquarium; a barter system; wetlands centre; botanic gardens; skating rink; indoor playground; dairy, fruit & veg, alpaca, ostrich, emu and worm farms; relatives; Conservatorium of Music; power stations; industries; community services; hospitals; Curriculum Resources Centre; CSIRO station; natural resources; bush; Culture and Arts Centre; bands and operas.

Without doubt this list would vary between locations, however as one parent commented, "There is very little that is <u>not</u> available within 1hour if you search."

Question 8

Whose decision was it to home-school the students?

In 41% of cases it was the parents' choice to begin home-schooling. Twenty-six percent listed that it was the decision of the whole family. In 18% of situations the decision was made by the student him/herself. The remainder (15%) of responses were made up of combinations of the possible responses (Parent & Students, Parent & Whole Family, All boxes ticked, Parent & Other friends and Teacher & Whole Family). Another possible area that was not included in this study, yet would be useful to investigate would be an analysis of which parent was the one to make the decision to home-school.

Question 9

What motivated the decision to begin home-schooling?

The motivations behind home-schooling were divided into two areas. One group listed problems with the mainstream schooling system – listed as push factors. The other group focused on the benefits of home-schooling – termed pull factors. Sample responses from these two groups are outlined below.

Pull Factors (Benefits of Home-schooling)

"...we wanted more input in their lives, not just the left over hours (ie. before and after school)."

"The desire to know what, if and how they are learning and therefore be able to tend to any special needs if they arise. The desire to allow them to develop naturally without peer pressure."

"It seemed the natural thing that they would grow and learn from a family/home based setting. As we observed how readily they learned from the situations that arose naturally in daily life we were confirmed in this."

"We are doing the right thing for our child – we are not much for the... mass institutionalization of education."

"I was inspired as it seemed a wholistic approach to learning. Since then, every experience the children have and every interaction I have with them, I believe is influencing them and educating them."

"Wanted children to develop to their full potential in terms of creativity, intellectual achievements etc. Wanted family to be main influence as children formed their world view – not peer group."

"I wanted to spend more time with my children. The school system had my children for the prime time of the day and for the most impressionable time of their lives. I seemed to get what was left over."

"Christian beliefs about parent responsibility and the type of education."

"We desired a Christian Education for our children, not available locally. A secure stable environment, within God's will. One of our boys couldn't read at 10 (six months later could read fluently."

"Family needs to spend time together."

"Having a 5 & 7 year old away from home & family for >8hours per day seemed too long, too tiring. Living in a beautiful place in the bush, but not having enough time just to 'be' and to 'play'. Realisation of advantages of one-to-one attention. Delightful flexibility of not having to squeeze into someone else's schedule/program/ideas. Realisation that God had given us (as parents) the

responsibility to train and educate our children and we didn't have to hand them over to someone else."

The prominent trends in this section were that of family relationships, and the God given responsibility for the education of children. Academic and social reasons feature in several instances as motivating factors. The general response may be summed up with the following comment from one respondent.

"We have no negative attitudes to schooling, but just think we can do a better job than the schools can."

Push Factors (Dissatisfaction with mainstream schooling)

"Lack of satisfaction with local Christian schools in the following areas: discipline, ethical standards, attitudes to worldliness, consistency in Christian principles."

"We both have an 'education' background as teacher/lecturers. Many products of the system seem unmotivated and assessment driven. We want our children to be autonomous learners motivated by a love of learning for its own sake."

"My children's difficulties at school. ...mainly social and authority problems, though...some academic problems too."

"My son...was struggling academically...and his self esteem was very low. [He] would have been lost in the system and into trouble. I had a choice, act now or accept the consequences."

" We were immensely happy with our children's education until they hit high school. The language, behaviour, drugs, violence and lack of parent input into secondary school got the better of all of us after 2 years."

"...the catalyst was bullying and my daughter being so unhappy with the social issues at school."

"Complete lack of confidence in the education system."

"Taught in high schools – not impressed, knew we could do better."

"Child and parents were unhappy with the school's response to problems."

"Dissatisfaction with existing structure."

Large Classes, Negative socialisation, Teaching style doesn't suit learning style

Deaf, "No school would fill the gap in her education. She needs 1 to 1 teaching which she can't have all the time at school."

"Child needed intensive one-on-one teaching due to fine gross motor skill problems."

"Dissatisfaction with schools of today."

"Dissatisfaction with socialisation at school."

"Too much homework, long way behind. We only have one chance at it and we thought we could do a better job."

"The socialisation in the school environment (especially the playground) was a stressful and detrimental force that caused great upset to both my daughters."

"Dissatisfaction with attended school, mostly with other children."

A general dissatisfaction with the schooling system was prevalent among these responses. These focus on the academic and social needs of the child. Many stated that the school was not catering for the needs of the children as well as the family could.

Question 10.

Who is the main supervisor for the students?

In 90% of cases the mother was listed as the main supervisor. Both the mother and father were listed in 7% of cases and in 2% of cases the father was listed as the main supervisor.

Question 11.

Who else is involved in the education of the students?

In most cases the parent who wasn't listed as the main supervisor was listed as being involved. Some subjects stated that there was no one else involved. In some cases respondents listed others as being involved in the education of the children. These include: church leaders, neighbours, friends, extra curricular teachers (dance, drama, gym, etc), grandparents, other home-education parents.

Question 12

How long have you been involved with home-schooling?

(see table #4)

Less than 1 year	8
1 year	4
2 years	14
3 years	6
4 years	7
5 years	8

6 years	8
7 years	5
8 years	1
9 years	2
10 years	3
11 years	-

12 years	1
13 years	-
14 years	-
15 years	1

Table #4

One parent spoke of involvement with home-schooling "since my eldest was born, officially 6 ½ years (since he turned 6)."

The majority of respondents had been home-schooling for 2 years or less. This may be because there was more information and acceptance of home-schooling, or that

families only stayed with home-schooling for a short period of time. It could also indicate that those families who had been involved for longer periods were more individualistic and therefore less involved with home-school groups.

Question 13

Where did they find out? (See table #5)

Friends (Other home-schoolers)	42
Media – mainly literature (See Below)	7
Literature & Other Home-schoolers	3
Unsure	5
Teacher's College	2
Location listed, not person	3
During own schooling	1
L'Abri (See Below)	1
Teacher Suggestion	2

Table #5

Media included isolated mentions of names such as Ivan Illich, Theodore Wade, Raymond & Dorothy Moore and the television personality Oprah Winfrey.

L'Abri is an international group which provides shelter for young people.

Question 14

Who has given you the most assistance in starting your home-school?

(See table #6)

Other home-schoolers	40
Books and other home-schoolers	8
Books	2
No-one	8
Teachers	3
Home-schooling curriculum centres	6
Blank	1

Table #6

One parent commented that

> to set up a 'home-school' implies that we try to replicate school at our home. Whereas some families do this (relatively few) most just live with their children at home helping them to grow in knowledge and skills – it really is nothing like school at all.

Question 15 - 19

Correspondence/Home-school System used

The vast majority of the respondents did not use any correspondence course. In most cases they developed their own curriculum. Some used other texts and courses as guides in developing their own program – much as a teacher would in school.

Each branch of the home-schooling population formed itself into a separate group. The survey was sent to a selection of 'home-educators'. The researcher was unaware of the significant differences existing between the terms home education and home-schooling. This difference may have affected the philosophies of the respondents as the home educators often developed their own curriculum and timetables. The number of students represented in this sample as studying through correspondence schools may not be a valid representation of the actual proportions.

Question 20

Would they send children to high school? (See table #7)

Yes	8
No	44
Maybe	16

Table #7

Yes

Eight subjects stated that they would send their children to high school. The main reasons were to provide them with technical and more specialised subjects that they did not feel capable of teaching. Others mentioned that the children wanted to experience the 'other side' of education. One parent who said this also added "I think it is valuable for children to go to high school if they haven't been damaged by the primary school experience."

No

Twenty-one listed push factors (negative attitude towards school) as the reasons for not sending their children to high-school. Many of these listed that the reasons for keeping kids out of primary school were all still there when they reached high-school, particularly peer pressure, bullying and the 'bad influences' of school. One parent listed that "Schools are too concerned with Academic Subjects unnecessary for ones future." Another commented "Standards of teaching, role modelling and professionalism seem to be even lower in high schools." In one instance the child "has begged me never to send him back." One comment related to university entrance. The parent declared that this was not "relevant any more as indicated by the fact that 62+% of uni. Students in Aust. have no HSC/TER or equivalent." In some cases the parents added a note that they would consider the option if their children specifically wished to go to high-school.

Twenty respondents listed pull factors (Positive aspects of home-school) in their answer. Most of these parents commented that they felt capable of educating their children through high school levels and simply did not see a need to send them to

school. This confidence was represented in statements such as "We are doing well at present and I am confident that will continue" and "My husband and I have many skills useful in providing a broad learning experience at High School level. If we get stuck academically, we can always get a tutor, as do many school students." Predominantly these parents hold some tertiary level qualifications, although most are not teachers. This may add to their confidence in educating their children. Once again there was a strong trend that the decision would consider the needs and wishes of the child.

Three families gave no reason for their response.

Maybe

Sixteen subjects stated that they were unsure whether they would send their children to school for high school. Some said that it was too early to decide. Most commented that the decision would depend on the needs of each child individually. One parent summarised this trend with the statement "We will make the decision for each child that will be appropriate for them."

There was a strong link between education levels of parents and the decision to send their children to high school. In most cases, those who had tertiary education experience stated that they **would not** choose to send their children to high school. Those who responded that they **would** elect to send their child, in most instances had either completed year 10 or year 12. Very few of this group held tertiary qualifications. This could be because those who had experienced further education were more confident in their own teaching ability. It could indicate that those with

higher qualifications were less content with the current education system and recognised that there are more options available.

Question 21

If yes, which school? (See table #8)

State	2
Christian	3
Other Private	2
Left Blank	1

Table #8

Question 22 - 26

Socialisation

The response to this question was very strong. All but a few of the respondents listed contact with same-age peers at least 2-3 times per week – many had daily contact. In all cases the children had had contact with other-age peers more frequently than same-age peers. Some parents listed this interaction with other age groups as one of the advantages of keeping their children at home. In all cases there was evidence of the children having a wide variety of peers from both the same and different age groups.

Question 27-29

Computer access

Most (86.7%) families had access to a computer. These were used for a wide variety of activities. Including: games, foreign language programs, interactive books, mathematics, logic, desktop publishing, internet, email, phonics, CAD (Computer

Aided Design), word-processing, record keeping, encyclopedia, typing practice, spreadsheets, database, operating systems

There were a range of responses to these questions. In some situations the computer is an important educational tool. This was emphasised by the parent who stated, "The computer is currently a major part of our program. The children use educational software on a daily basis as part of their play."

The active involvement was balanced by other families, who were not as actively involved in using computers. One parent listed the uses that they had for their computer, however they also added that they "do not believe that computers are the ultimate tool for education." Another stated "It is only used as an 'extra' activity – not the core of their program." Another parent described the use of the computer "to reinforce what has been learned, to hone observation, logic and calculating skills."

In one instance the use of a computer was extended, from simply the educational aspect, to a practical career beginning. The parent demonstrated this by saying, "My oldest son (14) has been programming for 7 years. He has a commercial business (with his dad) at home, making programs for the internet."

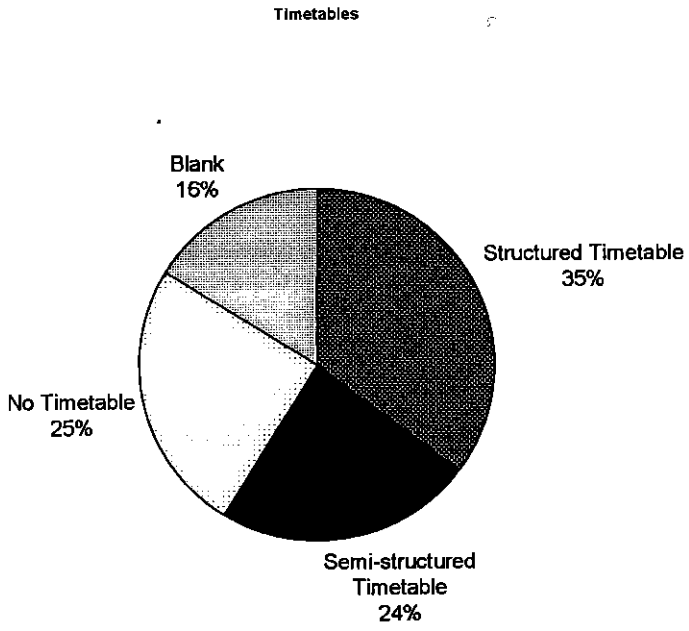
Of the nine families who did not use a computer, two said "not yet", one was travelling and therefore it was difficult to utilise a computer, and one listed computer use as minimal because their child 'prefers reading." This leaves four who did not elaborate on the fact that they did not use a computer. One respondent commented "This [question] presumes that computers are not used as a resource outside the

school program. Outside of the school program we use computers, for Home Educators Newsletter, Finding Resources, and in the family business."

Question 30

Timetable (approach to education, structured, unstructured)

The responses showed three main types of timetable structure within the home-school community **see graph #5**



Graph #5

Structured timetable

Of the respondents, a large portion replicated a structured timetable similar to one used in a regular school. **Table #9** shows an example of such a timetable.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.45	Shopping	Devotions	Devotions	Devotions	Devotions
9.00		Maths	Music Practice	Maths & Music Practice	Maths
10.00					
10.30	**B**	**R**	**E**	**A**	**K**
11.00	English	Social Studies	Music Lessons	Science	Word Building
11.30	Science	Science		Word Building	Social Studies
12.30	**L**	**U**	**N**	**C**	**H**
1.15	Word Building	Word Building	Art	Social Studies	Science
	Social Studies	Music Practice		Music Practice	Convention Prep.
2.15	**B**	**R**	**E**	**A**	**K**
2.30	Music Practice / Repairs	Cooking	Art	Craft	Gardening
					Cricket / Training

Table #9

Semi-structured timetable

Another group covered curriculum areas but without a detailed timetable (see table #10).

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Curriculum work	Swimming	Curriculum work	Curriculum work	Shopping		
Music	Curriculum work	Art lessons				
Indoor Cricket	Swimming training	Indoor cricket	Swimming training	Excursion/ Outing	Sports	Family

Table #10

Many of this group had either a daily or weekly timetable, without set time slots. This group typically made comments such as:

"We believe that children (& adults) LEARN much better when not too structured /structure *imposed* so we don't have a timetable, but we do have some routine – that is flexible."

"We like to be flexible and spontaneous within a reasonable routine."

"We run a highly flexible program. We balance fields of study over the week, month or even year. It is more conducive to learning if the child is given unlimited access to the subject when he/she shows enthusiasm for it."

No timetable

The third group commented strongly on the difference between educating children at home, and replicating the school environment. There were proponents of Natural Learning and therefore they chose not to follow a set program but instead used the daily family life to provide educational experiences. This group used phrases such as "learning is life". Another response stated "No timetable, no formal instruction given. The children learn from life." Another parent covered both question 30 & 31 in the comment, "We follow natural learning approach so do not distinguish between education and life. Consequently I am unable to identify specific times and places as educational." One was particularly adamant regarding the timetable.

"Timetable? What's that? The <u>most</u> redundant piece of paper in teaching is the timetable. Useless! Though no one likes to admit it."

Sixteen percent of families did not fill in this section of the survey. It could be assumed that the reason that these families did not complete this section was that they did not follow a set timetable, however this cannot be proven. It was anticipated that more light may be shed on this question by interviewing some who had not completed

this section. This was not possible however as there were no contact details given for these surveys.

Question 31

Study areas within the home.

This question was intended to supplement question 30. Those who had a structured timetable used a specific area for studying. This is illustrated by the response, "The 4 children all have desks and computer in a "study" room." Other parents described the study area as "Most of the written 'school work' is done at the dining room table."

The parents who had a more flexible approach tended to provide responses such as

> Learning takes place everywhere in the world, but we do have areas in our home where it is comfortable to do writing etc. These are noted but there are no designated areas where children must work.

"Our home is my son's study area." This parent mentioned that different parts of the house were used for different purposes, for example, the kitchen was used for cooking and science. This parent concluded by stating: "One thing you learn when you home-school is no day is like another day and there is no defined area or time for learning."

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interview findings (there were 7 interviews) were analysed and the themes are listed below according to question.

1. From the surveys there is strong evidence that people mainly hear about home schooling from other home-schoolers rather than another source.

Why do you think this might be?

"It is not recognised in the general community as a valid option."

The impression given in the responses to this question was that society and the education system were not interested in encouraging those who sought alternatives. The comments reflected almost a conspiracy theory view of the government and the system. This was especially expressed in the statement, "It [home-schooling] seems almost like an underground movement." Other comments focused on the general view of society in examples like "School is ingrained into people. It is not questioned, that is just what society does." And "Schools and Governments have their own agenda. They want children to be educated in their system, therefore they aren't interested in letting people know about other options."

It was suggested that while home-schooling was legal, "It is not encouraged by the department." One reason given for this was, "The nature of Home-schooling is independent of the system, therefore the system isn't going to advertise it."

The general attitude of society was given as a reason. One subject commented that the home-schooling world-view, in which the focus is on family, not the individual was not understood by an individualist society. It was commented that many parents wanted 'time for me' rather than the constant 'time for family' that is needed in a home-school environment. It was also indicated that "You have to go looking for information about home-schooling." Although the comment was made that hearing about home-schooling "Doesn't register until there is a personal contact, otherwise information goes unnoticed."

One subject was unsure, stating that "We went looking for alternatives."

2. Several authors were mentioned as being the first contact. These include Raymond Moore, Ivan Illich and John Holt, who were mainly writing in the 1970-1985 in the USA.

Do you feel that there is a need for current Australian books on home-schooling?

Most of the interviewees said that there was a definite need, although the reasons behind this response were varied. One subject saw a need for a long term perspective, to see how things work out **after** home-schooling. Another commented "There is no need for books on how home-schooling works, but an update for political and social changes would be beneficial." One questioned the benefit of more books, commenting on the number of books already available. The comment was directed at the fact that a book would tend to describe **one** person's style of doing things, but people needed to be encouraged to think and do things their own way. This idea was summed up in

a quote from one parent, who said that "Home-schooling is more of a dynamic than one persons view."

3. **Do you feel that the overall view of society towards home-schooling is positive or negative?**

Every person said that the overall view was negative. This was qualified by comments such as: "Those who have had personal contact tend to be positive", "It depends where you live, country towns tend to be traditional and therefore not accepting of new ideas", "Many people are positive, but the overall view is negative", and "People are very apprehensive at first although personal contact seems to relieve fears."

Why do you think this is so?

As shown in the answers above it was clear that the subjects considered that negativity mainly came from people who are uninformed. This was reinforced by the comment "It is unknown, unfamiliar. They think that if they are home-schooled then they are not schooled at all" which reflected the previously mentioned concept that most people "...feel that education should be in the hands of professionals."

One subject commented that non-home-schooling families felt threatened by home-schoolers. These families thought that if you say that Home-schooling is best for kids, then you are saying that what they are doing is not the best for their kids.

Socialisation was raised in two separate interviews. One commented that society wasn't concerned about the academic side, but rather that the home-schooled children were missing out on socialisation.

One subject commented that most people, "Don't know much about it, they don't think it is legal."

If Neg. What could be done to make this more positive?

The personal aspect was a strong component of this response. Most felt that home-schooled families should be open about their ideas and ideals and show what they were doing. One subject believed that home-schoolers needed to be "Pro Active, not apologetic" about their home-school experience. It was commented that Television was not able to properly represent what home-schooling meant. The personal interaction with home-schoolers was repeatedly mentioned. Education of society was another strong theme, as was allowing society to see that home-schooled children were not "weird and radical". Most were confident that if people saw their children, and how their families operated, then they would become more positive. One subject commented "The main issue is that they think kids are anti-social, once they get to know them and realise that they aren't, the major hurdle is gone."

One mentioned that people should know about the resources available, so they would realise that, "We are not just trying to keep our kids away from school." Another felt that there was a need to "Show how many people are doing home-schooling." These

indicated a desire to show the general public that home-school was acceptable and legal. One subject described a need to "Remind parents that education is **their** responsibility and it is **their** choice."

It was also commented that 'There will always be sceptics'.

4. **Which do you see as being more beneficial: Information for parents interested in home-schooling, or more awareness for those who simply do not know it exists?**

There was a strong trend suggesting that the information was needed for those who were not aware of home-schooling as an option. This was shown by the following statements:

"If the theory is true that most hear from home-schoolers, then they automatically have a contact for information, therefore it is best to focus on those who don't know."

"People who are interested can find resources, the difficulty is getting people aware of home-schooling."

"Both are needed, but if I have to choose, then letting people know that it is an option."

"Both, but more so – people who don't know it is an option. People [beginning home-school] tend to find their own way, so they are not after a package telling them what to do."

It was generally concluded that most people who were interested would find out themselves, referring to a need "To get rid of ignorance." The comment was made that "People who don't know what to do can get a list of contacts from Board of Studies" in conjunction with the perspective that "Home-schoolers are their own greatest resource."

The overall view was that there is a **"Need to promote to those who don't know",** however, there were those who differed from this concept. One said that information for those who are interested would be money better spent. This opinion was formed by the current TV publicity, which they felt has not been productive. It was felt that the media was unrealistic and didn't focus on the real issues involved. Another believed that information should be given to those who are interested, because "I don't think that everyone should home-school."

5. Should more parents be encouraged to home-school?

Why/ Not?

Most gave a strong "Yes" to this question. Providing reasons as listed below.

"Home-schooling is in the children's best interest, it builds family bonds, relieves them from the peer pressures at school etc. all those reasons shown in Question 9."

"Parents have misconceptions, thinking it has to be like school, too hard, they are untrained. They need to be told that they CAN do it."

"There is a need for more people to know, so we can form more networks. It is much easier when there are more of us."

"We would have more contacts, greater networks. They [parents] would not be forcing their children into artificial environments."

"It is the best option, best for their kids, best for their futures." Kids aren't labelled and institutionalised, being told that facts are all that matters.

One subject was non-committal, stating that it depends on the circumstances. This subject believed that some home-schooling situations would not benefit children at all.

One subject did not believe that parents should be told what is the best for their children, arguing that it is the parents' decision how to school their children, either to keep them at home, or send them to school. This subject made the comment that

> More parents should be encouraged to take responsibility, to be more daring in the way that they parent, rather than being told what to do by society. By definition, this means that I can't tell them to home-school.

If yes, How might this be done?

Those who believed that parents should be encouraged to home-school were strong in the concept of letting people know that home-schooling was an option. Suggestions included: Realistic public awareness; information nights advertised in media; media awareness of home-schooling gatherings, activities and conferences; public awareness of an Australian role model (someone well respected in Australia, who had been

home-schooled); advertising home-schooling as an option; Tax rebates as were given to New Zealand home-schoolers; and increasing general awareness.

One commented that parents "Need to know that it is their legal right, not a privilege. It is perfectly legal and they don't have to fight to do it."

6. Socialisation is an argument that many home-schoolers have to face. Much research has shown that this issue is not as most people think. This has been further emphasised by the results of the survey.

What can be done to show society in general that home-schoolers are socialised?

The question was asked, that if schools do not have to prove that they are providing kids with adequate socialisation, why do home-schooling families have to prove that they are?

The strong trend was that personal contact with home-schooled children was the best way to dispel fears of inadequate socialisation. Another view that came through strongly (both from the same people) was that, "If they know what socialisation **is** then they would know that Home-schooling provides more that school does."

Basically this can be summarised into – knowing what socialisation is, and knowing what home-schoolers do.

One parent had been approached by an educator who asked "Don't you worry that they are missing the social skills learned in the rough and tumble of the classroom." This parent believed there was a difference between social skills (socialisation) and survival skills (learned in the rough and tumble). She went on to state that "All school socialises you for, is school. If you don't go to school, you don't need to learn how to survive at school."

Some parents were overt in dealing with the socialisation issue. One stated that they listed socialisation as one of the main benefits of home-schooling. Both parents in this family were teachers and they offered examples of negative socialisation that they have witnessed within the school system. This subject believed that most parents whose children were in mainstream schools actually did have concerns about social issues, but they felt that they were not able to do anything about it. Another parent offered two points when confronted with this issue. The first point was that "School was not invented for socialisation." The second point being that, "The socialisation that happens at school is shocking."

It was also noted that there needed to be public recognition of the research that had already been done into this area.

7. How can the benefits of home-schooling best be shown to those who are concerned?

The overwhelming response was to show by example that the situation was working. Suggestions included: comparing classrooms with home-school situation, visiting

home-school meetings to show what really happened, and involvement with home-schooled families.

One parent said that while it was encouraging to "...meet and hear about home educated kids who come out at the end okay" it is important that this not be the measure of success. She commented that "We don't judge schools by whether everyone coming out at the end is okay." It was stated that too often, home-schooling was measured by other people's criteria. Standardised tests were given as an example of such criteria. It was suggested that success may be measured according to the question "Have you been able to achieve the goals that you set out with?" This subject warned against "...measuring by other people's ideas." She states that "A good guide is 'Are you still friends with your child when they are 16?' It sounds simplistic, but it is important."

There was an acknowledgment of concerns against home-schooling. One parent said "I have concerns myself. We worry about other families...There are a proportion who **aren't** doing the best for their kids." This parent also commented that with home-schooling the parent is in control of the children's education. He mentioned the fact that not all schools were doing the best for children's education either, but he stated that in the mainstream system, "Most parents say it is the school's job to ensure that the children are educated, the schools blame parents, no-one is doing it." This parent commented "I don't know how to answer this. You can't convince anyone who doesn't want to be convinced."

Another parent said that it was important to appreciate genuine concerns and treat them as such. "Don't just brush off genuine concerns, but don't worry about those who argue just for the sake of it, they haven't really considered it."

8. Who is capable of home-schooling?

"Anyone who has children, is prepared not to have a paying career, and has basic literacy and numeracy skills."

"Every parent is capable, but not every parent can commit the time and energy to do it. I can understand those who feel comfortable delegating the responsibility of education to teachers. Not everyone is willing."

"Every parent who is concerned with their child's education."

There was a strong response that "most people" were capable of home-schooling. It was seen that the essential qualities needed were: an open mind; a desire to do it; commitment and time. It was stated that the educational ability of the parents did not limit what the children could achieve. However, there were cautions given to those considering home-schooling. It was said that it was essential to be devoted, both to home-schooling, and their children. Also that "Commitment is important, it [home-schooling] is not something that you can be half hearted about." One parent also mentioned that the children have to want to home-school for it to work.

9. What are some problems that might face beginning home-schoolers?

"The idea that they have to reproduce school at home"

They have to give themselves permission to do what is right for them and their children.

Authority, discipline.

Lack of contact with other adults – need group interaction (eg. Bible Study group)

Concerned and sceptical relatives

Lack of support to bounce ideas off, talk about learning styles, need access to home-schoolers.

Introduction by someone with set ideas on how home-schooling should be done.

Social flak, parents & friends

There is no safety net, no step-by-step guide.

Time and effort incorporating home-schooling into lifestyle, there are no pre-packaged solutions.

Lack of information on how to start. Pressure with initial BOS interviews and inspections. These determined whether they were allowed to continue and were stressful to new home-schoolers.

Contact numbers given by BOS, but the contacts were given no support by BOS rather were just other parents who had said they would help.

Setting up programs, finding books,

Information on getting started.

Hassles from other children

Social pressures from other parents.

Lack of confidence.

Social pressures.

Their own indoctrinations and rigid ideas about schooling and education.

"If they are withdrawing their kids from school, they will also have to undo many habits formed at school and may have resistance from the kids."

10. One trend that showed strongly in the survey is the involvement of the whole family in the education process.

Does it require a strong family to be able to home-school, or does home-schooling strengthen the family unit?

"It is not an 'either or', it is an 'and'."

It came across very strongly that both aspects were important. It was stated that a strong family was important, particularly a committed family. It was not essential that this family be a traditional nuclear family. It was stated that single parents could successfully home-school, with support from the community. However it was emphasised, that if there were two parents, they **both** had to be committed to home-schooling. "If the spouse were [sic] not in favour, it would not be a good idea to start, any problems could become an 'I told you so' situation and drive a wedge between parents." One parent gave examples of couples that had begun but were not agreed on home-schooling. Both instances ended in divorce.

A good relationship with children was also mentioned as being important. It was stated that "home-schooling strengthens relationships". In all cases it was stated that home-schooling definitely strengthens the family. This is supported by such comments as:

"The family is strengthened because they have to work through issues together."

"You need to have strength to start, then it gets stronger."

"Having a strong family is the best option for any kid. Even in school (especially in school!) they are disadvantaged if they don't have a strong family for support."

Interview differences

One interview tended to differ from the general theme of the responses. This parent had a different focus than many home-schoolers. The reason given for her to home-school was that her child was deaf and school was not dealing with this issue. It was clear that she was not a strong home-school supporter, as recognised by the comment that not everyone is capable of home-schooling. Other comments referred to the fact that she felt that some home-school situations did not benefit the children, and that not everyone should be encouraged to home-school. This parent followed the traditional academic curriculum simply in her own home. It was a practical reason, not a philosophical one that prompted this parent to home-school.

Chapter 5
Discussion

Whereas training in the home strengthens the family and guides children in setting the highest standards for their lives which are essential elements to the continuity of morality in our culture;

Whereas home schooling families contribute significantly to the cultural diversity important to a healthy society;

U.S. Senate, (Legislative Alert, 1999, p.1)

DISCUSSION

Alteration of outcome

The literature indicated that information guides were plentiful in the United States. It was anticipated that this would be a useful resource in Australia also (specifically New South Wales). However, the original model of an intended 'ideas and options' kit was discarded following analysis of the survey results, as the data showed that New South Wales home-schooling parents tend not to rely on assistance from others. It became clear that there was a greater need for information to be provided for the wider community. From this it was apparent that the intended kit was not the most appropriate form of presenting information. Following this, the purpose of the study was changed, to investigate means of promoting home-schooling in the wider community. This development emphasised the need for a further study to be undertaken assessing both the need in the community at large and the most applicable method of presenting information regarding home-schooling.

Factors seen in successful home-schooling situations

The survey indicated that geographic location does not place a limiting factor on home-schooling as home-schoolers were found in all areas of New South Wales. It was also seen that those who elect to follow this style of education represent a wide variety of occupations and educational levels. The parents of home-schooled children tend to be qualified professionals, however, it is clearly shown that it is not necessary to hold a teaching degree in order to educate children as indicated by ACE (1999).

Family structure

From the survey it was seen that home-schoolers tend to be extremely family orientated, having larger than average families. They also demonstrated a tendency to maintain a traditional family structure, with both parents involved with the children on a constant basis. In most cases, the mother held the responsibility for the education of the children, although some parents indicated arrangement that allowed both to work part-time and therefore both be involved with the children's education. The traditional family structure is also apparent in the belief of many home-schoolers that the parents are responsible for the education of the children, even at personal cost. This supports Riemer (1994) in outlining the benefits for those willing to make the effort required. The trend is not towards an authoritarian style of parenting however, as the children are commonly involved in the decision making process.

Reasons for home-schooling

The reasons given by respondents for choosing home-schooling were consistent with the two categories as identified by Reece (1999). These categories may also be identified by the terms push and pull factors. Push factors (negative issues in mainstream schools) included a general dissatisfaction with academic and social issues. Specific concerns dealt with disabilities, commenting that schools were not able to offer the time required by these children. This is consistent with Foreman's (1996) evaluation of the difficulties faced by teachers dealing with individual needs. Several indicated that children were struggling academically in schools, and elected to provide them with the "one-on-one" attention that was required which supports Clay's (1993) concern that children with difficulties need individual attention that is not possible for schools to provide.

Pull factors (benefits of home-schooling), included a sense of family responsibility. There was evidence that a desire for increased program flexibility was a motivating factor, thus supporting Knowles & Muchmore (1993) in their analysis of this as being a key component of home-schooling. The respondents indicated a belief that life is the greatest educational environment, therefore acknowledging the work of Peacock (1997).

Resources available to home-schooling families

Home-schooling parents are aware of the educational value of real life situations and readily utilise the resources found in their local area. This supports the literature which demonstrated the interest home-schooling families exhibit in learning from their environment. This environmental learning is particularly seen in those families adhering to a 'natural learning' concept of education (Cole 1998; Peacock 1997, Scale 1998).

Initial contact with home-schooling

A clear trend in the data showed that home-schoolers are the first link that families have with the concept of home-schooling. It can thus be deduced that home-schooling is spoken of only by those specifically interested in it. Another strong trend indicated that while home-schooling families designed and operated their own program and style, they gained emotional and social support mainly from other home-schoolers. Such a view of community as resource supports the view of Terpstra (1994), and Lines (1996). The literature commonly referred to by home-schoolers is dated in the 1970-80s (Holt 1976; Illich 1972; Moore 1975, 1985; Moore & Moore 1973) and is predominantly from the United States. There is a great deal of

information available, particularly on the Internet. Books4homeschool (1999) which contains a listing of 201 sites applicable for home-schooling is an example of a source of home-schooling assistance. Other resources include Hubbs (1994) which details a wide variety of materials for home schooling. This publication covers such aspects as: legal information, curriculum details, resource suppliers, educational toys, games and software, books, support groups, and numerous other aspects dealing with home schooling in the United States. Moore & Moore (1990) provide a list of books available for home-schooling families. There are numerous websites containing information regarding home-schooling. Much of this is aimed at the United States, however the underlying philosophies of home-schooling are consistent and therefore such sites are useful within an Australian context. Such sites include a variety of perspectives ranging from Christian curricula to un-schooling. While these books and sites may be used as resource material by home-schoolers, it was clear such information has not been widely utilised in New South Wales as a means of intitial contact.

Socialisation

The findings of this survey are consistent with the literature when dealing with the socialisation of home-schooled children. As suggested by Knowles & Muchmore (1993) concern about socialisation is one of the greatest barriers to community acceptance of home-schooling. The study showed no indication that home-schooled children suffer from a lack of socialisation. Indeed they were seen to be heavily involved with a variety of community and social groups which supports the literature (Terpstra 1994; Carey 1998; Metts 1996; Lines 1996; Hubbs 1994). As well as adequate interaction with their own age peers, home-schooled children also tend to

have frequent contact with people from a variety of different age groups, supporting the concept of intergenerational interactions (Metts, 1996) being influential in forming a "spectrum socialisation (Carey 1998,12)."

Schooling systems

The study differed from the literature in that there was an overwhelming tendency away from curriculum packages. This was interesting in considering the number of these packages available. Christian curriculum centres include Cadron Creek Christian Curriculum (1999), Christian Curriculum Cellar (1999), Covenant Home Curriculum (1999), Curriculum Associates (1999), Emmanuel (1999), Hilltop Homeschool (1999), Shekinah Curriculum Centre (1999), Sonlight (1999), and S.O.W. (Student of the Word, 1999). Un-schooling and alternative education resources are available from such locations as: Other resources include book suppliers (Dominie, 1999; DHSS 1999) and used bookstores specialising in home-school products (Carty's, 1999). While some home-schoolers utilised textbooks and other resources, there was little indication that set curriculum packages were utilised in New South Wales.

Access to technology

While there were no studies located regarding computers in home-schooling, this survey revealed that home-schooled families tend to be computer literate and confident in utilising the advancing technology of interactive software and the internet. From the survey it is seen that computers are widely used in the home-schooling community. In cases where computers are not used, there was a philosophical objection, rather than a lack of skill. It could be argued that home-

schooled children, due to the small number of children in each 'school' setting, have greater access to computers than their schooled counterparts, however this would need to be more clearly investigated.

Program structure and style

A strong trend showed that home-schooling was flexible, with program structure depending on the individual family. There was no set education style common to all home-schooling families. This was consistent with Cole (1998) who described a wide range of home-schooling families. The home-schooled community was also divided into different methods and educational ideas as mentioned by Hardy (1998). Some families tended to replicate the school structure in their own home, other families modeled school principles while adding their individual style, yet others completely rejected the school model and elected to educate in their own way.

Higher Education

While there was no literature found specifically referring to secondary home-schooling, the survey respondents strongly indicated that they would continue home-schooling through into secondary schooling. It was seen that there was a strong link between the parents education level, and the decision to continue home-schooling. Those parents with tertiary training were more likely to display confidence in their ability to continue schooling their children at home. Parents who had year 10, or year 12, qualifications tended to feel inadequate in teaching their children at a secondary level. It was clear that parents felt the decision would need to be based on the needs and wishes of the children involved.

Educational environment

The three trends seen in curriculum structure were mirrored in the set up of their educational environment. Families with a structured "school-like" environment tend to have a 'school-room', with desks and a computer. Other families who have a less formal approach, yet still follow a basic academic curriculum tend to work where it is comfortable. This is consistent with the variety of home-school types shown by Cole (1998). The families who believe that 'learning is life', do not acknowledge any particular area as more educational than any other. In these families the education occurs wherever the child happens to be. Peacock's (1997) view of the family as utilising the domestic situation to provide learning situations is demonstrated through the responses of those who adhere to the natural learning style of education.

Commitment

In all cases, respondents believed that home-schooling had strengthened their family structure, however it was strongly confirmed that, while home-schooling can be successfully conducted by one parent, if two parents are involved with the children, the decision to home-school should be supported by both parents. This was considered essential, as conflict could destroy the benefits of the situation and it needs to be a consistent and combined effort. Commitment to home-schooling and to the children was seen as the essential ingredient in the success of the process. This was consistent with Carey (1998); Dahm (1996); Latham (1998), and Riemer (1994) who, while open about the difficulties that may be encountered in home-schooling, showed confidence positive that with commitment, home-schooling would be successful. The idea of commitment was also supported by the BOS (1998) who addressed commitment in their suitability assessment procedure.

Educational viability of home-schooling

As a result of this project, it has been ascertained that families involved in home-schooling come from a variety of backgrounds and philosophical viewpoints. They adhere to vastly differing timetables and structures in their individual programs. From this it can be seen that home-schooling is not an option that is limited to a small portion of society, rather it is available to individuals from all ages, backgrounds, educational levels, and locations.

Enhancing community awareness

No previous research was located dealing with community awareness of home-schooling, therefore this study is a significant contribution in this direction. The remainder of the discussion was drawn mainly from the interview results. The interview questions specifically addressed the issue of community awareness, and were developed from the survey analysis. It can been seen from the results of the survey that home-schooling is a growing trend in Australia because many home-schoolers have been involved for only a short period of time. This leads to a concern raised in the interviews that there are few examples of successful home-schooled children in the workforce. While the United States has seen prominent figures from successful home-schooling backgrounds (Legislative Alert, 1999), Australia does not have such public acknowledgment of home-schooling success.

The interviewees were committed to the idea of providing others with information about home-schooling as an option. Some considered that home-schooling was the best option, therefore everyone should try it, however most were focused on home-schooling as **an** option, not **the** option. The respondents were clear on the fact that not

every family is able or willing to make the lifestyle and career changes that are necessary in a successful home-school situation. All were adamant that the decision for education should depend on the needs of their children.

A significant observation was that if there were more families involved with home-schooling, there would be a greater resource base for families to work within, thus supporting Terpstra's (1994) view of home-schoolers as highly community orientated. This observation is also consistent with the description by Leans (1996) of home-schoolers as working within strongly bonded home-school groups. Therefore, it was stated that more home-schooling families would both extend home-schooling opportunities and benefit those already involved. Respondents also commented that beginning home-schoolers often have to struggle against (extended) family and social pressures. It may be suggested that if these individuals (general community) had a greater understanding of home-schooling, they would perhaps be more supportive and less controversial.

It was suggested that many people are not aware of home-schooling, simply because of its individualised nature. As there is no structured body, there is no-one to advertise home-schooling as an option. The comment was made that the government and education systems are not about to advertise the option, because home-schooling is separate and different from their traditional ideas of education. In light of this, there exists a need for acknowledgment of home-schooling. This does not mean advertising, but simply publicly stating that home-schooling is a legal and acceptable form of education. It was stressed that the general public should know that they have a legal right to educate their children at home, that home-schooling is not a privilege

that has to be fought for, but a fundamental parental right, approved by NSW legislation. This public awareness should include acknowledgment of research supporting the home-schooling structure and practise.

It was also claimed that society is negative towards home-schooling. There were several possible reasons given for this negativity, however in each case there was an element of 'unknown' causing the negative perspectives. The greatest concerns lie in the areas of academic, social and legal aspects of home-schooling. It is claimed that personal contact with home-schooled families is the primary factor required to negate these fears and develop public understanding and appreciation of home-schooling. This personal contact may be enhanced by media awareness of home-schooling families and group activities.

Books about home-schooling were seen as helpful, particularly if they dealt with the current legal and social situation in Australia (or NSW specifically). There was strong opposition to the idea of a guidebook describing 'how to home-school', because home-schooling in its philosophy is structured to fit the needs of the individual, rather than follow a prescribed procedure.

Confidence is a key aspect promoting home-schooling. Parents need to be able to clearly and confidently outline the positive benefits of home-schooling to those who are concerned. They should also be able to recognise and admit the constraints on home-schooling, for this will enhance their position. It was also suggested that active involvement in the wider community (not simply the home-schooled community) was a key element of enhancing awareness and support. This allows the personal contact listed essential for understanding the home-school situation. It has been suggested

that there exists a need for an Australian role model who had been home-schooled. The importance of the role model is emphasised by the listing of several prominent US figures as representative of the successful implementation of home-schooling (Legislative Alert, 1999).

It may be seen from these comments that the surveyed home-schoolers are aware of difficulties involved in the home-school process. It is also clear that they are committed to the education of their children and see home-schooling as the best means of providing this education. Respondents believe that more parents should be given the opportunity to investigate home-schooling as a possible educational choice.

From the interviews, a list of possible means of providing information to the general community was compiled. This list includes:

a) Advertising of home-school events – conferences, group meetings, gatherings;
b) Recognition of successful home-schooled individuals in society;
c) Public acknowledgment of home-schooling research;
d) Community information regarding the legal situation of home-schooling; and
e) Departmental affirmation of home-schooling as a viable educational option.

Chapter 6
Conclusions

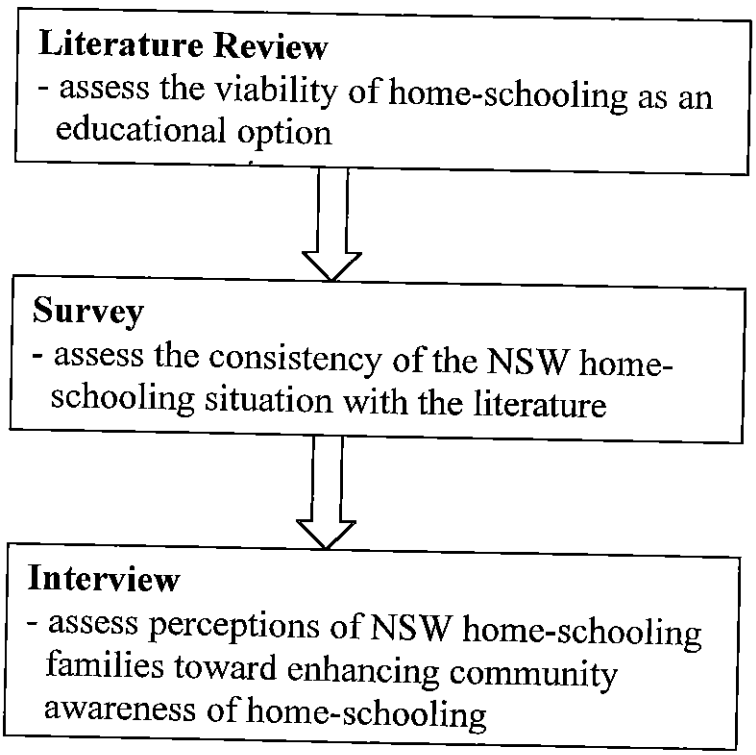
No children will be the worse for having experienced the focused attention of a caring adult, especially their own parent.

Metts (1996, p.73)

CONCLUSIONS

This study was significant in that it provides an initial step into developing a community awareness of home-schooling in New South Wales. It was difficult to find information regarding such awareness, particularly in New South Wales.

The study consisted of three main sections as seen below.



The literature review served to identify the nature of home-schooling and identified home-schooling as a valid and valuable educational option for children. It showed this by observing that parental support and input into children's education was a major feature in providing an environment conducive to the academic and social development of the child. From this it demonstrated that home-schooling provided the parental input listed as so essential. The literature also assessed major concerns that were held with regard to home-schooling. The two major concerns regarding home-schooling, ie. socialisation and academic development, were analysed. It was shown

that the concerns were inconsistent with studies done in these areas. Also contained in the literature was an acknowledgment of the constraints involved with home-schooling, particularly the time and energy required of parents. It was concluded from the review that the option of home-schooling should be made known to the general community, not as a compulsory means of education, but as an available educational choice.

The intended outcome of this project was to be an information kit directed at families interested in home-schooling their own children. The survey was designed to gather information about home-schooling in order to have information to present in such a kit, however, a major finding of the survey indicated that home-schoolers tended to prefer to develop their own style and structure, rather than to follow a set procedure. It was also seen that home-schoolers felt that while Australian information would be beneficial, the US information was sufficient in aiding their home-school program. Therefore it was observed that there existed a greater need to inform the general community regarding home-schooling in New South Wales as there was little information available. It was decided that it would be a more appropriate aim to focus information towards families not aware of home-schooling as an educational option. This altered focus may be seen as being a change from emphasising the "viable educational option" to an emphasis on "enhancing community awareness."

From this altered purpose, the survey information was then used to assess the consistency of home-schooled families in New South Wales, against the literature which dealt with other states and countries. It was seen that while differences occurred due to the individual nature of home-schooling, the underlying philosophies

and ideals were strongly consistent. It was seen from this survey that home-schooling families in New South Wales demonstrated a broad range of education styles and utilised a variety of structures in developing their own learning situations. The New South Wales home-schooling community tended to be well-educated and formed supportive networks to provide assistance for other home-schooling families. Each of these findings was consistent with the literature, thus indicating that generalisations may be formed regarding home-schooled situations in areas, specifically noting that literature available for other states, as well as internationally, was consistent with the New South Wales home-schooling situation.

It was seen from the survey that the majority of home-schoolers found out about home-schooling, from others who were already involved, rather than from anywhere else. It was thus decided to assess the potential for creating a greater awareness among the general community, regarding home-schooling.

Interviews were conducted, in order to assess the perceptions of home-schoolers regarding possible means of enhancing community awareness. There emerged a number of methods that could be used to inform the wider community. While this was a valuable beginning, it is recommended that further studies be done in the general community to assess the most appropriate means of promoting home-schooling.

Recommendations emerging from the present study

The present study has provided data as a step towards the enhancement of community awareness of home-schooling as a viable educational option. This step was the gathering of information regarding home-schooling in order to develop a resource for use in enhancing the awareness of home-schooling in the wider community. For an adequate awareness of home-schooling to be realised it is recommended that the following steps be undertaken:

1. Survey the general community to gain insight into the current awareness of available educational options. This survey should focus on three main areas:
    - Current awareness of educational options **including** home-schooling.
    - Community interest in information regarding home-schooling.
    - The most appropriate methods of providing information about home-schooling.

    The findings from this survey should be used in the development of information sources to outline the available options *including, but not entirely home-schooling.*

2. Develop a program to provide parents with an awareness of the educational options available for their children. Such a program would ideally be aimed at parents of children approaching school age, however it would also be beneficial for parents who already have children enrolled in the mainstream system. This program should include web pages, brochures for distribution and ideally an education expo in each town or region. An expo would include the different schools in the area: State; Private; Christian; Distance Education; *and*

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representatives from the Board of Studies Home School Board. This would be a step in providing families the option of home-schooling their children.

3. Request the New South Wales Board of Studies include on its homepage a link to the Home-School Board information.

Possible Future Studies

Several possible areas for future research have emerged from the present study. These areas include:

- An enhancement of support mechanisms to provide the greatest benefit to home-schooled families;
- Possible negotiations with mainstream schools to enhance the home-school experience;
- A comparison between home-schoolers interactions with cross-age peers and the cross-age interactions of mainstream school students;
- The use of computer technology in developing programs for home-schooled students;
- The development of an "Ideas and Options" kit relating to general educational choices. This kit could detail the variety of options available, including Public, Private, Christian, Correspondence and Home Schools;
- The identification of correlations between, social background – and the selection of the different styles of home education – including Distance Education, Home-Schooling and Natural Learning;

- An analysis of the philosophical reasoning used by parents who send their children to a **mainstream** school, particularly focusing on whether parents realise that school is an option or simply the expected norm;
- A survey of retrospective views of home-schooled students regarding academic and social aspects of home-schooling;
- An analysis of computer programs available for home-schooled families;
- An in-depth analysis of the philosophy of home-schooling in relation to the educational philosophy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is based on the writings of Ellen White.

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Appendices

The top twenty reasons to homeschool

20. Your kids never tell you that you're a lot dumber than their teacher.

19. If you can't find matching socks for your child first thing in the morning, who cares?

18. Cleaning out the refrigerator can double as chemistry lab.

17. Your kids never have a reason to think they'll get beaten up by a gang at school.

16. If the principal gives the teacher a bad evaluation, she can stick her icy feet against his legs at night.

15. You can post the Ten Commandments on your school room wall, and you won't get sued.

14. You never have to drive your child's forgotten lunch to school.

13. Your child will never go to their 20th high hschool reunion, meet an old flame, and recklessly abondon their marriage.

12. You get to change more than nappies, you get to change their minds.

11. If you get caught talking to yourself, you can claim you're having a PTA meeting.

10. It's better to be slightly concerned about socialisation than very concerned about socialism.

9. Your child will never suffer the embarrassment of group showers after P.E.

8. The only debate about food at the canteen is whose turn it is to cook.

7. You never face the dilemma of whether to take your child's side or your teacher's side in a dispute at school.

6. If your child gets drugs at school it's probably Tylenol.

5. The teacher gets to kiss the principal in the staff room and no one gossips.

4. Your kids recognise that this list is numerically in reverse order.

3. Your students can actually read the bumper stickers that you have put on your car.

2. If your child claims that the dog ate his homework you can ask the dog.

1. Some day your children will consider you a miracle working expert and will turn to you for advice.

Auckland Home Educators (1999, p.2)

Appendix #1
Background to the Researcher

I began studying by correspondence when I was seven years old, due to racial issues in my first primary school. I had completed one year at school, and began in grade two on correspondence. Following this, my parents moved to a farm, fifty kilometres from the nearest primary school. To attend school would have meant leaving home at 7am and not returning until after 5pm. My parents decided that this would make too long a day for an eight year old. At the end of each year, we reviewed the situation and decided to continue for one more year. We began working through the NSW Department of Education, Correspondence School, in Sydney. The structure later changed and became ten Distance Education Centres (DEC) located around NSW. As 'veterans' of the system, my family became informal trainers for the mainstream teachers at Port Macquarie High School, who were new to the Distance Education (DE) structure. My mother was involved in the development and organisation of camps, 'mini-schools', and other get-togethers for "Corro Kids".

Many of my friends as a child were schooled at home, either through DE, ACE (Accelerated Christian Education), or simply taught by their parents. The last category had the stress of not being legally schooled and therefore facing the risk of being "caught". While this is no longer the case in NSW, there is still strong public perception of home-schooling as illegal, and detrimental to children.

My older sister was having difficulties with year eleven at home, so it was decided that we would attend school. I completed years eleven and twelve at Port Macquarie High School. This was a valuable experience, however it was evident that the perceptions of my classmates towards DE students was rather negative. As a part of my B.Ed. (Primary) degree, I worked in the Port Macquarie Primary DEC for two weeks where I gained a knowledge of the opposite end of the DE system. In both aspects (teacher and student) I faced public perception of DE as not "real" school. It was said that only teachers who couldn't teach worked in DE, and only kids who were weird didn't go to school. It is from this background that I am motivated to enhance community awareness of home-schooling as a viable and acceptable option.

Appendix #2
Phone script to potential survey distributors

Hi, I'm Kate Patrick, a student at Avondale College. I got your name and number from a web site listing home-schooling families in New South Wales and I understand that you are involved in a home-school group in your local area.

I am currently completing my honours degree here at Avondale. For this work I am compiling a kit for use by persons interested in schooling their children at home.

As a part of this kit I am looking to incorporate views and ideas from families currently involved in home-schooling/distance education. I have developed a survey that I would like to distribute to as many of these families as possible.

This is where you come in. I was wondering if I could send you some surveys to distribute among the parents in your local home-school group.

If YES – How many surveys would you be able to distribute? Postal Address?

If NO – is there someone else in the group that may be willing to assist in this project.

If they want more information. "We will be sending a cover letter containing more information with the surveys, that should answer these questions."

Thankyou for your participation, I shall be posting the surveys out within the next week.

Appendix #3
Consent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The enclosed survey forms a part of a research study which involves the compilation of a resource kit for use by parents who are interested in home-schooling their children. As a part of the kit I would like to include insights from families who are already home-schooling their children in order to provide encouragement and ideas for those wishing to be involved in a similar pursuit.

The first section of the survey deals with specific family details to provide an overview of your situation and home-school structure. The second section requires more thoughtful responses to give an indication of attitudes involved with home-schooling. The final questions ask for information regarding the layout of your home (specifically the main study areas) and an approximate timetable of activities relating to your child's education. These answers will assist new home-school families in setting up their own home-school situation. The survey responses will remain anonymous.

You are not required to respond to all the questions if you are not comfortable with a particular question.

I will also be conducting interviews with a few of you. The interview data will be used to clarify the findings of the survey. There is no obligation to be interviewed. **If you choose to be interviewed**, please complete and return the included Name and Address sheet. If you return this with your survey I will be able to discuss specific issues arising from your survey during the interview. If however you choose to be interviewed, but do not want to be identified with your survey (so that your survey responses will remain anonymous), please return the Name and Address sheet in a separate envelope. If you choose to be interviewed anonymity will be maintained. *Written permission is required for a taped interview*

Avondale College requires that all participants are informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted it may be given to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, to the College's Human Research Ethics Committee Secretary, Avondale College, PO Box 19 Cooranbong, NSW, 2265 or phone (02) 4980 2214 or fax (02) 4980 2118.

The results of this research will be made available through the Avondale College Library. Those wishing to obtain copies of the kit may contact me at the above address.

If you feel that any questions require a more detailed response than space permits, you may include additional comments on a separate piece of paper and return it with your survey.

Thankyou for your time

Kate Patrick

Appendix #4
Survey

Section 1. Please tick the most appropriate response to the following questions regarding your home-school environment.

1. Where do you live?

- ☐ Travelling
- ☐ Rural (community with no town)
- ☐ Small town (pop. <20 000)
- ☐ Large town (pop.20 000-1 000 000)
- ☐ City (pop.1 000 000 +)

2. What level of Education have you completed?

Mother/Guardian 1
- ☐ Primary School
- ☐ Year 10 (School Certificate, Form 4)
- ☐ Year 12 (HSC, Form 6)
- ☐ Tertiary (list level and area of study)

_____

Father/Guardian 2
- ☐ Primary School
- ☐ Year 10 (School Certificate, Form 4)
- ☐ Year 12 (HSC, Form 6)
- ☐ Tertiary (list level and area of study)

_____

3. How many children do you have?

_____

4. How many are currently being home-schooled?

_____

5. How old are your children?
(Please indicate number of children in each age group)

- ☐ 4-6 _____
- ☐ 7-9 _____
- ☐ 10-12 _____
- ☐ 13-15 _____
- ☐ 16-18 _____
- ☐ 18+ _____

6. What are your occupations?

_____ Mother/Guardian 1

_____ Father/Guardian 2

7. What resources are available within 1hour from your home?

- ☐ Library
- ☐ Tourist Park
- ☐ Other (Please List)
- ☐ University
- ☐ Zoo
- ☐ Swimming Pool
- ☐ Sports Grounds

_____

8. Whose decision was it to home-school the student/s?

- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Whole family

Section 2. The following questions will require a more detailed response.

9. What motivated the decision to begin home-schooling?

10. Who is the main supervisor for the students?

11. Who else is involved in the education of the students?

12. How long have you been involved with home-schooling?

13. Where did you first hear about home-schooling?

14. Who has given you the most assistance in starting your home-school?

15. Are you studying through either a correspondence school or other schooling system?

- ☐ Yes (Please go to question 16)
- ☐ No (Please go to question 20)

16. Through which schooling system are you currently studying?

---

17. Do you feel that you receive enough support from your education program?

---

18. In what ways could greater assistance be provided?

---

19. How often do you contact your children's teacher?

---

20. Do you intend to send your children to school for high school? (Please Circle)

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Why / Why not?

---

21. If the answer to # 20 was *yes*. What type of school would they attend?
(Please tick one from each column)

- ☐ State
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Other Private
- ☐ Boarding
- ☐ Day

22. How often do your children interact with other children their own age?

---

23. Where do they interact with these children? (church, family, scouts, guides, sport clubs, etc)

---

24. How often do your children associate with people of other age groups?

---

25. Which age brackets do they normally associate with?

---

26. With which groups do they associate (church, family, neighbours etc)?

---

27. Do your children have access to a computer as a part of their school program?

- ☐ **Yes (go to question 29)**
- ☐ **No (go to question 31)**

28. What type of computer do you use?

---

29. In what ways is computer technology used in your home-schooling program?

---

30. Please give an approximate weekly time table on paper supplied

31. Please provide an outline of your home (Especially including the study area/s used) on paper provided.

Please mail your responses to me in the return envelope as soon as possible.

Thankyou for your participation in this survey.

Appendix #5
Introduction to Phone Interview

Hi, I'm Kate Patrick. I am calling for the interview that we arranged earlier regarding home schooling. I would first like to thank you for your participation in this study. I have received an excellent response from home-schoolers in NSW and your assistance is invaluable!

The aim of this interview is to gain some ideas from current home-schoolers about how to best 'share the news' with those who do not realise that this is a viable option.

I am using the word home-schooling to mean education that occurs in the home. I understand that you may not choose to use the word schooling, but for ease of operation that is the word that I will use.

Appendix #6
Interview Questions

1. From the surveys there is strong evidence that people mainly hear about home schooling from other home-schoolers rather than another source.

Why do you think this might be?

2. Several authors were mentioned as being the first contact. These include Raymond Moore, Ivan Illich and John Holt who were mainly writing in the 1970-1985 in USA.

Do you feel that there is a need for current Australian books on home-schooling?

3. **Do you feel that the overall view of society towards home-schooling is positive or negative?**

Why do you think this is so?

If Neg. What could be done to make this more positive?

4. **Which do you see as being more beneficial: Information for parents interested in home-schooling, or more awareness for those who simply do not know it exists?**

5. **Should more parents be encouraged to home-school?**

Why/ Not?

If yes, How might this be done?

6. Socialisation is an argument that many home-schoolers have to face. Much research has shown that this issue is not as most people think. This has been further emphasised by the results of the survey.

What can be done to show society in general that home-schoolers are socialised?

7. **How can the benefits of home-schooling best be shown to those who are concerned?**

8. **Who is capable of home-schooling?**

9. **What are some problems that might face beginning home-schoolers?**

10. One trend that showed strongly in the survey is the involvement of the whole family in the education process.

Does it require a strong family to be able to home-school, or does home-schooling strengthen the family unit?

AVONDALE [illegible] LIBRARY