

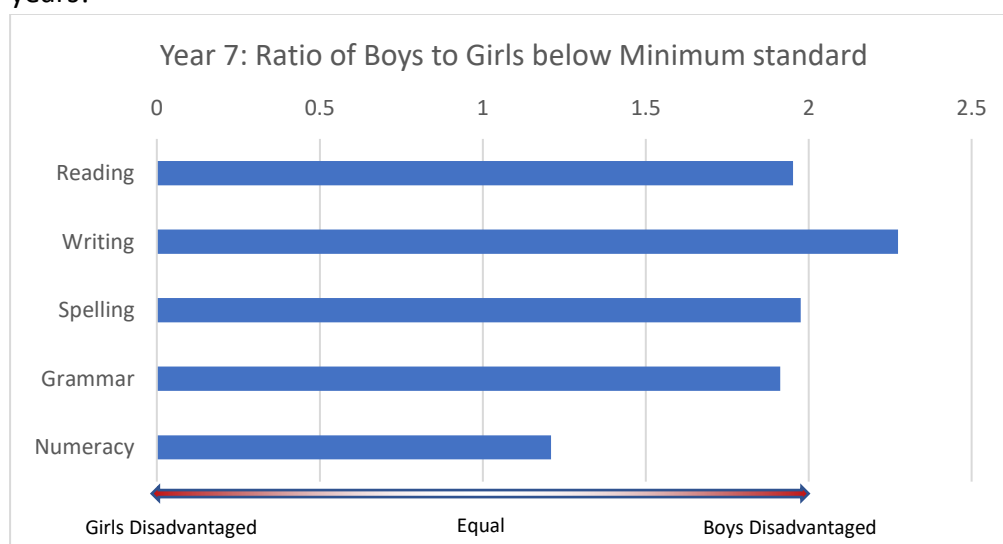
Response to Interim Report on Review of the National School Reform Agreement

What's Wrong?

The central problem with Australian education is with outcomes for boys – whether one considers the matter equality or just the impact on overall outcomes.

In its current form, Chapter 3 of the interim report is frankly bizarre – concerning itself with trivia while steadfastly ignoring the elephant in the room. I have no doubt that the authors are actually familiar with the state of things though they may prefer to cover it up. But let me remind them of some of the issues:

- **Retention:** In the early 1990s, participation rates for males & females were equal.¹ In 2020, for every 17yo girl not going to school, there were 1.5 boys.²
- **Suspensions:** In NSW, 2.6 boys are suspended for each girl. Astoundingly, there are a significant number of K-2 children suspended and the ratio there is 7.3 to 1!³
- **Expulsions:** In Victoria, 4.3 boys are expelled for each girl.⁴
- **Schools failing boys:** The following graph shows the frequency with which schools fail to educate boys. It's no better if we look at average results rather than those being left behind. In the writing test, boys are 7.2 months behind girls in Year 3, 9.72 months in Year 5, 18.12 months in Year 7, and 20.52 months in Year 9. Almost 2 full years!



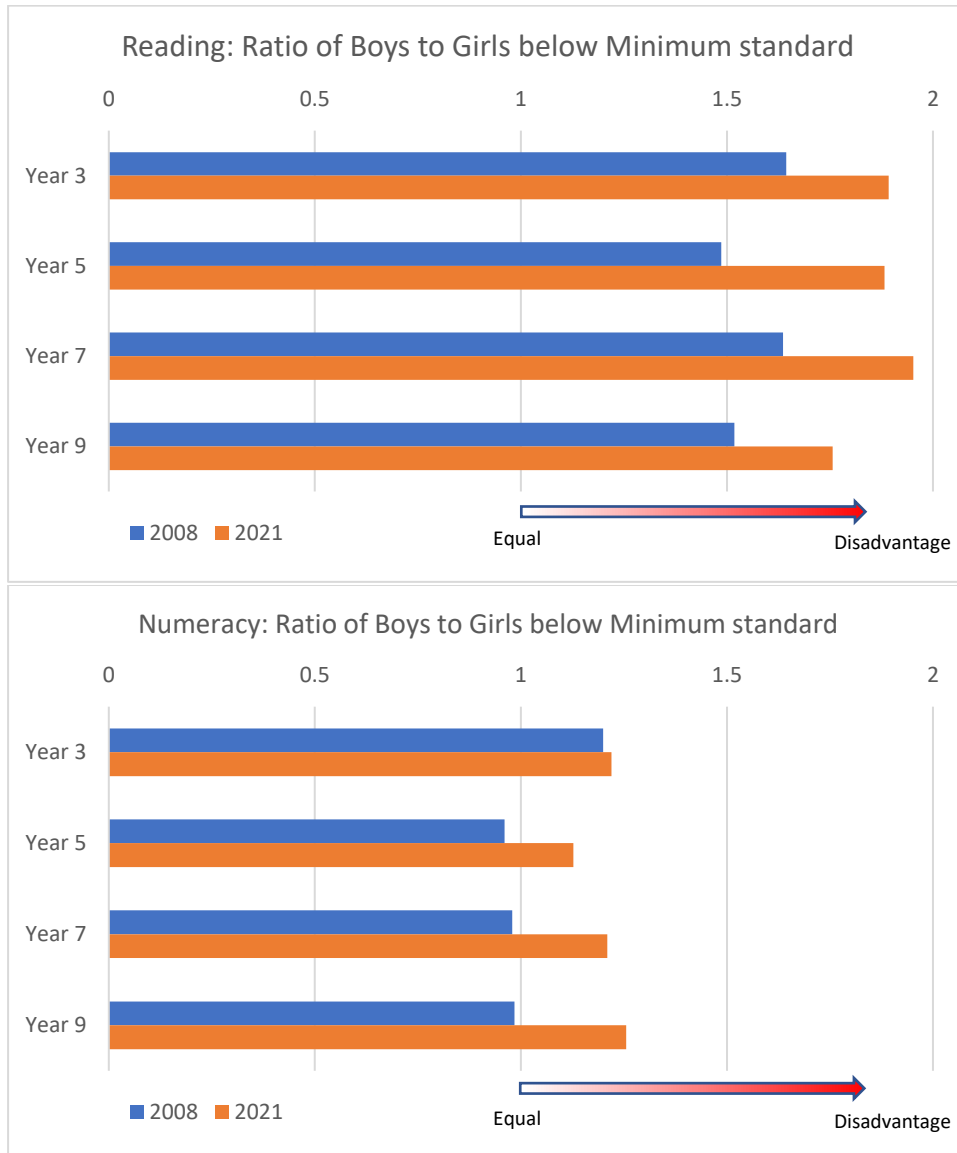
¹<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/c2a1e1b677d4ae81ca2570ec00195177!OpenDocument>

² Table 66a <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/latest-release#data-download>

³ https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/c0a90a6f-2509-45c5-ba77-cf5b00350043/resource/7d039678-7527-4744-93a5-e162aa74de11/download/2021_suspension-and-expulsion-factsheet_vr_v2_aa.pdf

⁴ <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/school-expulsion-rates-plunge-after-students-gain-new-power-to-appeal-20200819-p55n8l.html>

- **Schools getting worse** : NAPLAN⁵ data shows how frequently schools are failing to educate children to minimum standards. The two graphs below show the ratio of boys not educated to minimum standards versus girls. Interestingly numeracy started from a position of rough equality but has moved to increasing bias. (See later discussion.)



- **Schools failing to get boys into university:** In 1988 equal numbers of males and females were able to go to university.⁶ In 2021 there were 1.4 females for every male doing degree or graduate study.⁷

⁵ <https://readwritethinklearn.com/blog/naplan-2021-results/>

⁶ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/c2a1e1b677d4ae81ca2570ec00195177!OpenDocument>

⁷ Table 4 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/latest-release#data-download>

What Causes This?

One thing that is clear, is that the different outcomes for boys & girls don't result from lower ability by boys.⁸ They reflect a bias by schools against boys.

In part, the bias arises from what is often described as the feminisation of education – teaching methods, teaching environment⁹ and assessment methods that favour girls. However, in my view, the most troubling cause of the bias is outright discrimination.

There is abundant research from around the world showing that teachers will score papers they believe came from a girl more highly than an equivalent paper they believe came from a boy.¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³¹⁴¹⁵¹⁶ The fact that nothing is done in Australia to address this blatant discrimination suggests that it is, at a minimum, accepted if not actually encouraged.

Summary

This report is not a sincere attempt to address problems in education. Shame on you.

⁸<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/transition/GenderPerformance.pdf?Redirect=5>

⁹<https://9now.nine.com.au/a-current-affair/highschool-boys-allegedly-forced-into-rape-apology-on-behalf-of-gender-speak-out/c0ee6859-9f0b-49f8-8141-1ed68d65af8f>

¹⁰<https://www.economist.com/international/2015/03/07/the-weaker-sex>

¹¹<https://www.bbc.com/news/education-31751672>

¹²<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1041608020301151?via%3Dihub>

¹³<https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1341.pdf>

¹⁴<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/eliminating-feminist-teacher-bias-erases-boys-falling-grades-study-finds/>

¹⁵<https://mitil.mit.edu/sites/default/files/project-documents/SEII-Discussion-Paper-2016.07-Terrier.pdf>

¹⁶<https://2014.economicsofeducation.com/user/pdfsiones/166.pdf>