



# Foundations for Learning: A new vision for New South Wales?

I S S U E S P A P E R

E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

# Foundations for Learning: A new vision for New South Wales?

In August 2000, the NSW Minister for Education and Training asked the Social Issues Committee to inquire into early intervention into learning difficulties during the early childhood years (0-8 years).

The Inquiry has revealed a broad consensus that the systems designed to help children's learning in NSW are not working as well as they could. However, there is less agreement about how to make the system work better.

This Issues Paper is our invitation to families, academics and professionals to identify stronger foundations for learning for our youngest citizens.

Jan Burnswoods MLC  
*Chair*

## 1. Introduction

The Issues Paper is made up of nine chapters. Each chapter includes a series of questions about the specific issues under discussion. They are numbered from 1 to 69 and are taken from the main report.

It may be that the questions do not cover your particular concerns. If so, please raise these in your response.

You do not have to respond to all the questions. You may prefer to focus on your particular area of interest or expertise.

**This summary is available on audio cassette and on our website at [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au).**

For more information phone (02) 9230 3078.

The closing date for responses is **Friday 19 April 2002**.

Responses should be sent by mail to:

The Director, Standing Committee on Social Issues,  
Parliament House, SYDNEY NSW 2000.

Or by email to: [socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

### The next steps

The Committee will produce a Report to be tabled in the NSW Legislative Council later this year. The Report will include recommendations to the NSW Government, based on the submissions and evidence received by the Committee, including your responses to this Issues Paper.

### A diverse group of children with two key problems

Our inquiry looks at children who:

- have, or who are likely to experience, learning problems but
- **do not** have a diagnosed physical or intellectual disability.

Generally speaking, these children would be expected to achieve 'age-appropriate outcomes' if they receive appropriate early intervention.

This is a diverse group of children whose learning problems stem from a range of environmental and individual factors.

We have identified two key challenges for children with learning difficulties.

First, the unco-ordinated nature of early childhood services in NSW. This is a major barrier to helping children with learning difficulties. Three levels of government, four separate NSW government agencies, as well as numerous non-government organisations are responsible for children's services in NSW. Each has its own policy objectives, planning processes and funding criteria. This complex mix creates confusion and frustration for parents and service providers.

Second, the needs of children with learning difficulties are seen as a lower priority compared to children with a diagnosed disability or more 'serious' problems. As a result, very few programs or services are specifically designed to help such children. Children with learning difficulties often find themselves at the bottom of waiting lists for a range of services intended to help those with more obvious needs. The situation in rural and remote areas is even more difficult.

## 2. Early Childhood Health Services

Early Childhood Health Services provided by NSW Health are a universal and valuable point of contact for information and support to parents about child health and development. However we were told that the potential of these services to help children with learning difficulties is not being fully realised.

### The role of General Practitioners

General Practitioners are often the 'first port of call' for families seeking advice about their child's development. However some people questioned whether these doctors have the skills to identify and help children with learning difficulties.

**Question 1** *Do General Practitioners have adequate skills and/or training to identify and assist children with potential or actual learning difficulties?*

**Question 2** *Do General Practitioners fulfil a role in identifying children with learning difficulties and regularly refer them to the appropriate services? If not, why not?*

### Contact with early childhood health services

Establishing contact between an early childhood health service and new parents is an important way to identify and assist children with learning problems. Some people believe this contact could be maximised if hospitals were legally required to notify the relevant early childhood health service of all new births and nurses were required to contact the families of all new babies. They also argue that to guide planning and service provision every Area Health Service should collect statistics on the number and characteristics of children seen by an early childhood health service.

**Question 3** *Should public and private hospitals in NSW be legally required to notify the relevant early childhood health service of all new births?*

**Question 4** *Should nurses be legally required to contact or visit the families of all new babies?*

**Question 5** *What other initiatives could be employed in NSW to maximise contact between families and local early childhood health services soon after the birth of their baby?*

**Question 6** *Should data on levels of contact with early childhood health services, including participation in home visits, be collected as part of the Community Health Information System? If not, why not?*

### Nurses' qualifications and support

Participants raised concerns about the professional qualifications of early childhood nurses and the funding of early childhood health services.

**Question 7** *Should nurses who primarily work with children and families be required to hold relevant specialist qualifications?*

**Question 8** *What further training or support is required to assist child and family health nurses to 'skillfully elicit' from parents, information about their children's health and development?*

**Question 9** *What type of support is required to assist child and family health nurses to deliver home visiting services?*

### >> Tran's story

Tran is told to stay inside, it's safer and easier that way.

Tran lives in a high-rise apartment block. It's noisy because his new baby sister has just arrived home from the hospital. His mum, Ming, an outworker, seems down since arriving home and frets about the possibility that her children aren't safe outside the flat.

Inside means not much contact with the outside world. There is no pre-school for Tran, no close friends and with money so tight, no new books, toys or paints. With work and the new baby Tran's mum doesn't have time to visit the park or go to the library. Besides, she hardly speaks any English.

With little opportunity to mix with other kids and develop his language and social skills, starting school is likely to be a big challenge for Tran.

Some intensive work at the local early intervention centre has already made a difference to Tran. He now races around the playground with his new friends and is learning about words and numbers.

## 3. Childcare and Pre-school Services

Approximately one-third of pre-school age children in NSW are in families who do not access any type of Early Childhood Education and Care service (ECEC). We were told that a disproportionate number of these children come from socially disadvantaged families. Given the benefits of ECEC services to children who may be at risk of developing learning difficulties there is a compelling need to improve access to pre-school and childcare for children from disadvantaged or socially isolated backgrounds.

**Question 10** *What is the best way to improve access to pre-school and/or childcare services by children from disadvantaged or socially isolated families?*

### Commonwealth/State arrangements

It is widely accepted that the current Commonwealth and State funding, administrative and accountability arrangements for early childhood services are difficult and costly for providers to negotiate.

**Question 11** *How can the complex Commonwealth and State funding arrangements for pre-school and childcare services, which have a significant impact on the ability of Early Childhood Education and Care services to support children with or at risk of learning difficulties, be simplified and improved?*

### Administration and funding

Pre-schools in NSW are administered and funded by two separate government departments: the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Community Services (DOCS). Inquiry participants raised various concerns in relation to these arrangements. Department of Community Services funding for community pre-schools has been frozen since 1990 while DET pre-schools only operate in 79 locations, with limited plans for expansion. Some people suggested that the only way to ensure pre-schools reach the areas of greatest need is through growth funding. Participants also questioned the wisdom of having two separate pre-school systems, administered by two different departments.

**Question 12** *What should be done to ensure that State funding for pre-school services reaches areas of greatest need?*

**Question 13** *What is the rationale for having two separate pre-school programs administered by different departments in NSW? Should they be combined? If so, which department should administer the programs?*

**Question 14** *Should there be an expansion of State funding for pre-school services? If so, how should this funding be allocated?*

### Rural and regional areas

Having fewer ECEC services and limited choice of services disadvantages rural and regional communities. Funding constraints have led to the closure of pre-schools in regional areas, as families opt for long day care. This is often a cheaper and more widely available option.

**Question 15** *What should be done to improve access to pre-school and childcare services in rural and remote NSW?*

### Universal pre-school

A number of witnesses told the Committee that universal pre-school would be a valuable way to prevent, identify and manage learning difficulties in young children. Other participants argued that the short hours and sessional attendance pattern of pre-school are not suitable for working parents. They felt it would be wiser to spend limited resources on services for younger children.

**Question 16** *Should NSW have a system of universally available pre-school? If so, what models would be most effective? If not, what are the preferred initiatives to assist in the care and education of three and four year olds?*

### Improving quality

For ECEC services to identify and help children with learning problems effectively, they need to offer high quality services. We were told that quality would be improved by reducing staff/child ratios, improving employee training and remuneration, and the wider use of an early childhood curriculum.

**Question 17** *Is reduction of staff/child ratios in NSW childcare centres and pre-schools a priority initiative? What would be the impact of a reduction in ratios on the quality of service provided and on children at risk of learning difficulties? Should there be a system of differential staffing for target areas where there are children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 18** *What can be done to ensure that childcare and pre-school workers have the necessary skills to identify and assist children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 19** *What can be done to address the current shortage of trained early childhood teachers in childcare and pre-school services?*

**Question 20** *What other ways are there to improve the capacity of childcare and pre-school services to identify and assist children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 21** *What are the advantages and disadvantages of a curriculum for early childhood services for children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

## **Family day care and other arrangements**

We received very little evidence about the role of family day care and other forms of childcare in the prevention, identification and support of learning difficulties. We would welcome input on this important issue.

**Question 22** *What is the best way to support home-based carers in the care and education of children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 23** *What is the impact of multicare arrangements on children with learning difficulties?*

## **>> Nicki's story**

Nicki's nous and tenacity got her elected captain of her school last year.

Bright, dynamic, artistic 11-year-old Nicki has near perfect comprehension in class, loves learning about nature and sings in a choir. Assessed as having a high IQ and good numeracy skills, Nicki has a learning difficulty that prevents her from reading as well as she should for her age. She may need the maths problem read out because it appears to be a jumble on the page but she has no problem in solving it.

Nicki's reading skills are improving through her sheer persistence, dedication from her teachers, not to mention the one-on-one tutoring from her family. But this entails great emotional and financial expense to those closest to her. Her mother could do with a lot more help.

## **4. Supporting Families**

It is widely recognised that helping parents to provide a loving and consistent environment for children is critical to the prevention and management of learning difficulties. We were told that more could be done to ensure government and non-government family support programs are relevant to children with learning problems.

**Question 24** *How effective are current programs to enhance family support in NSW? What should be done to increase their efficacy and ensure they reach families in need, particularly families with children with or at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 25** *What role should non-government agencies have in developing a comprehensive program of family supports in NSW? What needs to be done to ensure that they are effective in carrying out that role? What can be done to improve the efficiency of the current funding arrangements and requirements?*

**Question 26** *What role should parent support groups for children with learning difficulties have within the broader range of family support services in NSW? What can be done to assist them in this role?*



## 5. School Entry

School entry is an important milestone for all children. It is a point of transition into a structured environment with a strong focus on learning. A difficult start to school can create lasting problems with learning.

### Transition guidelines

The Department of Education and Training has introduced a transition program for children with learning difficulties. However the guidelines appear to relate mainly to children with significant difficulties and/or an identified disability.

**Question 27** *Do the Department of Education and Training's Transition to School Guidelines for Young Children with Special Learning Needs apply to and/or provide sufficient support to the target group for this inquiry? If not, how can they be improved?*

### Formal transition programs

While some participants support the extension of formal transition programs, others noted there could be more cost-effective ways to prepare children for their first year at school.

**Question 28** *Should schools be encouraged to place greater emphasis on formal transition to school programs? Should they be required to provide formal transition programs for children who have not attended prior-to-school services?*

**Question 29** *What are the advantages and disadvantages of targeted transition programs for 'difficult to reach' families and should these programs be expanded?*

**Question 30** *What are the best ways to ensure that transition programs are used by families who are less likely to engage with prior-to-school services?*

### Kindergarten and school entry age

Some inquiry participants suggested that children's transition to school could be made easier if the Kindergarten curriculum was less formal and/or continuous entry was possible after their fifth birthday. It was suggested that such initiatives might avert the need for expensive transition programs.

**Question 31** *Does the Kindergarten program include a greater emphasis on formal learning than in previous years? If so, what are the implications of this for children who have or are at risk of learning difficulties?*

**Question 32** *Should the format of Kindergarten be made more flexible to allow for transition activities to take place during a child's first year of school, rather than prior to school entry? What implications would this have for schools and for the children themselves?*

**Question 33** *Has there been a trend towards earlier school enrolment in NSW? If so, what are the implications of earlier enrolments on the format and curriculum of the Kindergarten year?*

### Information transfer

Some people suggested that schools could do more to take advantage of information collected in other early childhood settings such as pre-schools, childcare centres and medical services.

**Question 34** *What could be done to improve information transfer between prior-to-school services and schools?*

**Question 35** *What measures can schools take to encourage parents/carers to provide information to teachers that will be useful in identifying and assisting children with learning difficulties, including parents and carers who may be reluctant to engage with the school system?*

### » Ben's story

Ben has poorly developed mouth muscles for a four-year-old—it's a real problem when learning to speak.

Ben's mother Janine is on a methadone program and hasn't managed to incorporate solids into his diet yet. He has pretty much survived on milk from a bottle. This means that his mouth muscles haven't developed in a way that will make speaking a natural activity for him. The local baby health nurse told Janine that a speech pathologist might help Ben learn to speak.

With the help of a special program for Ben, and support from the local childcare centre, Ben is now learning to eat and speak.

## 6. Teachers and Schools

Teachers and schools have a vital role in identifying and helping children with learning difficulties in the early school years from Kindergarten to Year 2 (K-Y2).

### Teacher pre-service and in-service training

Two main issues regarding teacher education were raised in submissions and evidence. First, whether teachers of children in K-Y2 should have some form of training in early childhood education. Second, the availability and quality of professional development.

**Question 36** *Do K-Y2 teachers need specific training in the developmental domains of early childhood? If so, what is the best way to ensure they receive this training?*

**Question 37** *Do all K-Y6 teachers need some in-service training related to children with learning difficulties or do some teachers need intensive in-service training to allow them to provide more specialist assistance?*

### The relationship between class size and student performance

It was suggested that smaller class sizes in the first three years of school could make a significant difference to the level of support for children with learning difficulties. The difficulty is whether smaller classes, which are costly, are more important than several other initiatives that could help children with identified learning difficulties.

**Question 38** *Should class sizes in the early school years be reduced, and if so, at what level should they be set?*

**Question 39** *Are there initiatives, other than reducing class size, that may have a greater impact on enhancing student outcomes?*

### Reading Recovery and Support Teachers Learning Difficulties

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program designed for children who are struggling with reading after one year at school. While most inquiry participants were positive about the program, two specific concerns were raised. First, it should be more widely available, especially in rural areas. Second, that it is not suitable for children with specific learning difficulties.

**Question 40** *What strategies could be used to increase the availability of Reading Recovery in rural and remote areas and in small schools?*

**Question 41** *Should Reading Recovery be modified so that it is better able to support children with specific reading difficulties?*

Support Teachers Learning Difficulties (STLDs) assist schools and teachers to cater for students in regular classes who experience learning difficulties. Most evidence to the Committee acknowledged the importance of STLDs, but as with Reading Recovery the major concern is that it should be more widely available.

**Question 42** *Should the number of Support Teachers Learning Difficulties be increased or are there any other ways to increase the coverage of Support Teachers Learning Difficulties across the State?*

**Question 43** *Are there any other issues or concerns regarding the Support Teachers Learning Difficulties program?*

### Identifying children with learning difficulties

A number of participants raised concerns about delays to the early identification of learning difficulties by teachers. However, the Committee received very little evidence about the possible reasons for the delay or strategies to accelerate effective early identification.

**Question 44** *What are the barriers to the early identification of children with learning difficulties in the first three years at school and what should be done to overcome these barriers?*

## 7. Specific Learning Difficulties

Between 2 and 4% of school students have highly specific difficulties with formal learning. These difficulties are considered to result from factors intrinsic to the child, rather than from the environment. Many of these students require ongoing support throughout their schooling, but are ineligible for the assistance provided to children with a diagnosed physical or intellectual disability. Some people argued that there is a need to recognise and fund a category of 'learning disability'. Others recommended that support be provided on the basis of demonstrated functional need.

**Question 45** *What is the best way to ensure that children with specific learning difficulties are able to access ongoing support, and should the concept of 'learning disability' be incorporated into funding criteria?*

### The role of certain treatments

We received evidence from many parents and some professionals about less conventional forms of treatment to help children who have specific learning difficulties. These included Samonas sound therapy and behavioural optometry. These treatments are controversial. Supporters claim there is growing scientific evidence for their success, while detractors say there is no basis for their claims.

**Question 46** *Is there any reliable evidence about the efficacy of non-conventional treatments to help overcome the intrinsic factors that result in learning difficulties? If so, how should this knowledge be reflected in practice?*

## 8. Therapy Services

While children with learning difficulties often respond extremely well to therapy, they generally cannot access this support because priority is usually given to children with ongoing complex needs or manifest disability. We were told there is a need to increase the supply of therapy services for children with or at risk of learning difficulties. Building community capacity to support these children might reduce the demand for therapy services. Much of the evidence received by the Committee identifies speech pathology as a key area of unmet need for children with learning problems.

### Supply of therapists

The Committee was told that there were not enough therapists in NSW Health or the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to meet the needs of children in NSW.

**Question 47** *Should NSW Health and/or the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care employ more therapists so that the target group for this inquiry can access appropriate therapy? If so, what level of increase would be necessary to make a difference for children with learning difficulties?*

**Question 48** *What are the barriers to the employment of additional therapists in public agencies such as NSW Health or the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care? How might these barriers be overcome?*

**Question 49** *Should children receive higher priority access to NSW Health therapists? Should all Area Health Services be required to consistently set higher priority for children's therapy services?*

**Question 50** *Should the criteria for access to the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care therapy services be modified to enable access by the target group for this inquiry? If so, how should this be done? What would be the implications of such a change?*

### Overcoming departmental boundaries

Concerns were raised about the poor co-ordination between children's therapy services provided by NSW Health and DADHC. It was suggested that this could exacerbate the tendency for children considered having lesser needs to 'fall through the gaps'.

Concerns about co-ordination give rise to broader questions about whether it is appropriate to have two separate departmental providers of therapy services for children. It is possible that the two systems currently do not promote effective and consistent service delivery and are confusing for families and service providers.

**Question 51** *Should the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health continue to be separate providers of therapy for children in NSW?*



**Question 52** *Is there a need to establish clear departmental responsibility for planning and delivery of therapy services to children with or at risk of learning difficulties? If so, which department should have this responsibility? If not, what can be done to ensure that the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health collaborate effectively to ensure that therapy services are available to all children who need them?*

## Non-government early intervention services

Non-government early intervention services are significant providers of specialist therapy support for children with special needs. However government-funding guidelines for these programs also tend to prioritise children with high and persistent needs and/or who have a diagnosed disability.

**Question 53** *Should funding criteria for non-government early intervention services be modified to enable children who have learning difficulties but not significant disabilities to access therapy support through early intervention services?*

## Improving availability in rural areas

The Committee heard from many witnesses that rural areas find it difficult to attract and retain qualified therapists, that vacant therapy positions are difficult to fill and that experienced staff are hard to keep.

**Question 54** *What are the most effective strategies to enhance the availability of therapy services to children living in rural and remote areas of NSW?*

## Using resources more efficiently

The Committee was told that the demand for therapy services could be reduced by greater use of consultative models of therapy and by increased involvement of therapists in early childhood settings, such as pre-schools.

**Question 55** *What role should therapists have in early childhood services such as pre-school and day care? Should there be an expansion of programs such as the Macarthur Teamwork Project in Schools and Pre-school Outreach Project? How should this be funded and administered?*

**Question 56** *Should there be greater use of consultancy and team-based models of therapy to support children with or at risk of learning difficulties? What role should NSW Health have in providing community-based and preventative therapy services for children at educational risk?*

## Therapy for school aged children

A significant concern raised by parents and early intervention providers was the lack of continuity in service provision for children when they reach school. Funding programs for therapy support in the prior-to-school years are separate from those for school age children; they are administered by different departments and have different eligibility criteria. It was argued that therapists, particularly speech pathologists, should be employed to work directly in schools to support children with learning difficulties.

**Question 57** *Should speech pathologists and other relevant therapists be employed by the Department of Education and Training to work in schools?*

**Question 58** *Are there other ways to ensure that schools cater appropriately for children who have special therapy needs?*

## » Kayla's story

Mum and dad are always at work, but that's okay, Kayla really likes watching TV and playing video games.

Kayla's mum and dad are rarely at home in time to read her a bedtime story and chat about her day. It's hard to balance shift work and family life.

Lucky for Kayla she has an older sister, Jane, who looks after her in the mornings and afternoons while her parents are at work or catching up on some sleep.

It's not surprising that when Kayla recently started pre-school her teacher noticed she wasn't talking as well as her classmates. So she arranged for a consultant speech pathologist, attached to the pre-school, to work on her language skills. But just as importantly, the therapist spent time with Kayla's parents, helping them understand the crucial link between talking to children, reading stories and later literacy success.

## 9. Finding Solutions

Throughout the inquiry, the Committee has been told about innovative ways to make the system work better for children and families. Some of these approaches have been implemented in different parts of the State. However, several inquiry participants urged the Committee to go beyond community level solutions and address fundamental concerns about children's services in NSW. While various systemic solutions were suggested, these ideas were not presented in fine detail and there was no consensus on the best way forward.

### Reducing fragmentation

Some participants believe that assigning responsibility for early childhood services to a single agency and/or establishing interagency guidelines and committees could address some of the problems associated with fragmentation.

**Question 59** *Should responsibility for early childhood services in NSW be assigned to one government agency? If so, which agency should hold this responsibility?*

**Question 60** *Could inter-agency guidelines and/or committees facilitate greater co-ordination between the four state government departments responsible for early childhood services in NSW?*

### Families First

The Committee received little evidence about the implementation of *Families First*, the NSW Government's strategy to help parents raise healthy children. Given the potential significance of *Families First*, the Committee would welcome feedback on the strategy and its relevance to children with learning difficulties.

**Question 61** *What is the potential of Families First to improve the co-ordination of early childhood services in NSW?*

**Question 62** *Should the stated aims of Families First, including those relevant to learning difficulties, be accompanied by measurable targets and, if so, what should they be?*

**Question 63** *What are the implications of moving the co-ordination of Families First from The Cabinet Office to the Department of Community Services?*

**Question 64** *Should the forthcoming evaluation of Families First look specifically at the needs of children with learning difficulties and their families?*

### Making connections

The Committee heard that there is a need for professionals to work in new ways to help families overcome the complexities of a fragmented early childhood sector. Highly skilled early childhood professionals are required to work across professional and systemic boundaries.

**Question 65** *Is there a role for a specialist early childhood professional to make connections between families and systems and if so, how should this role be supported?*

## >> Damien's story

The Jacksons move around with the seasons—that's the nature of fruit picking.

Damien is four and spends most of the day in the orchard watching his parents pick fruit. It's lively and fun and he loves to help carry the fruit back to the shed.

While he's getting lots of physical activity, Damien's not learning a lot of things that will help him settle into school next year. Simple things, like cutting out shapes so his hand muscles are ready to hold a pencil for writing. Sometimes he complains to his mum that he's bored and she knows he going to be a handful that day.

Enrolling in the School of Distance Education pre-school was a godsend. Every so often Damien gets to meet up with kids his own age to play and learn and it gives Damien's mum lots of new ideas about how to refocus his boundless energy.

*Note: These accounts were told to the Committee during the course of the inquiry. The children's names have been changed to protect their privacy.*

## Lack of comparative data on early childhood services

Consistent and reliable data on participation in early childhood services on a statewide and national basis is difficult to obtain. In 1996, a Senate Committee recommended the establishment of a National Research Centre, which would include a clearinghouse to collect and co-ordinate comprehensive data on early childhood services across the country. However, this recommendation has not been acted on.

**Question 66** *Who should be responsible for establishing a national clearinghouse on the provision of and participation in early childhood services?*

## Improving co-ordination between the Commonwealth and NSW

The Committee was told there is a lack of collaboration at the policy and administrative level in relation to Commonwealth and State programs for children with learning difficulties. Attempts to achieve a more integrated system with the Commonwealth have been unsuccessful.

**Question 67** *What are some of the ways to foster greater co-ordination of early childhood services between the State and Commonwealth governments?*

## Extending the reach of early intervention services

Early intervention services provide valuable support for children with disabilities and developmental delay. However, their ability to support children with learning difficulties is constrained by funding guidelines. The Early Childhood Intervention Co-ordination Program (ECICP) appears to have had a very positive impact on the coordination of early childhood intervention services for children with disabilities in NSW. There was considerable support for extending this, or a similar type of program, to cater for children with learning problems.

**Question 68** *Should early intervention services receive additional funding to cater for the needs of children with learning difficulties?*

**Question 69** *Should the Early Childhood Intervention Co-ordination Program be adapted or a similar program introduced to cater for the needs of children with learning difficulties? If not, why not?*

Cover illustrations by Lucy Burke, aged 5.

# About the Social Issues Committee

**The Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues examines matters relating to the social development of people in New South Wales. It consists of five members of the NSW Parliament.**

Jan Burnswoods MLC, Chair (Australian Labor Party)

The Hon Doug Moppett, Deputy Chair (National Party)

The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC (Australian Labor Party)

The Hon Dr Arthur Chesterfield Evans MLC (Democrat)

The Hon Ian West MLC (Australian Labor Party)



Legislative Council  
Standing Committee  
on Social Issues