

Innovating for the Future Inner-City Brisbane Project

Professor Lee Ann Perry

Report summary

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Introduction

The report summary provides an overview of the work undertaken by Professor Lee Anne Perry during the Innovating for the Future Inner-City Brisbane project. It outlines the key findings for BCE to consider and respond to. The report highlights the research, stakeholder consultations, and analysis of enrolment and demographic data considered as part of the project.

The report contains sensitive information and is not for sharing.

Background

As part of the Innovating for the Future Inner City Brisbane project, Professor Lee Anne Perry undertook a comprehensive analysis of the current challenges and considered future planning to inform, shape, and direct the next phase of Catholic Education in inner-city Brisbane. For the report, a ten (10) kilometre radius from Brisbane City has been used to determine a catchment of 77 SA2 (Statistical Area 2) regions.

Inner-city Brisbane has a high concentration of State, Catholic, and Independent schools. As of February 2023, the catchment contained 111 primary-only schools (70 State, 39 Catholic, 2 Independent) and 72 secondary schools, some of which have primary classes (31 State, 22 Catholic, 19 Independent). BCE has 39 primary and 4 secondary schools in the inner-city Brisbane catchment.

Project Activities

Stakeholder and community consultation

During the project, consultations were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including the BCE Executive, Principals, leadership and staff, agencies of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Vicar for Administration and Council of Priests, RI/MPJP Principals and governing bodies, Australian Catholic University, Catholic School Parents Queensland, National Catholic Education Commission, as well as targeted state and territory Commissions and targeted Diocesan Directors.

Research

Extensive research informed the project, with the relevant BCE strategies, reports, processes, financial, and enrolment data reviewed and analysed. In addition to the BCE documents, other important information was considered, such as the Apostolic Priorities for the Archdiocese of Brisbane 2023, the Futures Toolkit from the UK Government Office for Science, and a report on building a world-class learning system by Professor Geoff Masters.

Recent educational papers prepared by various institutes and academic bodies were also considered, alongside a survey of BCE parents, to gain a better understanding from the BCE community about what they evaluate when choosing their primary and secondary schooling options for the inner-city Brisbane area. The results of the survey are in **Appendix 1**.

This information provided valuable context, data, and conceptual ideas that have informed the project.

Analysis of enrolment and demographic data within inner-city Brisbane

The project identified that the inner-city of Brisbane has undergone significant gentrification, attracting families from higher socio-economic backgrounds and leading to a competitive environment with many school choices. Market research data indicates a shift in parental preference from small, intimate community schools to larger schools offering a range of subjects, programs, facilities, and resources.

Changes to school funding, particularly impacting high DMI schools in inner-city Brisbane, have led to higher school fees, affecting affordability for parents. Other significant considerations for BCE schools in the area are workforce challenges, such as shortages of teaching staff and a reduction in the quality and quantity of applicants for school leadership roles.

Additional external factions relevant to the Future Inner City Brisbane project

- Demographic changes in inner-city Brisbane, including population growth and densification of key areas, are expected to increase school enrolments with targeted marketing and improved educational opportunities.
- The forthcoming National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA) from 2025 could potentially give State schools a competitive advantage over Catholic schools due to increased funding.
- The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, which includes aggressive teacher recruitment programs, may also have implications for BCE.
- Potential future education precinct development by the Archdiocese of Brisbane and a potential partnership with the Australian Catholic University.
- Catholic School Authorities in other jurisdictions, like Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) and Melbourne Archdiocese Schools (MACS), have already experienced similar challenges and have undertaken significant transformation processes. These include strategic and operational changes, fee adjustments, amalgamation of schools, and multi-campus approaches.

Key findings

The report highlights seven key aspects impacting the future of Catholic schooling in inner-city Brisbane for BCE to consider and respond to. At a high level, the project identified the following:

Demography and enrolment

- There's strong demand for two new co-educational BCE secondary schools, one each on the north and south sides of the city.
- Size of all primary schools and the number of streams should be considered, particularly where there is a significant loss of students at the end of Year 4.

Learning outcomes

- Improvement in learning outcomes is needed for all students. A sustained, system-wide approach is required. BCE has identified the need for improved learning outcomes and has developed strategies and programs to address this.
- Educational outcomes and excellence are critical to attracting and retaining inner-city Brisbane enrolments.

Kindergarten and OSHC

- The provision of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) is a significant factor for parents.
- The importance of early years education is increasing. Parents prefer a clear and seamless transition from kindergarten to Prep. The co-location of kindergarten and primary school is highly valued by parents.

Staffing

- Staffing is a critical factor in school choice and sustainability.
- Parents with children in BCE schools consider the reputation of the Principal as a key factor in their choice of school.
- Principals with proven expertise, particularly in leading parent and community engagement, should be identified to lead new or transformed schools.
- New leadership models, such as an Executive Principal overseeing multiple schools, should be considered to support the innovation and transformation process.
- The availability of expert teachers is a challenge. The competition for expert teachers is significant and expected to continue, according to National Teacher Workforce data. In this context, innovative and flexible solutions are required, including the teaching of Religious Education.

Marketing and community engagement

- Marketing and community engagement are crucial for BCE schools. Not only must they achieve educational excellence and quality programs, but these must also be actively promoted.
- A more centralised, coordinated marketing approach is required, built on an identifiable BCE brand while supporting local marketing to highlight individual school strengths.
- BCE needs to leverage its system strengths more effectively by providing multiple options and diverse pathways for families through centralised marketing.
- The Principal plays a critical role in raising their school's visibility and presence in the local community. Engagement with parents and families extends beyond current families to prospective ones, necessitating outreach beyond the school. Principal role statements should reflect this important activity, with appropriate support and training provided by BCE.

Pathways

- Parents seek clear and seamless schooling pathways for their child(ren). The recent market research highlights how early parents make decisions and choices for primary and secondary schools.
- The careful and considered mapping of K-12 pathways for families inclusive of all potential source geographic locations for families considering an inner-city Brisbane school will be required in the future. These pathways then need to be actively marketed to prospective and current families.

Infrastructure

- The facilities and resources available at a school are the top factors influencing families when choosing a school, as highlighted by recent market research.
- BCE faces constraints in its capital funding pool, which is needed to invest in new and upgraded facilities in inner-city Brisbane and to meet capital demands in other parts of the Archdiocese.
- The current approach of providing contemporary facilities at multiple BCE inner-city Brisbane primary schools with lower than optimal enrolments is an inefficient use of these limited capital resources and limits the capacity to provide enhanced facilities to more students.

Inner City Schools Survey

BCE parents believe...



Catholic schools are important for faith development

55% of Catholic parents believe that a Catholic education is important for their children to strengthen their faith.



Social justice, values and community are most important

When choosing schools, parents consider a focus on social justice, values and community to be the most influential factor with an importance rating of 8.3 out of 10.



Facilities, resources, and proximity to home are other influences

Facilities and resources, and the proximity of the school to home are other important factors with importance ratings of 8.3 and 7.9 out of 10, respectively.



Co-located kindergartens are preferable

36% of BCE parents would prefer a kindergarten co-located at the main school campus.



Primary schools with 3 to 5 classes per year level are ideal

Parents prefer 3 to 5 classes per year level.



In staying in a BCE primary school until the end of Year 6

66% of parents would prefer to keep their children in primary school until the end of Year 6.



A Catholic secondary school is the pathway for their children

80% of parents plan to send their children to a Catholic secondary school.



Catholic secondary schools provide holistic, faith-based education

Parents believe Catholic secondary schools offer a faith-based education, a sense of community, consistent education, and a well-rounded, holistic educational experience.



In sending their children to a Catholic co-ed secondary school

Nearly 60% of parents prefer sending their children to a co-educational secondary school.

