



## EDITORIAL CORRECTION AND APOLOGY: CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ALIVE AND WELL IN CHINCHILLA

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### INTRODUCTION

In a recent addition to the [TJRyan Foundation website](#), I took some comfort in reporting that the decision taken when I was Director-General of Education in 1992 to abolish corporal punishment had finally come to completion in 2015.

This was an error. I misled our subscribers by reporting at face value the news communicated in the Sunday Mail of 28 February that 'Last schools drop the cane'.

**I apologise unreservedly to the management of the two schools, Central Queensland Christian College and Chinchilla Christian School, and to the chief executive officer of the Christian Communities Ministries for any confusion created by my article.**

My error arose from contradictory statements made by the CEO that corporal punishment had ceased, and a spokesperson for the Administration of the Chinchilla Christian School who affirmed in an email to the Education Editor of *The Australian* that 'We have not changed our policy. And, had we done so, we would not be the last school, but rather the latest'. This can be read to imply that he is aware there are other schools which continue to use corporal punishment.

Alan Corbett, former member of Parliament and long-term advocate of removing corporal punishment from all education systems, has provided the valuable background which sets my earlier comment into a broader historical context:

There is absolutely no evidence that there is currently any other school in Australia that uses corporal punishment nor has the existence of such a school ever been suggested by any other media outlet or reader. Indeed, in 2015 WA passed a regulation prohibiting corporal punishment in its non-government schools and in Jan 2016, legislation came into effect to ban its use in both state and non-state schools in the Northern Territory.

I wish to point out that every state and territory prohibits the use of the cane or paddle on children in its government schools. A similar situation exists in non-government schools with two exceptions; South Australia and Queensland.

However Queensland is in a ballpark of all of its own because, unlike SA, it doesn't even have official guidelines agreed upon by the government and non-government school sector that forbid its use in non-state schools.

In reality in SA non-state schools, corporal punishment is not used at all. This fact has been confirmed in writing to me by Catholic Education SA and the Association of Independent Schools SA.

In Queensland, however, the Crimes Act Section 280 still allows its use in any non-state school and there is no government legislation, regulation or policy to dictate otherwise. Successive Queensland governments have consistently stated it is the school's choice.<sup>1</sup>

So I need to recognise that the Chinchilla Christian School System for continuing to exercise its freedom of choice to provide a distinctive approach to education, which presumably accords with the views of its parents as well as the teaching body.

Can I safely assume that it has equally old-fashioned views on the Safe Schools Program and the curriculum guidelines about indigenous perspectives on Australian history? If so, should I be advocating that the Chinchilla schools be heritage listed as a link to the past?<sup>2</sup> Or do newfound concerns over domestic and public violence raise problems of policy inconsistency requiring government action?

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<sup>1</sup> Corbett has provided two tables on p.3, comparing the position in each of the Australian jurisdictions relating to state and non-state schools.

<sup>2</sup> Ten years before I became Director-General, there had been a parliamentary select committee into education sparked by concerns over religious education and government curriculum bans on material relating to the teaching of evolution as a scientific fact rather than as a matter of faith. (Akin to contemporary controversies over climate change). Then, as now, independent schools could make their own minds up and the Catholic system ignored the bans, and state schools successfully offered passive resistance. See Scott A, [The Ahern Committee and the Education Policy-making Process in Queensland](#), PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1984.

## NON STATE SCHOOLS - USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

QLD: There is currently no restriction on its use. Corporal punishment is still possible under Section 280 of Qld Crimes Act. Officially, non-government schools are autonomous in this area. Previous Ministers of Education from both parties have argued against taking any action to change the status quo.

NT: None, due to 2015 legislation.

SA: A 2005 combined Government/AISSA/Catholic Education set of "Guidelines" advocate for its non-use. It is not used according to Association of Independent Schools SA and Catholic Education SA.

WA: None, due to a 2015 regulation.

NSW: None, due to 1995 legislation. The legislation actually came into effect at the beginning of the 1997 school year.

ACT: None, due to 1997 legislation.

VICT: None, due to 2006 legislation.

TAS: None, due to 1999 legislation.

## STATE SCHOOLS : USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

**All jurisdictions have a ban on corporal punishment due to departmental policy, regulations or legislation.**

QLD: None, due to a 1992 cabinet decision to abolish corporal punishment by 1 Jan 1995.

NT: None, due to 2015 legislation.

SA: None, because previous provisions that allowed it were repealed by a 1991 amendment regulation.

WA: None, due to a 2000 regulation.

NSW: None, due to 1995 legislation. The legislation actually came into effect at the beginning of the 1997 school year.

ACT: None, due to 1997 legislation.

VIC: Previously banned by governmenttt communique in 1983. Now legislation (2006) bans its use.

TAS: None, due to 1999 legislation.