



*A sound education system is vital to the nation*



# Chapter 10

## EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A sound and adequate education system is vital to the development of any nation. It forms the basis of the social well-being of every community. From the planning viewpoint, apart from its social importance, the education structure involves the daily movement and activity of a very high percentage of the total population and the use of a considerable quantity of land throughout the urban area. In the metropolitan area of Melbourne almost one-quarter of the total population is daily concerned with education in some form or other. In 1951 there were nearly 200,000 children attending some 605 primary and secondary schools. In addition there were about 20,000 smaller children attending kindergartens, 8,000 attending the University and another 35,000 attending night schools. If allowance is made for teachers, it will be seen that education involves over 265,000 people in Melbourne, which is comparable with the number engaged in all secondary industry.

But the significance of education goes far deeper than its importance in mere numbers engaged. The effectiveness of the education system is of vital importance to the whole development of the nation, covering as it does that most formative period when the youth of the country is trained for its lifelong career of citizenship. Its influence and importance, therefore, cannot be overstressed.

Education is compulsory in the State of Victoria for all children between the ages of 6 and 14, and although the State Government passed an Act in 1943 authorising the raising of the school leaving age limit to 15 years, this has not yet been implemented.

The basic problem confronting education authorities not only in Victoria, but throughout Australia since World War II has been the shortage of schools and teaching staff to cope with the rapidly increasing number of pupils. The position so far has been most acute with primary schools because of the greatly increased birthrate over the past 10 years, but with secondary schools also there is a shortage of space and staff to meet present needs with the result that most schools are already overcrowded and the average size of individual classes has generally grown considerably in excess of desirable standards.

One of the most urgent social problems facing the community today therefore is to provide for the greatly increased numbers that will be requiring both primary and secondary

education over the next 15 years. This is especially so with regard to secondary schools, because there is every reason to believe that the number of pupils requiring secondary education will just about double over that period.

One of the features of both primary and secondary education in Melbourne is the relatively high proportion of pupils who attend private schools. In 1951, one-third of all primary school pupils were attending private schools. The proportion of secondary school pupils attending private schools was 37%. In the case of pre-school training, private kindergartens account for a considerably higher number of children than do the State subsidised institutions.

Although there is reason to believe that an increasing proportion of future pupils will need to be provided for by State institutions the high proportion attending private schools is significant and complicates the task of assessing future needs.

### ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION STRUCTURE

The education structure of Melbourne can be classified into four broad groups:

Group	Usual age range (years)	Usual period (years)
Pre-school	2-5	3
Primary	5-11	7
Secondary	12-18	Up to 7
University	18 and above	3 and upwards

The administration of the education structure is complicated somewhat by the fact that primary schools and secondary schools, which account for the largest numbers, are divided into three distinct categories:

- State schools administered and financed by the State Government through the Education Department.
- Catholic schools administered and financed by the Roman Catholic Church.
- Non-Catholic private schools financed and administered by the various Protestant churches and other private organisations.

Technical schools are largely financed by the State Government and come under the general administration of the Education Department. The University is an independent