

## Philosophy goes to school in Australia: A history 1982-2016

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### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to highlight significant developments in the history of philosophy in schools in Australia.<sup>1</sup> We commence by looking at the early years when Laurance Splitter visited the Institute for the Advancement for Philosophy for Children (IAPC). Then we offer an account of the events that led to the formation of what is now the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA), the development and production of a diverse range of curriculum and supporting materials for philosophy in schools, the making of the Australasian journal, and more recent events. Our purpose is to create further interest in exploring this complex and rich history. This will achieve a better understanding of the possible future directions for classroom practice and research.

**Keywords:** *Critical & Creative Thinking*, community of inquiry, Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations, Philosophy for Children, picture books, stories-as-text.

### Introduction

It goes without saying that we are constantly challenged by the enormity of our task: to take a discipline long ignored in schools and place it at the very centre of all that goes on there. But this external challenge is more than matched by one that originates from within: to remember the ideal of the community of inquiry and practise what we preach. (Splitter 1993, p. iv)

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the 45th Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (see Burgh & Thornton 2016).

To practise what we preach is a very political statement; it forces us to weigh the claims of the community against those of self-interest. With community in mind, in the 1960s, Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp at the Institute of Advancement for Philosophy for Children (IAPC) developed Philosophy for Children (P4C), a unique approach to *doing* philosophy *with* school-aged students. The curriculum they developed consists of a series of purpose-written philosophical stories-as-text and accompanying instruction manuals with discussion plans and exercises aimed at developing the philosophical themes contained within the stories. Lipman and Sharp argued that the practice of philosophy, in the form of the community of inquiry, went hand-in-hand with a philosophy curriculum.

In this paper, we offer an overview of the development of Philosophy in Schools in Australia. Our purpose for writing this paper is twofold: (1) to whet the reader's appetite in the hope that it will create further interest in exploring the complex and rich history, and (2) to commence writing a more detailed history. On the second point, we have begun an ongoing process of engaging with the Australian community of teachers, academics and others who are a part of the historical development of philosophy in schools in a community of inquiry, in order to piece together a critical history. We have browsed the IAPC archives at Montclair State University in New Jersey, along with the personal archives generously shared with us by Laurance Splitter, Jennifer Glaser, Susan Wilks and other formative figures in Australia's P4C history. In addition, we will continue to gather historical documents, letters, newsletters, essays, and newspaper articles, as well as testimonies from people involved in philosophy in school in Australia.<sup>2</sup> In this way, we will consider as many perspectives on issues that prove to be recurring as we can gain access too, so that the community can in a way speak for itself in an ongoing dialogue with the reader.

Combing through archives, including piles of meeting minutes, what is striking and we think should be kept in mind when reading this history, is the amount of work, time, effort and cooperation put in by members of the community. Most people involved volunteered over long periods to create opportunities for the introduction and development of philosophy in Australian schools. The sheer number of

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meetings, workshops, and training sessions, as well as effort put into fundraising, networking, record keeping, responding to correspondence, questioning, reflecting, innovating and improving, is staggering and truly inspiring. Aside from intermittent government funding, P4C has developed in Australia very much under its own steam through the work of dedicated individuals. It is in a spirit of appreciation that we set out the following history as faithfully as we can from information gleaned so far. We apologise that this history is not exhaustive, and, therefore, invite contributions and suggestions for expansion.

### **The formative years**

The promotion of P4C in Australia began in the early 1980s. There may well have been earlier attempts to introduce P4C into Australian classrooms; however, we can trace the history of its current place in Australian education back to Laurance Splitter, and soon thereafter, Jennifer Glaser. The work of these two key figures inspired a host of similarly dedicated people to join in the teaching and promotion of P4C across all states. It was in September of 1982 that Splitter first met Lipman at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children in New Jersey. In undated private correspondence, Splitter wrote that he 'came away deeply impressed by [Lipman's] conviction that philosophy in the hands and minds of the young was the key to improving education'. After returning to Australia, Splitter's subsequent conversations with Lipman and Sharp led to them making their first trip to Australia.

In 1985, Lipman and Sharp conducted seminars, awareness sessions and demonstration classes around Australia, including the first national P4C workshop, held at The University of Wollongong. Twenty-six people 'participated in this very intense and productive session, the objective of which was to produce suitably qualified individuals who may proceed to work with, and train, classroom teachers' (Australian Institute of Philosophy for Children 1985, p. 2). This was the first of many such workshops (later called Level 2 training), a practice that continues to the present day, with more or less the same goal.

The workshops, sessions and seminars were some of the primary vehicles for the dissemination and spread of P4C nationwide. Eventually, these became formalised, with the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Association (FAPSA) eventually providing criteria for training. Nowadays, FAPSA Associates (i.e. associations, related groups, or organisations, established for the promotion of philosophy in schools) provide Level 1 training, which is professional development

for classroom teachers aimed at imparting a practical understanding of philosophical inquiry with children, to enable them to start practicing it in their own schools and classrooms. FAPSA conducts Level 2 training, provided by qualified trainers. As straightforward as this seems, it remains a contentious issue, as it raises the questions: What is required to teach philosophy to children and who decides? Is it a degree in education, a degree in philosophy (or both), teacher instruction manuals and classroom resources, in-service training, workshops, a Masters degree in P4C? Throughout Australia's history of philosophy in schools these have become frequently asked questions.

Sharp and Lipman's visit marked the formal beginning of P4C in Australia with the inauguration of the Australian Institute for Philosophy for Children (AIPC), directed by Splitter. It was through the AIPC that the P4C materials first reached Australian shores. Sharp and Lipman's visit, and the institute they helped begin, proved inspiring and, by 1987, P4C had made inroads into every Australian state and territory. A secondary vehicle for the growth of P4C was the newsletters; first produced by the AIPC and later by each of the associate organisations. These newsletters not only increased awareness of P4C, but also functioned as a kind of community of inquiry, allowing the diverse group of people involved to share ideas, events and updates across Australia.

Speaking on differences in the dissemination of P4C from country to country, in a telling interview with Zaza Carneiro De Moura, Lipman (1993) notes that 'a lot depends on the administrative structure in the particular country that regulates the adoption of new material' (p. 3). In a country with a decentralised administrative body, where everything is local, 'you have to persuade and re-persuade every little community—you have to reinvent the wheel a million times—in order to get anything happening. In more centralized countries, one persuasion would lead to a thousand others' (p. 4). In a country as vast as Australia, without extensive government support, the growth of philosophy in schools was uneven across the states, being introduced 'usually on a one-off basis rather than systemically' (Splitter, undated and unpublished article) and in 1987 not all states had yet developed a P4C branch of its own. To give a snapshot of the progress during this time, we take note of P4C involvement by state. South Australia, under the coordination of Susan Knight and Bill Ekins, was an early leader—approximately fifty teachers from twenty-five primary schools had introduced P4C into their classroom by 1987. Western Australia, headed by Robert Wilson and Felicity Haynes, boasted approximately ten schools involved with the program in the same year. Several

schools in New South Wales, under the direction of Splitter and Marjorie O'Loughlan, had introduced P4C. One school had already incorporated P4C into its curriculum, and the 'Studies of Education' Masters Program at the University of Wollongong taught a dedicated subject. Tasmania, coordinated by Brian Haslem and Felicity Hickman, equalled Western Australia in the number of schools involved. A school in Victoria, under the management of Cliff Penniceard and Susan Wilks, had also introduced P4C into its curriculum. The Australian Capital Territory, directed primarily by Frank Sofo, Christina Slade and Peter Forrest had introduced P4C to five schools. Queensland had used the Lipman material in a Diploma of Teaching supervised by Robert Elliot, but was lacking in both a school presence and a principal organiser at the time.

Despite attempts to nationalise AIPC, Splitter noted that

WA and SA, whilst not rejecting the concept of a national organisation, quite naturally wanted to 'do their own thing' (with some experience of p for c in other countries, I can confidently assert that this desire is especially, albeit not uniquely, Australian). (undated private correspondence)

On the development of new materials this desire was, as we will show, a strong aid. On the issue of organisation, it is, as Lipman said, still a matter of persuasion and re-persuasion.

In order to bring the IAPC materials to Australia, the AIPC incurred a debt and, as time wore on, this—coupled with the administrative burden of both the debt and the day-to-day running of an organisation—proved problematic. Subsequently on 12 April 1988, four years after its conception, AIPC transferred to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Splitter had the support of then-Director of ACER, Barry McGaw, who appointed him as the Director of a newly established Centre for Philosophy for Children (later Centre for Philosophy with Children and Adolescents) within ACER. However, the move was not without controversy. Correspondence from the era indicates that some people feared losing the community engagement AIPC had generated so successfully. Others, wary of the move, saw no clear advantage to AIPC or did not see a significant role for the Centre in the co-ordination and promotion of the cause of Philosophy for Children. It is also evident from further correspondence sent shortly after his move to the new Centre that Splitter was eager to address these issues and assure existing proponents of P4C that he sought and welcomed their continuing engagement. An Extraordinary General Meeting of AIPC members was called to discuss and settle the proposed move. The move was eventually accepted. The Centre's Advisory Board included

such Australian notables as broadcasters Phillip Adams and Robyn Williams, Senator Michael Macklin and leading Australian philosophers Max Charlesworth, Genevieve Lloyd, and Peter Singer.

### Coming of age

A year later, in 1989, Sharp made a return visit to Australia, this time accompanied by Ron Reed. The purpose of their visit was to head a six-day workshop in Lorne, Victoria, organised by the newly founded Centre for Philosophy for Children, with the aim of training the trainers and again it proved of historical significance. According to Stephan Millett (2006), '[t]he participants at the Lorne workshop, by creating associations and drafting school textbooks, had the most visible impact on the introduction of P4C in Australia' (p. 26). Alan Day, then a Senior Education Officer for the Northern Territory Department of Education, attended the workshop, which lead directly to the development of a 'philosopher in residence' program in the Northern Territory. Appointed to the position in 1991 was Clive Lindop. Over a hundred teachers and 2400 children participated in this project alone. Lindop was also to become the creator and inaugural editor of *Critical & Creative Thinking: The Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*, but more on that later.

Another notable attendee at the Lorne workshop was Roger Cresswell, then from the School of Education at Charles Sturt University. Cresswell (1992) was initially sceptical of Philosophy for Children, but was soon convinced and by the end of the week had resolved to promote the program. This resolution led, in 1991, to a New South Wales western region pilot program involving fourteen teachers and approximately three hundred children. Whilst attesting that 'the overall reaction [of all the teachers involved] was one of solid approval and endorsement of philosophy for children' (p. 25), he aptly summed up the issues many had and were to have with the program.

Criticisms raised related to: Americanisms—a comparatively minor problem, but consistent with an appeal for material with a local flavour; problems over the stop-start nature of maintaining a story line; logistical difficulties in finding a niche for the material in an already overcrowded curriculum; practical problems regarding availability of texts and manuals; occasional difficulties maintaining stimulating discussions with large groups; and observations concerning the need for committed teachers, adequately prepared and supported in their teaching of philosophy. Of these issues, the last mentioned was most often raised. (Cresswell 1992, p. 25)

In 1992, Splitter created the first Australian publication of a classroom resource in the form of an Australian adaptation of Lipman's novel *Harry Stottlemeier's discovery*, as a way to address the first issue. This was to be the first of many materials created in Australia. The last point Cresswell raises, namely, the need for adequately prepared and committed teachers, remains pertinent.

Tim Sprod, then at the Hutchins School in Hobart, was an early leader in the development of new materials. Initially inspired by a session on *Elfie* conducted by Ron Reed at the Lorne workshop, he later wrote to Splitter asking for his thoughts on possibly incorporating picture books as stimulus for dialogue in a community of inquiry. Using *Getting our thoughts together*, the instructional manual to accompany *Elfie*, he soon discovered the need to adapt the discussion plans and exercises specifically to the picture books selected. Subsequently, he spent the next few years teaching and testing classroom resources designed to aid teachers in finding philosophical themes and creating classroom activities based on existing children's literature, such as familiar children's stories and picture books. Although the use of picture books in P4C was not novel (Karin Murriss published her book, *Teaching philosophy with picture books* in the same year), Sprod was the first in Australia to propose such a move; however, *Books into ideas* was not published until 1993. In 1991, an in-house University of New South Wales publication, *Philosophy for kinder kids kit* by Chris de Haan, San MacColl and Lucy McCutcheon became available, but it was not until 1995, retitled as *Philosophy with kids*, that Longman Australia published the series, which included *Books 1-3* and *More ideas & activities*. The authors acknowledged that Sprod 'used children's stories for philosophy classes for some time in Australia' (de Haan et al. 1995, p. 4).

De Haan et al. (1995) provided a rationale for moving away from purpose-written novels to existing picture books, namely, 'to include Australian material' and 'because kids in their first years at school already know the storybooks, or can easily become familiar with them' (p. 4), thereby extending the program to those of pre-reading age. The series, aimed at young primary school-aged children, consists of a number of teacher's instruction guides each containing a short write-up on a particular philosophical topic, an existing children's picture book used as stimulus material, discussion plans, exercises and activities. The layout was intended to assist teachers in provoking and facilitating philosophical inquiry, although it is stressed in several places in the beginning of the books that they work best in conjunction with "philosophical training" or at the very least, in the hands of teachers who have some interest in philosophy' (p. 4).

Philip Cam, at the time of the Lorne workshop, was a lecturer at the University of New South Wales. Before the workshop he was of the impression that ‘cognitive skills happen in the head’, whereas, post-workshop, he concluded ‘cognitive skills are things that develop in conversation with your peers’ (Cam in Liverani 1991, p. 2). This was a significant shift in his thinking. Later, Cam was to publish *Thinking stories 1&2* (1993, 1994); purpose-written philosophical narratives accompanied by teacher’s manuals specific to each story, utilising a short story format rather than the lengthy novels Lipman wrote.

Resulting from her attendance at Lorne, Lyn English, then Professor of Mathematics and Science Education at Queensland University of Technology, became the coordinator of P4C in Queensland. In 1990, she invited Splitter and Lindop to conduct the first Level 1 training workshop in Queensland. The workshop attracted the interest of a number of philosophers, teachers and administrators throughout south-east Queensland, including Gilbert Burgh from the University of Queensland, who four years later became inaugural President of the Queensland Philosophy for Children Association (later re-named the Queensland Association for Philosophy in Schools). It is noteworthy that prior to the introduction of P4C in Australia, Queensland had taught Philosophy and Logic as a senior subject for around 100 years, and this was later redeveloped to become the Philosophy and Reason Senior Syllabus. Associate organisations had already formed in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Other parts of Australia had regional coordinators—including Northern Territory, Armidale and Bathurst in New South Wales and South-West Victoria—or later formed Associations, such as the Society of Philosophy for the Young (SOPHY) in the Australian Capital Territory and the Association for Philosophy in Tasmanian Schools (APTS).

The push for the formation of the Federation of Australian Philosophy for Children Associations (FAPCA) began in earnest with a small meeting organised by Splitter, held in Geelong in January 1989, with representatives from all states except Western Australia. The idea behind the formation of a legally incorporated organisation was that it would allow for the democratisation of policy and other matters. Peter Woolcock, then president of the South Australian Philosophy for Children Association, and who was also in the running for the FAPCA presidency, undertook the first drafts of FAPCA’s constitution, as the South Australia group were then the most formalised. In a letter dated May 1990, Splitter called for those involved in P4C to ‘set about creating one [an association] in your neck of the woods’ the ‘main gain’



being 'greater regional, state and national coordination, plus a higher status in the educational and political worlds'.

Two years after Lorne, the first National Conference on Philosophy for Children and the Teaching of Thinking was held at Trinity College in Melbourne on 12-16 July 1991. The conference included the official launch of the FAPCA. Over 160 participants from primary, secondary and tertiary education around Australia, as well as two philosophers from New Zealand, one from Hawaii, and an environmental educator from the UK, attended the conference and launch. Sandy Yule (1991), then Chair of the Victorian Philosophy for Children Association (VPCA), heralded the development as 'establishing and consolidating a national network' (p. 1) and a successful moment in P4C history, not simply a new chapter. Splitter (1991) shared his sentiments deeming it a "'Coming of Age" for the growth of Philosophy for Children in Australia' (p. 2).

The decision to adopt a federal structure was based 'on geography and the Australian legal system. It assumes that eventually people in each state will form a state organisation registered under their state laws' (Peter Woolcock, in correspondence dated 4 April 1989). Since, historically, both the production of new materials and the responsibility for teacher training largely came from individuals in various states, the structure of FAPCA as a federation reflected this and concentrated the work on the states rather than coordinating at a national level. It was a decision very much grounded in historical circumstances. In light of this choice, it is interesting to reflect upon McGaw's (1991) analysis in his keynote address on the structure of FAPCA:

It is no threat to anything we imagine we might do in the scheme of things, for there to be now a strong, national, professional body of people sharing an interest in philosophy for children. The only thing that intrigues me is that at this time, in this country, you choose a federal structure and not a national body. I predict that sooner or later you will form a national body, but I wish you well as you establish a federal body tomorrow night. (p. 3)

McGaw, too, spoke of ACER's acquisition of AIPC. He admitted that P4C was a novel activity for ACER and that the establishment of FAPCA created a situation where strategic thought could take place as to what role ACER could play within its partnership with P4C; for example, new ways of educational research and measurement, the distribution and production of curriculum materials, and training.

Lipman (1991) in his address to launch FAPCA at the conference dinner stated that he was 'very gratified to see the work that you have been doing in the programme to

move it on' (p. 17). He saw Australia as leading the rest of the world in professionalism and innovation: 'I do want to come back and tell you how warmly I wish you success in these uncharted waters that you are getting into. The ground is uncertain, but there is a thrill, an excitement ...' (p. 17). Indeed, a year later, Sharp (1992) proclaimed Australia second in the world in 'the strength of its commitment to the program' (p. 24).

The addition of an elected Executive Committee to the FAPCA structure was not discussed until 1993. Handwritten minutes for a VPCA meeting dated 28 July show the discussion started with a paper by Ross Phillips on the topic of 'how to provide an executive', which touched on the need to clarify ambitions and procedures. Among those present were Splitter, Glaser, Phillips, Yule, and Brenda Cherednichenko. The inaugural members of the Executive Committee were Philip Cam (President), Martyn Mather (Secretary), San McColl (Treasurer), and Laurance Splitter (ex-officio). As previously mentioned, this year also saw Lindop set up a dedicated journal, *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children*. The aim and scope of the journal was for 'the communication of ideas and a forum for a discussion and debate of issues concerning the practice of philosophical inquiry with children' (Lindop, 1993, p. ii). The journal included articles by classroom teachers and academics on theory and applied research, philosophical studies, reports from the field, resources and reviews. As such, it provided a forum for open dialogue and another resource for classroom teachers interested in P4C. Also contained in this first issue is a reprint of an article by Robert Laird (1993), 'Philosophy for Children in remote Aboriginal classrooms', pertaining to the first trial of the P4C program in Indigenous communities, at Barunga in the Northern Territory in 1991.

Whilst the national body that McGaw predicted has not eventuated, FAPCA has undergone some changes. In 1995, New Zealand became the first country to join FAPCA since its formation. Also in 1995, FAPCA held its annual conference in conjunction with the International Council of Philosophical Inquiry for Children (ICPIC). The keynote speaker was the esteemed Australian philosopher, Peter Singer, a long-time supporter of P4C. This conference saw the launch of Susan Wilks' book *Critical & creative thinking* (1995). The impetus for the book came much earlier in 1992 from her Masters research, part of which was a study with a group of teachers using the IAPC materials. Her findings reflected those of Cresswell's from the year before, but went beyond. The teachers involved in her study thought the IAPC materials were not suited to the classroom and preferred to select their own materials and

draw from the Lipman instruction manuals, which they found to be very useful. Wilks' study and the development of her own materials that moved away from the Lipman novels altogether, helped fuel the debate over suitable stimulus materials for the classroom.

In the meantime, Glaser (1992), who had also used the IAPC materials in her PhD research, published an article trying to get to the heart of the contention over the materials; and which she wrote following months of discussions with the Resources Committee of VPCA. Although she stated that the paper was not a defence of the IAPC materials, but rather an attempt to 'come to a better understanding of them', she noted that with 'understanding came a renewed respect for their form and literary style' (p. 47). The article delivered a 'general list of desiderata for classroom materials' (p. 47) for 'anyone who may be interested in looking for, or writing, other stories for use in philosophy' (p. 48). The committee was unanimously against the use of 'literal illustration of the text' but had 'mixed responses to the idea of abstract or non-specific illustrations' (p. 49). Glaser wrote the article 'in the hope that it [would] initiate further dialogue on the issues involved' (p. 52). As we shall see in the following section, the dialogue and the development of resources have been ongoing.

### **Ideas into books**

Although Lipman and Sharp embraced the development of a healthy P4C network in Australia, it was not without some anxiety that they watched the creation of new materials and the unfolding direction of P4C in Australia. A particular concern of theirs was the emerging move away from purpose-written novels to existing children's literature. They first thought the novels were integral to teacher training, and they feared that teachers 'not prepared in the art and craft of philosophical inquiry' would struggle to 'explore the philosophical dimension of literature' without them (Sharp in Naji, 2004). They argued that there is an inextricable link between the IAPC curriculum materials and pedagogy; that the purpose-written stories-as-text are necessary for both teacher education and classroom practice, as they provide a model for inquiry for the teacher and the children as well as for professional development and training. In fact, this dispute was the catalyst for the development of what was to become *Philosophy with Children* that emerged out of Britain and later Africa, led by Karen Murriss (see Murriss & Haynes 2001; Murriss 2015). In part, responding to the concern over teacher training, Sharp worked with Splitter for five years to create a general text for P4C, *Teaching for better thinking*

(1995). Designed as a companion to new classroom resources, it combined both practical and theoretical subjects and became a template for the development of future resources for teachers. In his autobiography, Lipman (2008) proved cognisant of the desire for different countries to appropriate P4C to reflect their own culture.

Each nation is looking for an educational approach that reflects its own experience and is therefore in a sense *autobiographical*. They see Philosophy for Children as an approach that welcomes their appropriation of it, so that in time it will come to be seen as indigenous and natural, as if it had sprung full-grown from the local culture and its component traditions. (p. 145)

Australia has certainly been very successful in this respect.

With the publication of Splitter and Sharp's *Teaching for better thinking*, 1995 became an important milestone in the development of P4C literature. Their book served a wider audience in the field of education and became a general text on P4C. Cam published *Thinking together*, an instructional book providing a practical resource for classroom teachers that explicitly combines Lipman's method and the conceptual and reasoning tools of philosophy with the use of children's literature as stimulus. Although it neither pointed directly to the use of either IAPC novels or the picture books as stimulus, it clearly focused, in part, on offering a guide for teachers on how to select existing materials of philosophical merit, including Cam's previously authored *Thinking stories*. In this sense, it represented a condensed version of the IAPC curriculum materials, but it also acted as a companion for children's picture books. In the same year, Wilks published *Critical & creative thinking*. She, too, focused on picture books, however, unlike De Haan et al., Wilks included introductory chapters on how to identify and select materials. Thus, we could conclude that 1995 reignited dialogue on what materials are best suited for P4C in the context of classroom practice.

Over the next few years, authors moved in other directions. Cam's *Thinking stories 3* (1997) differs from the previous volumes in his series as it 'uses a cycle of stories with many of the same characters appearing in different stories and occasionally even revisits the same events from a different perspective' (Cam in Naji 2013, p. 157). Also by Cam are *20 Thinking tools* (2006), which provides teachers with an easy-to-follow guide of conceptual and reasoning tools; *Sophia's question* (2011), a philosophical novella in the tradition of Lipman/IAPC novels; and *Philosophy park* (2013), a short story format based on well-known passages and central ideas of philosophers, which provides continuity through the history of philosophy. Clinton Golding, who worked as a Thinking Coordinator at Queen Margaret College in

Wellington, New Zealand and later as a teaching and research academic at the University of Melbourne in 2004, has developed a series of workbooks, two of which provide teachers with classroom resources, *Connecting concepts* (2002) and *Thinking with rich concepts* (2005a). These provide a step-by-step introduction to conceptual analysis in the classroom.

Theoretical scholarship, too, has been on the increase. *The ethical school* by Felicity Haynes (1998) is not strictly a P4C text, but was written to guide teacher practice, and to gradually transform schools into more cohesive and caring communities. Sprod's 2001 book, *Philosophical discussion in moral education*, a revision of his PhD dissertation, explores how philosophical inquiry can underpin moral education. He did devote one chapter to classroom community of inquiry and P4C, however, the book was clearly an attempt to broaden what philosophical inquiry can be in an educational setting.

Much later, in 2012, the next generation of scholars followed Sprod by publishing their PhD dissertations. This was an important step in Australian research; the development of theory from higher research degree students with a background in philosophy and teaching. Sarah Davey Chester's book, *The Socratic classroom*, attempts to look at philosophy in schools, not only from Lipman's model, but also from Leonard Nelson's (1965) Socratic Dialogue and David Bohm's (1996) notion of dialogue. She makes comparisons and develops a model for what she calls Socratic pedagogy, which furthers, but still relies heavily on Lipman's treatment of philosophy in the classroom. A year later, Jennifer Bleazby published *Social reconstruction learning*, which argues that educational problems have their basis in an ideology of binary opposites. In doing so, Bleazby reinvigorated Lipman's P4C program by drawing on the philosophy of John Dewey and feminist pragmatism, proposing an approach to schooling she terms 'social reconstruction learning' in which students engage in philosophical inquiries with members of their community in order to reconstruct real social problems.

*Engaging with ethics* by Mark Freakley and Gilbert Burgh (2000) was designed specifically for university pre-service teacher preparation programs with the aim of developing skills for the facilitation of collaborative philosophical inquiry through modelling the method. They offer a model for developing a program over a university semester. Different again, although not strictly a P4C text, is Golding's *Developing a thinking classroom* (2005b). Designed so teachers could use the book for self-directed professional learning, Golding drew from the principles of inquiry and learning that underpinned P4C, which he used in workshops to train teachers, and

to encourage a general approach to fostering thinking across the curriculum. Other similar publications include *Ethics and the community of inquiry* by Burgh, Field and Freakley (2006) and *Teaching ethics in schools* by Cam (2012). These publications target teachers interested in both practice and in the development of greater theoretical understanding of their practice. Books that place increased emphasis on practical guidance are *Art is what you make of it*, by Wilks and Tony Healy (2011) and Sprod's *Discussions in science*.

It is important to note that all of the books mentioned are difficult to categorise in terms of whether they are classroom/teacher training resources or theoretical/research books. This is not problematic, but indeed desirable, as it demonstrates the relationship between developing classroom resources and developing theoretical perspectives. In other words, the books are a form of praxis that can be used for scholarly research as well as classroom practice. In addition, while the books owe much to Splitter and Sharp's original publications, all of them have moved away from a reinterpretation of Lipman's theory and practice. The books indicate commonalities amongst the authors about the nature of the community of inquiry but, at the same time, the differences in their perspectives have repercussions for teacher training as well as classroom resources. Arguably, they all provide answers to the question 'What does one need in order to teach philosophy to children?'

In 1998, Splitter published a report through ACER on teachers' perspectives on P4C, informed by a larger study aimed at aiding curriculum development. Whilst acknowledging the healthy P4C community of the time, the report points to the lack of a

unified curriculum framework or structure which would address such questions as "What does it mean to do philosophy in Australian schools?", "What learning outcomes can be expected?" and "What kinds of resource materials are most likely to achieve these outcomes?" (Splitter 1998, p. 3)

Arguably, these questions require empirical investigation. Whilst empirical research in Australia does not have the long history that the Australian P4C publications do, from 2009 onwards (with the exception of observational and classroom reports etc., which have been there since the beginning), there has been a number of studies. These studies have attempted to show to what degree philosophical inquiry in the classroom has been successful. They have demonstrated the potential for collaborative philosophical inquiry to foster pedagogical transformation (Scholl, Nichols & Burgh 2008, 2009, 2014) and more effective learning in the science

classroom (Burgh & Nichols 2012; Nichols, Burgh & Kennedy 2015). It is noteworthy that the studies did not use the IAPC curriculum materials, but rather the Australian developed materials and the results are comparable to previous studies conducted around the globe.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, the Australian approach has not suffered pedagogically. Nevertheless, the studies are not exhaustive. As noted, empirical studies are still in their formative years in Australia, with many avenues still to be explored. To date, a comparative study on the use of the original IAPC curriculum materials with other purpose-written materials and existing children's literature is lacking. Studies that test the effectiveness of any number of newly developed Australian theories through implementation into the classroom are also yet to be undertaken.

### Going through changes

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the 2002 Annual Conference of FAPCA, held in Brisbane, saw a new round of changes. In light of the production of other specifically written materials and the adaptation and development of classroom communities of inquiry, by 2002 the term P4C was no longer an accurate description of philosophy with school-aged students in the Australasian region. The AGM decided that the term *philosophy in schools* described better a discipline with its own set of diverse teaching materials and innovations and subsequently the Association's name was changed from Federation of Australian Philosophy for Children Associations to the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA). New Zealand had already become part of FAPCA and it was decided that in the future other associations or related groups or organisations established for the purpose of promoting philosophy in schools in Australasia could be invited or apply to join. The AGM also voted to remove the ex-officio position from the Executive Committee, due to ACER dissolving the Centre for Philosophy for Children and Adolescents, and subsequently Splitter was no longer acting as Director. In the following year, at the 2003 Annual Conference of FAPSA held in Brisbane, the AGM rejected a proposal for restructuring FAPSA. The proposal included annual general

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<sup>3</sup> International research findings on the effectiveness of philosophy in schools indicate marked cognitive and social benefits (Millett & Tapper, 2011). An analysis of 18 studies by Garcia-Moriyon, Robello & Colom (2005) concluded that 'the implementation of P4C led to an improvement in students' reasoning skills of more than half a standard deviation' (p. 19). Topping and Trickey's studies concluded that the practice of collaborative philosophical inquiry produces increases in measured IQ, sustained cognitive benefits, and clear performance gains in other school studies (Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007; Topping & Trickey, 2007a,b,c).

elections requiring nominations (which can draw from all over Australasia) for each position on the Executive Committee, to replace the existing practice of the AGM choosing the Associate to constitute the Executive Committee, thereby leaving the selection of the members who will occupy the various offices to the relevant Associate. The proposal was an attempt to move away from a federal structure. The meeting also focussed on developing standard criteria for Level 1 and Level 2 training; an issue that would remain on the agenda for years to come.

In 2003, to reflect the change of name from FAPCA to FAPSA, the journal changed its name to *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Schools*. At the end of that year, Lindop retired. From 2004, the journal was under the interim editorship of Burgh, Cam and Millett. The new editors took the opportunity to revamp the journal, giving it a more contemporary, professional format and another new name, *Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy in Education*. In 2006, the editorship passed to Sue Knight and Carol Collins in South Australia. They decided to increase the Editorial Board from ten to fourteen, to include national and international scholars and leaders in the field of cognitive psychology as well as from philosophy and P4C. In very many ways, the journal was successful. Subscribers were based in every state and territory of Australia, as well in New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, England, Scotland, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States. The journal was listed in the Australian Education Index and SCOPUS-Elsevier databases, and included in the ERA ranked journal list.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it also played an important role as a forum for scholarly discussion in the field of education for thinking. However, the editors pointed out that the running of a scholarly journal 'demands at least some level of financial and administrative support. Taking the journal forward would also have required support from colleagues to establish a relationship with an online publisher and to promote the journal more widely' (Knight & Collins, 2009, p. 4). After seventeen years of publication, in consultation with the Editorial Board, the editors made the decision to close down the journal. The last issue was published in November 2009.

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<sup>4</sup> Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) is Australia's national research evaluation framework that, according to the Australian Research Council, 'identifies and promotes excellence across the full spectrum of research activity in Australia's higher education institutions'. Journals were assigned ratings of A\*, A, B, C. *Critical & Creative Thinking* was assigned a B rating. In 2012, the ARC removed the rankings, although they still give an indicator of the prestige of a journal. See <http://www.arc.gov.au/excellence-research-australia>.



In 2014, Andrew Peterson and Laura D'Olimpio launched a new open access online journal for research into philosophy in schools: *Journal of Philosophy in Schools*. According to the editors, the aim of the new journal is 'to fill the gap where there had once been *Critical & Creative Thinking*, the official journal of the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA)'. For the first issue the editors 'selected key works that were published in C&CT between 1993 and 2008, and invited the authors to revise their original articles or add a new introductory note or reflective comment'.<sup>5</sup> This served to connect the new journal with its history as a starting point. The journal attempts to take the experience of the previous journal and create dialogue over subsequent issues. So far, it has been successful and has proved popular, with the fourth issue forthcoming in May 2016.

## Conclusion

Where are we now? Undeniably, we can easily illustrate philosophy's place in Australian education by citing numerous positive examples. Indeed, we have already mentioned many, such as the proliferation of book publications and classroom resources, the establishment and maintenance of an Australasian organisation, the early stages of empirical research, the number of individual teachers who have implemented philosophy in the classroom, and the improvement of student performance. Another positive example is Buranda State School, a primary school in Brisbane, Queensland, where the students have benefited greatly from the adoption of a whole school approach to teaching philosophy. After starting poorly in 1997 in systemic state tests, by 1999 results began to improve. By 2002 'students were above the state mean in everything tested' (Hinton & Davey Chesters 2013, p. 271), and thereafter remained above or significantly above. With the introduction of the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) in 2008, comparisons with the whole country have indicated results of above the state and national means. In addition, the school received the title of *Queensland Showcase School* for the year 2003 and the *Outstanding National Improvement by a School* award in 2005. In consultation with philosophers and practitioners, the school developed the first-ever online course to allow teachers in remote areas to teach philosophy in schools. The course was also made available worldwide. The success of the school and its students inspired other primary schools, among them Stanmore State Public School in New South Wales and East Brisbane State School in

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<sup>5</sup> These quotes are from the Editorial in the *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* by Andrew Peterson and Laura D'Olimpio.

Queensland to adopt a whole school approach to teaching philosophy. Newington College, an independent school in Lindfield, New South Wales, introduced applied philosophy as part of a Year 7 subject called Critical Thinking, and incorporated philosophy into English in Years 8 to 10. Hillbrook Anglican School, a secondary school in Brisbane, Queensland, started with the first cohort of Year 7 students in 2015, in partnership with the Queensland University of Technology. In Bovell, Western Australia, Geographe Primary School has used a whole school approach in classes from kindergarten to Year 6 since 2013. Also in Western Australia, Leeming State High School has Philosophy in its English program in Years 7 to 9.

In other developments, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia now have Philosophy as an elective subject in the senior years of schooling. In New South Wales, Primary Ethics delivers philosophical and ethics education for children who do not attend scripture classes in urban, regional and rural schools. A more recent development is the Philosothon; an event that encourages school students to investigate ethical and other philosophical questions in communities of inquiry. The event is composed of students from multiple schools who participate in a series of facilitated communities of inquiries that are then scored and ranked. Head of Philosophy and Ethics, Matthew Wills, and Head of Gifted and Talented, Leanne Rucks, at Hale School in Perth, Western Australia, conceived of the concept and held the first Philosothon in 2007. In 2011, FAPSA hosted the first National Philosothon. Since then, Philosothons have continued to grow in popularity, spreading across not only Australia but, in 2013, to New Zealand and the UK. The 2013 FAPSA Philosothon included Raffles Girls School from Singapore.<sup>6</sup>

In regards to the Australian Curriculum, outcomes have so far been less positive. Although there have been attempts to include Philosophy in the Australian Curriculum, it has been a very difficult task to convince education decision-makers to accept the idea of teaching philosophy at school. In 2009, the Australasian Association of Philosophy (AAP) established a Working Party to promote the inclusion of Philosophy in the Australian Curriculum. AAP Chair Graham Oppy, with the assistance of Eliza Goddard, chaired the meetings, which included members Monica Bini, Gilbert Burgh, Philip Cam, Eliza Clinton Golding, Sue Knight, Stephan Millett, Janette Poulton, Tim Sprod, Alan Tapper and Adrian Walsh. The Working Party submitted an argument in favour of including Philosophy in the

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<sup>6</sup> For more information, see 'Fostering the exploration of philosophical and ethical questions among school students in Australasia' by Matthew Wills: <http://p4c.com/files/p4c/PhilosothonArticlewills.pdf>. See also: <http://fapsa.org.au/philosothon/>.

Australian Curriculum to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the submission was unsuccessful.

In 2015, the Victorian Association for Philosophy in Schools (formerly VPCA) acquired funding from the Department of Education and Training, Strategic Partnership Program (SPP) Victoria for its Ethical Understanding Project to provide workshops for educators to support the introduction of the AusVELS' General Capabilities detailed in the Australian Curriculum.<sup>8</sup> It is yet unclear how the project will be supported after SPP funding ceases in 2017. In another development the same year, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) published the new Victorian Curriculum, which included only four of the General Capabilities: Ethical Understanding, Personal and Social Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, and Intercultural Understanding. VCAA argued that Literacy, Numeracy, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Capability were not included because they are already taught across the Learning Areas. Subsequent to the VAPS SPP initiative, the VCAA introduced a Specialist Teacher initiative, which seconded teachers for a period of 18 months, working out of their respective schools, to carry out research and fieldwork. Both initiatives aim to build teacher capacity in applying a philosophical approach to teaching and learning to support the new Victorian Curriculum. It remains to be seen if teachers will be provided with the necessary framework in which a philosophical approach to inquiry based teaching and learning may be consistently applied.

Throughout Australia, there is a lack of teacher educators with qualifications in philosophy in faculties of education. There is also a lack of philosophers of education in philosophy departments. As Splitter (1990) put it 'there is virtually a world-wide recognition that active involvement on the part of the professional philosophical community is essential to the growth of p for c' (p. 12). The shortage has contributed to a lack of philosophy courses in university pre-service teacher preparation programs. Equally important is the need for further empirical research, both quantitative and qualitative, on the advantages of philosophy, without which it becomes difficult to convince education decision-makers and universities of the

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<sup>7</sup> See 'The case for inclusion of philosophy in the National Curriculum', available on the FAPSA website: <http://fapsa.org.au/curriculum/national-curriculum/>.

<sup>8</sup> AusVELS provides a single curriculum for levels Foundation–10. It incorporates the Australian National Curriculum learning areas for English, Mathematics, History and Science within the framework developed for the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). See <http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>.

value of philosophy in schools. As noted, there has been an increase in these activities.

The promotion and advancement of philosophy in schools has been ongoing, mainly due to individual tenacity or the concerted efforts of AIPC and later FAPSA. However, neither of these organisations has been so effective to have a significant impact on governments and education bureaucracies. This raises an important question: 'Can FAPSA be more effective in bringing about change?' Indeed, the role of FAPSA has been an ongoing topic of conversation between members of the FAPSA Executive and Council. Not yet tried is a move away from a Federation model to an Australasian model similar to that of the AAP. Such a structure might be more effective for a professional association and governing body to promote research and scholarship by supporting, connecting and enabling activities of its members in schools, colleges, universities and state departments of education, with emphasis on developing partnerships for grant applications, as well as preparation of submissions and lobbying of governments. Perhaps it is time once again to re-visit the idea of a centralised organisational structure, as first proposed by Barry McGaw at the launching of FAPCA in 1991.

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