

Esther Nott

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Good morning everyone, especially visiting academics from Norway, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

My topic is the Educational System in New South Wales (NSW).

Before I attempt this, however, allow me to introduce Australia to you.

As can be seen from this large map, Australia is an island surrounded by ocean as well as being large enough to be a continent in itself. The distances can be huge, for example, the distance between Sydney, where I live, and Perth, on the other side of the country, is roughly 3,000 kilometres. Sydney to Brisbane, north, in Queensland, is roughly 1,000 kilometres, but only about an hour by plane. To the east is the Tasman Sea, New Zealand, the Pacific Ocean and the Americas; to the north is New Guinea and the Far East, then moving north-west we have Indonesia and Malaysia etc. and a very long way off, Europe. All of Europe neatly fits into the centre of Australia. All of the United Kingdom fits into NSW five times over.

Children in NSW can attend pre-school if there are places available.

Officially, a child must be attending a school by the time he/she is 6 years old. If younger, the child must turn 5 by the middle of the school year (which, as school begins in late January, would be June/July).

68% of pupils in NSW attend state schools. There is a large private school component, and these accommodate roughly the remaining 32%, of which the Catholic system has the largest share.

In NSW there are over 2,200 schools, 1,600 primary schools (i.e. kindergarten, Years 1 to 6), and about 360 secondary schools.

The private system contains not only Catholic schools, but also Protestant, Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Anglican, Japanese, International and Jewish.

High school lasts for 6 years, from years 7 to 12 inclusive and the pupils are around 12 when they enter.

There is an exam called the School Certificate which pupils take at the end of Yr 10, but those with academic aspirations stay on to finish Yr 12 and the Higher School Certificate (the HSC). There is stiff competition for places in the 15 NSW universities, and the higher the overall mark out of 100 the better the chances.

Technical and further education (TAFE) now works in with the tertiary sphere. Students at TAFEs train for more hands-on careers and it is also now possible to take some units of TAFE when still in high school.

There is another option available for schooling in NSW – homeschooling or schooling at home, where one or both parents are directly involved in the education of their child/ren. This has been made possible through an Act of Parliament and some families choose it, as they do in the U.K. and especially in North America.

I thank you all very much for your attention.