Thirty eight schools across Australia will receive up to $100,000 each to act as ‘lighthouses’ in their communities under Stage Two of the Australian Government’s Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) initiative.

This stage forms part of the Howard Government’s $6 million investment in boys’ education announced last year in response to growing concern that boys are significantly underperforming in key educational areas.

It is imperative that nothing is done which undermines the important and necessary progress which has been made in the last twenty years in the education of girls, however overwhelming evidence suggest that boys are falling behind.

It is unacceptable that 14 year old boys are doing worse in literacy tests than they were 25 years ago. Boys are lagging behind girls in operational literacy right across the school curriculum from early primary to secondary school. They are also represented two to one in the lowest 25% of educational outcomes.

In 2002 the Year 12 school retention rate was 81% for females and 70% for males.

The successful initiatives announced today will champion effective approaches in addressing the needs of boys. This will involve working closely with other schools and delivering professional learning activities for teachers. In all, some 263 schools will be directly involved in this second stage of the Boys’ Education programme.

Lighthouse school initiatives will include innovative projects such as the South Australian Open Access College’s Keeping Boys Connected Strategy. This strategy will bring South Australian, Victorian, Western Australian, New South Wales and North Queensland schools together, break the conventional mould of face-to-face schooling, and involve specialised programmes for boys in outdoor education, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Vocational Education and Training (VET) and mentoring.

Moerlina School in Perth will focus on improving boys’ literacy outcomes using critical
literacy and integrating ICT into existing literacy programmes. Significantly, a strong evidence-base will be used to drive literacy strategies that challenge stereotypes and gender biases. Parents will be actively involved in this learning partnership and the progress will be regularly monitored to assess the impact on the boys’ learning.

(See Attachment A for full listing of Lighthouse Schools)

These initiatives follow on from the success of Stage One, where more than 200 schools were awarded up to $5,000 each to document and showcase successful practices in educating boys.

The inspirational work of the schools involved in the first stage has resulted in ten guiding principles that will inform the work of the schools involved in the next phase of the initiative.

As highlighted in the final report for Stage One, boys’ education programmes need to:

- cater for different learning styles generally preferred by boys;
- adopt a flexible, whole-school approach;
- recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged; and
- provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school.

These findings re-enforce the importance of providing boys - particularly in primary schools - greater opportunities to be taught by teachers of both gender. However, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) findings show that the proportion of full-time male school teachers fell from 25.8% to 20.9% in primary schools and from 49.4% to 44.7% in secondary schools during the period 1992 to 2003.

The Howard Government is determined to create additional opportunities for educational authorities to attract more male teachers and recently introduced legislation into the Parliament to amend the Sex Discrimination Act.

In addition to the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools, a range of initiatives to support male teachers and improve boys’ education are being developed. These include a mentoring project for male teacher education students and teachers and a review of the Gender Equity Framework for schools to be conducted in cooperation with State and Territory education jurisdictions.

The Howard Government is committed to addressing the critical issues affecting boys’ education and in turn, to ensure that our children are given every opportunity to reach their full potential.

The report Meeting the Challenge: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Programme Stage One 2003 can be found at: www.dest.gov.au/schools/boyseducation/MC_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

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Stage 2 Lighthouse Schools

VICTORIA
Bayswater Primary School
Brighton Grammar School
Chaffey Secondary College
Flora Hill Secondary College
Hampton Primary School
Kew Primary School
Pakenham Consolidated School
St Joseph’s College

NEW SOUTH WALES
Airds High School
Balgowlah Heights Public School
Collector Public School
Kingscliff Public School
Lismore Public School
Macleay Vocational College
Oak Flats High School
Quakers Hill Public School
St Andrew’s College
St Joseph’s Primary School
West Wallsend High School

QUEENSLAND
Blackheath and Thornburgh College
Dimbulah State School
Mirani State High School
Thornlands State School
Urangan State High
Walkervale State School and Kepnock State High School

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Melville Senior High School
Merredin Senior High School
Moerlina School
Tom Price Senior High

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Mount Barker High School
Salisbury High School
St Augustine’s Parish School
Open Access College R-10 Distance (national focus)
Youth Education Centre (national focus)

TASMANIA
Claremont College
St Thomas More’s School

NORTHERN TERRITORY
Kormilda College

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
Palmerston District Primary School