

source material no doubt drove this allocation of space, the more recent decades will be familiar to most people who pick up the book. I would like to have learned more here about some of the characters from the early years of the division.

Hancock traces the current internecine warfare back to the emergence of the hard right in the 1960s. Carrick's efforts to prevent branch stacking could not stop experienced political operators such as Lyenko Urbanchich, complete with ASIO file, from building their networks. They gained numbers on the state executive by populating branches in safe Labor seats.

Once 'the Uglies,' as they were labelled by their detractors, became a significant presence inside the party, they could not be removed by democratic means. In any event, apocalyptic rhetoric about the communistic Whitlam government, along with support for South Africa and Rhodesia, was hardly outside the mainstream of Liberal Party thought in the 1970s.

Hancock is unsympathetic to the right, but concedes that the moderates' legitimate complaints about intimidation on the part of their opponents were often laced with jealousy at their own declining relevance. Indeed, it was often 'the Group,' as the NSW moderates called themselves while tightening their organisation in response to the rise of the right, who played their politics the hardest. Through all of the infighting, the efforts of a handful of professionals in the party organisation and parliamentary party along with the indefatigable volunteers in the branches steered the party for its occasional victories over Labor.

Despite the efforts of the branch stackers, membership of the division has fallen from its peak at over 45,000 in the 1970s to something under 10,000 today. Given the problems

the party has experienced recently, and the public's recognition that little is to be gained by joining a political party where the MPs are sovereign, this trend is unlikely to reverse.

In all of this, the name John Winston Howard barely features. He was, of course, tied up with matters of state from an early stage of his parliamentary career. As prime minister, he gave the impression that organisational matters were very low on his list of priorities. He treated the symptoms of the winner-take-all battles that factionalism promoted (for example, he helped the moderate Marise Payne hold on to her Senate preselection) without expending political capital on systematic intervention in the organisational wing.

This is a meticulously researched and crisply written book. Those wishing to understand or participate in the ongoing debates about the future of the Liberal Party should consult it. As Hancock points out, those debates are often conducted as though the party has no history at all.

**Reviewed by
Wayne Errington**

*School Choice:
The Findings*
by Herbert J. Walberg
Cato Institute
Washington, DC, 2007
US\$9.95, 132pp
ISBN 193395041

Herbert Walberg's *School Choice* is a comprehensive review of the current academic literature investigating the effects of promoting choice in education. Walberg collates a wide range of research papers on the relative performance of charter schools, voucher schemes, and private

schools, in an attempt to measure the benefits of facilitating choice in education. Unlike many other commentaries on school choice, this one features considerable academic research from voucher programs outside the United States, providing interesting points of comparison. Yet while Walberg's summary contains a wealth of data, it fails to inspire.

The book follows a familiar path for school choice advocates. First, it details the static or declining performance levels in American schools, particularly public ones, against a backdrop of increasing spending. It asks the obvious question, 'What are we getting for all the extra money we are spending?' It then delves into numerous studies that attest to the success of school choice programs as an alternative path for US education.

The book relies heavily on standardised test scores as empirical evidence of higher performance under school choice programs. While this is partly due to necessity—it is difficult to compare schools on other criteria—it is likely to understate the real gains offered by school choice. The benefits of a more positive, aspirational environment are not limited to higher test scores. Walberg cites one interesting study that reports private-school student cohorts are more likely to resemble the racial composition of their local area than public schools, and also have higher incidences of interracial friendships.

For Australian readers, the most compelling section of this book is the chapter on charter schools. Given that we already have high levels of private-school education—and some argue that we have a quasi-voucher system, given the nature of federal funding to private schools—perhaps the biggest gains for choice could be made in the area of school autonomy. Charter schools are publicly funded schools that have a higher degree of independence from central

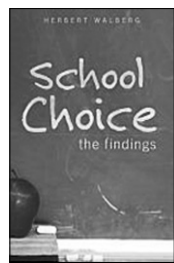
education authorities. Structures differ on a state-by-state basis, but many allow significant latitude with curriculum; empower principals and school boards to hire, fire, and pay teachers as they see fit; and to make operational decisions such as whether to have a compulsory school uniform. Walberg's research indicates that these schools outperform traditional public schools even in their first years of operation, and that this gap grows the longer the school is established. Yet the policy debate in Australia is heading rapidly in the opposite direction. Moves towards a national curriculum and the mandatory teaching of Australian history are the most recent egregious examples. Walberg's research shows the folly of this path.

Unfortunately, the book reads more like a literature review for a PhD thesis than a cogent policy argument. The text is rather dry, and devotes much time and space to discussing less-interesting topics such as the methodologies of the research examined. Though little more than a hundred pages long, the book can be tedious. In fairness, it does not attempt to emulate earlier texts advocating school choice, such as Milton Friedman's seminal paper 'The Role of Government in Education' (which became a chapter in his book *Capitalism and Freedom*), and it produces exactly what it sets out to—a comprehensive summary of the research into school choice programs.

School Choice is most appropriate for those already familiar with the arguments in favour of school vouchers who are interested in the detail of competing choice proposals. The book could serve as a particularly valuable tool for those engaged in public debate to promote school choice. Though Australia already has high rates of private-school education, particularly at

the secondary level, support for vouchers to fund education and school autonomy is very low. If vouchers or charter schools are ever to be established in Australia, it will require a well-articulated campaign based on solid, verifiable evidence that choice improves performance. Opponents of school choice—most commonly teachers' unions and politicians keen to assert central authority over curriculum—are well-resourced, and determined to prevent the expansion of choice for parents.

The recent failure of the Utah voucher referendum is a case in point. After the state legislature passed a law giving Utahns a means-tested education voucher worth US\$500–3000, Utah's teachers' unions mobilised to defeat a statewide, petition-initiated referendum, with significant financial and logistical support from unions interstate. They argued that Utah's scheme—which was among the first universal voucher schemes in the United States—would benefit wealthy and middle-class students at the expense



of poor and minority students. An interstate union, opposing the ballot, admitted 'We are fighting them in Utah so we don't have to fight them here.' One study cited in *School Choice* might point to the reason: parents, students, and the public have much higher expectations of the education system than public educators do. Therefore, a scheme that facilitated choice would allow students and their parents to seek schools with similar aspirations, leaving the unambitious public educators behind.

Given the style of the book, it is unsurprising that Walberg appears reluctant to detail his personal opinion on school choice at length, or to make a persuasive case for the

adoption of any of these measures beyond summarising the collected results. This is unfortunate, because although the bulk of the research points in this direction, failing to make the case forcefully weakens the book's impact.

Readers who are unfamiliar with the school choice debate are unlikely to gain from this book an appreciation of the topic or of the values and logic that underpin the argument for choice. Such readers would do better to start with a more accessible text, like Friedman's education chapter in *Capitalism and Freedom*, which makes the case for vouchers in a less formulaic fashion. On the other hand, *School Choice* will serve as a perfect reference guide for those engaged in policy debate about school choice, and would make a perfect gift for your local Shadow Minister for Education and Training.

**Reviewed by
James Paterson**

Australian Social Attitudes 2: Citizenship, Work and Aspirations
**edited by David Denemark,
Gabrielle Meagher, Shaun
Wilson, Mark Western, and
Timothy Phillips**

UNSW Press, Sydney, 2007
\$59.95, 320pp
ISBN 9780868408613

This is the second instalment in a series on Australian public attitudes. It is based on data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2005 (AuSSA 2005). The editors' intent in *Australian Social Attitudes 2* is to deal with issues of currency during the 2004–2007 electoral term. Accordingly, the book presents AuSSA 2005 data on attitudes to the Coalition government's WorkChoices