

**The pastoral academic divide: Impacts and  
implications for pastoral care**

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(by Research) of Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia.

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Katherine E. Clark

## **Abstract**

Secondary schools in Australia routinely develop organisational constructs to fulfil their dual obligations of academic teaching and the pastoral care of students. Although these obligations are closely interrelated, school organisational structures are frequently dichotomous, differentiating between the academic roles of teachers and their pastoral responsibilities and can result in a functional divide between the two sides of the school. Teachers find themselves wearing ‘two hats’; a subject teacher and a pastoral carer and thus are required to work in two separate domains, the academic and the pastoral, each with distinct and different tasks, expectations and line management. The limited amounts of research available suggest that such an organisational divide can hinder the work of teachers and lead to some organisational confusion within the school. This research took the form of a qualitative case study, based in an independent secondary school in Western Australia. It investigated the impacts and implications of the notional division between the pastoral and academic dimensions of the school. The thesis begins with a review of the understanding and development of pastoral care in schools. The construct of an enabling bureaucracy is then explored and adopted as a theoretical lens with which to examine the pastoral care system from the perspective of teachers, students and senior managers. Narratives are used to present the data. The research findings indicate that alignment of the pastoral and academic structures, both functionally and culturally, can be achieved if an enabling approach is employed. Such alignment allows the pastoral care system to support the primary function of a school which is learning, whilst retaining its fundamental duty of student care. The study concludes with a consideration of how an enabling school culture may improve the provision of pastoral care in schools.

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