SCHOOLS, SCHOOL COMMUNITIES AND THE STATE
IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW SOUTH WALES, SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND VICTORIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relations between schools, the communities in which they were situated and the state in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It focuses principally on the schools affiliated with the state education boards established in the three colonies from 1847 onwards, although it also notes the existence of large numbers of schools independent of the boards and their relation to state supported schools. First, it provides a description of the ways in which schools were provided, their material conditions and the educational practices they adopted, emphasising the diversity of forms of schooling in the period and the construction of a socially and regionally differentiated network of schools. Second, it examines the material conditions enabling different groups to support teachers, secure accommodation and send their children, and the extent to which they might depend on the state to assist them in this. It considers the interests of various groups, individuals and local institutions in providing schools not only for their own children but for those of others, noting on the one hand the importance of patronage and on the other the existence of often conflicting vested interests. It analyses the value different groups attached to education and the diverse assumptions and cultural values and practices from which they drew their characteristic notions of what constituted good schooling. These rival interests, assumptions and norms generated conflicts over almost all aspects of school provision, both within local communities and between them and the central boards. Finally, it explores the construction of means of governance of schools and the different capacities it secured parents, leading settlers and institutions with local communities, and the state to shape schools.