



**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

# **SENATE**

**EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**Reference: Status of teachers**

**CANBERRA**

**Monday, 1 December 1997**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

SENATE

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Members

Senator Crowley (Chair)  
Senator Tierney (Deputy Chair)

Senator George Campbell	Senator Ferris
Senator Carr	Senator Stott Despoja
Senator Denman	Senator Synon

Participating members

Senator Abetz	Senator Bob Collins
Senator Allison	Senator Colston
Senator Bolkus	Senator Margetts
Senator Bob Brown	

Matter referred by the Senate for inquiry into and report on:

The status of teachers and the development of the profession during the next five years. Issues include community perception of, and teacher attitudes towards, the teaching profession, and matters of teacher training and supply.

## WITNESSES

<b>ALLEN, Ms Sarah Jane, Co-convenor, ACT Branch, Association of Women Educators, Gold Creek Primary School, Kelleway Avenue, Nicholls, Australian Capital Territory . . . . .</b>	<b>1133</b>
<b>DANIELS, Mr William Laurence, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 16 Mort Street, Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory 2600 . . . . .</b>	<b>1150</b>
<b>HAGGAR, Mr Clive John, Branch President, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, 40 Brisbane Avenue, Barton, Australian Capital Territory . . . . .</b>	<b>1050</b>
<b>HART, Mr Denis John, Director, Occupational and Skills Analysis Section, Skills Analysis and Research Branch, Analysis and Evaluation Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, L1, 12 Mort Street, Civic, Australian Capital Territory 2601 . . . . .</b>	<b>1150</b>
<b>JOHNSTON, Ms Mary Christine, Assistant Secretary, Quality Schooling Branch, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 16 Mort Street, Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory 2601 . . . . .</b>	<b>1150</b>
<b>LAIRD, Mr Donald Richard, Chairperson, Standards Council of the Teaching Profession, Victorian Government, 2 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria . . . . .</b>	<b>1065</b>
<b>LEE, Mr Warren Douglas, Branch Secretary, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, PO Box 3042, Manuka, Australian Capital Territory .</b>	<b>1050</b>
<b>MacGREGOR, Ms Fiona, Professional Officer, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, 40 Brisbane Avenue, Barton, Australian Capital Territory . . . . .</b>	<b>1050</b>
<b>MORGAN, Dr Ian George, President, Australian Council of State School Organisations, c/- Hughes Primary School, Hughes, Australian Capital Territory . . . . .</b>	<b>1143</b>

SENATE  
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFERENCES COMMITTEE

*Status of teachers*

CANBERRA

Monday, 1 December 1997

Present

Senator Crowley (Chair)

Senator George Campbell    Senator Stott Despoja

Senator Carr                    Senator Tierney

Senator Ferris

Participating Member

Senator Allison

The committee met at 10.05 a.m.

Senator Crowley took the chair.

**HAGGAR, Mr Clive John, Branch President, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, 40 Brisbane Avenue, Barton, Australian Capital Territory**

**LEE, Mr Warren Douglas, Branch Secretary, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, PO Box 3042, Manuka, Australian Capital Territory**

**MacGREGOR, Ms Fiona, Professional Officer, ACT Branch, Australian Education Union, 40 Brisbane Avenue, Barton, Australian Capital Territory**

**CHAIR**—I declare open, and welcome you to, this public hearing of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee as part of the committee's inquiry into the status of teachers. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but, should you wish to give your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera subsequently may be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened over the past few years. The committee has before it a document which is numbered 254. Is there any other material you would care to table at this stage?

**Mr Haggar**—Not at this stage, thank you, Senator.

**CHAIR**—You might like to make some brief opening remarks and then field some questions. Thank you for coming.

**Mr Haggar**—We appreciate the fact that this has been a lengthy inquiry conducted by the committee and that in fact you have had a large number of written submissions. I do not propose to take the committee's time in terms of a long address, but I would like to say that, in representing the views of ACT teachers, we are obviously in a situation of canvassing those views very widely and we have received numbers of written submissions, not simply from our members through our own organisational channels, but also through members who chose to make their own submissions through their professional associations as well.

In fact, one of the interesting exercises in preparing for the committee is the length of time that this issue has actually been of concern in the ACT. Our office file on teacher supply and demand identifies, on examination, submissions from members and other interested groups to the union on this issue dating back to the early 1980s. It is fair to say that, whilst it has been of concern for a lengthy period of time, the status of teachers is today possibly of the greatest concern in the teaching lives of the current teaching force in the ACT.

Given the average age of teachers in the ACT and the length of time that they have been working—the average teacher in fact joined the service in the mid 1970s and is highly experienced and generally a female member of staff—they have been in a situation of continual staffing reductions, losses of conditions and wages throughout almost their

entire teaching career. It is no surprise to many of our colleagues that we are in a situation now, in the late 1990s, where we are facing potentially a very severe teacher shortage across the country and also extraordinary levels of cynicism amongst our members, towards both the federal government in its approach to public education and to our own political masters here in the ACT.

I will address the issues locally. The ACT has had self-government for nearly 10 years. We are coming up to an election in which we hope to see education as a significant issue. The membership views both major political parties with concern in terms of their history towards education. We have seen both major parties unable to form good government here in the ACT. They have reduced teaching numbers, reduced resources available to schools and reduced the numbers of schools within the ACT on each occasion when they have been in government. They are also in a situation of recognising now the very high levels of politicisation affecting education within the territory. As an example, take our department. Our senior bureaucrats are, by and large, engaged in the defence of government policy or the defence of the minister's person in terms of his approach to the education portfolio. They are seen as defending policies. The minister has a particular interest in sport and physical education, so it is his best resourced area within the department in terms of the key learning areas.

Recent attention has been given to testing arrangements and literacy. We are now seeing other curriculum areas lose support staff who were fully engaged in supporting teachers in schools in the key learning areas. They have been moved across because of the political imperatives of providing programs in the literacy area. The literacy results in the ACT, from our own quite comprehensive testing arrangements, are results that teachers can be quite proud of. The local *Canberra Times*, contrary to many of the media approaches to the literacy issue, headlined the recent testing results in the ACT with the headline 'It's official: ACT students can read and write well.' That is quite a change from some comments that we receive.

Industrially in the ACT, having completed last year an agreement which took almost the full year to negotiate amidst quite difficult industrial action, we are facing the possibility in the future, under the Workplace Relations Act, of individual contracts, particularly for principals. In the view of our principals and members it will be a disaster to the collegiate nature of the work that has to be undertaken in schools. So they are very concerned about that for the future. It is one reason why, when we negotiated our agreement, we put a time frame in place which was extraordinarily long for these sorts of agreements; it was in excess of three years. We were hoping that we would have a climate that would be more conducive to recognising the need for the collegiate and collective approach to industrial relations that we believe should operate in schools.

On the federal front, I believe teachers' morale has been severely damaged this year with the approach of the federal minister on the literacy issue. Public policy is now being announced through such organs as the *60 Minutes* program. The condemnation by

the federal minister of teachers' work, particularly focusing on the literacy issue in that exercise and in subsequent press releases, has had a major impact on the way in which teachers perceive themselves and the way in which the community sees their work. This is contrary to the very successful outcomes not only in our own testing regimes but also in international testing regimes for ACT students.

Whilst we have seen positive comments in relation to teachers emanate from government and our department in recent times, the vision of our own CEO is in accord with that of the federal minister when she talks about far fewer teachers in the future being supported by ancillary and technical staff. Dr Kemp's approach at a recent conference was to have them supplemented by industry experts within our schools as well.

The sense that teachers have been devalued as professionals continues. I believe that we have outlined that within our submission. We have quite comprehensively focused on, no doubt, similar sorts of recommendations that you have had from other organisations.

The level of debate now seems to have lost almost all intellectual content in many of the forums in which it is being carried out. I will use one example to reinforce a point I would like to make. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training produced a document entitled *Youth employment: A working solution*. In the text of that document, there is this statement:

The advantage to students of being taught to conform to a high standard of self-discipline and social courtesy is also quite obvious. John Paul College graduates, armed with self-confidence and good manners, exhibit the positive attitudes and presentability that employers are seeking. Unfortunately, this element of the John Paul College approach is often thought to be old-fashioned and has all but disappeared from most Australian public schools.

To find a statement like that in a major government publication expresses, at least in the eyes of our membership, a deeply held prejudice towards public schooling that now seems to have permeated this parliament in addition to the forums that the media frequently report. For a working teacher to have to face that kind of statement in a document with that level of status is of real concern. But it fills, from our point of view, a pattern of denigration of working teachers that has been sustained, particularly in the last two years. It has not only been sustained but it has also increased in intensity. Thank you very much.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—Those views have not necessarily permeated the whole parliament.

**CHAIR**—Well said, Senator.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—I take your point. Did the AEU—I have no doubt that you did—respond to some of the comments made earlier in the year by the former

Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Senator Vanstone, particularly those relating to teachers and employment opportunities in the schools you went to? Did your organisation respond in writing or in any other public form? Perhaps you could even just share how you felt about her comments.

**Mr Haggar**—In reflecting the disquiet in the membership, we made a number of public statements. It was covered through the electronic media and the press within the ACT, as it was right around the country. The concern was, again, that we had a senior minister of government essentially reflecting on issues that have to do with geography and social status and then making statements focused very much on the public-private divide. That is the concern for teachers.

The vast bulk of our membership involves very hardworking, professional people. They focus very much on the classroom. They believe that they are entitled to the support of their employer and, obviously, government. They are entitled to recognition for the good works that they do. Again, the House of Representatives report contains similar statements. Primary school illiteracy is targeted as one of the major reasons for youth unemployment, and that is not a sustainable argument.

**Mr Lee**—I will add to that. Teachers are mystified by this view that they are the creators of jobs. Teachers do not create employment opportunities. As far as I can tell, most teachers sit with a lot of sorrow when they see 400 youngsters front up for a job for which two or three may be required. The other 397 who do not get the job are said to have not got it because they are somehow illiterate or ill-prepared when enough jobs do not exist in the first place. This connection between the youth unemployment and schools is one that has demoralised teachers very much and has been partly successful in the media. Somehow, it is seen that there is a shortage of jobs for youth because of education when in actual fact it is much more complex than that.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—There does seem to be a culture of blame surrounding teachers at the moment. What I find most surprising is ministers or decision makers blaming teachers for their own predicament and, as you say, the lack of employment opportunities for young people. You have mentioned in your submission political interference. I know that you briefly mentioned it in the verbal submission. Would you like to perhaps elaborate on the idea of political interference at the highest levels impacting on teachers.

**Mr Haggar**—Obviously, I will not mention names because children are involved. In one incident a couple of years ago, we had a developing integration program. Some parents who were very active successfully sought a placement for their child through a direct approach to the local minister. That child leapt several places up the queue. In recent times, we have seen very favourable staffing arrangements put in place for a school which far exceed those made available to other schools in similar circumstances in the past. This has sustained their curriculum in a situation of falling enrolments. We have a

local election coming up, and the school happens to be in the minister's electorate.

That level of political gamesmanship or concern did not exist when we had a very broad structure prior to self-government. We had a very distant federal minister who would hardly have been seen in our schools or near our department. The old ACT Schools Authority, as it was, which contained ministerial appointees, parent representatives and teacher representatives as well as bureaucratic operators, was able to focus for most of its time on the work of supporting a school and teachers and looking after the needs of students.

We are in a situation now where a very large component of our much reduced bureaucracy has to carry the operations of a full department of state education. For a city state of a small size, it is very unfortunate that we have to see that level of diversion of resources away from supporting schools.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—You mentioned the media. Throughout the hearings we have held and the submissions we have received, we receive recurring evidence about the way that the media has perpetuated some of the ideas of blame, guilt and responsibility. I know that there are a number of ways that we can address the status of teachers and teaching. I do not underestimate the importance of the industrial and professional aspects of compensation et cetera. I want to look at the other side of the public persona of teachers and teaching. One suggestion we have had is that there be some kind of media campaign that promotes teachers and teaching. Is that something that you see as beneficial, be it an educative campaign for the media per se or a nationally run and funded program that highlights the work of teachers and their involvement and importance in our society? Is it a worthwhile suggestion?

**Mr Haggard**—Certainly we have in the past supported that kind of approach. We just recently concluded a public education festival in the ACT, which was partly funded by us and the ACT government. We worked closely with the local Trades and Labour Council. It was quite an unusual mix of groups. Even the New South Wales Teachers Federation was involved for a variety of reasons but obviously because of the surrounding region. That showcased not simply the work of students but also the work of teachers. Art teachers, drama teachers, music teachers and so on were involved in it. We are looking towards doing similar things in the future. It was simply to get a positive message across to the community of the quality of the work that teachers do. I would have to say that our media here in the ACT, with the occasional lapse is, by far and away more responsible in covering education issues than what we experience in a lot of the interstate newspapers and television and radio programs.

**Ms MacGregor**—Any sort of media project like that would really have to underscore the complexity of what teachers do. The broad community has no real concept of the complexity of teachers' work. There is a view in the community that teachers teach and that that is really it and that they have very generous leave arrangements and work

very short days.

But teachers are increasingly having to deal with pastoral care and providing a whole range of services to young people in schools and their families. Teachers are certainly becoming very overstretched and not able to do the job that they have been initially trained and employed to do because of the complexity foisted upon them by the undermining of other welfare agencies that support students and families, particularly ones at risk or in crisis. Any media campaign that focuses on the complexity of teachers' work and the things they are required to do to fulfil their roles would be really important.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—I certainly note in the submission—again, this has come through from a number of people we have spoken to—your mention of the additional responsibilities that teachers are faced with. I note in the submission the reference to increased high levels of violence and abuse imported into schools from dysfunctional homes. Is that something you would be interested in elaborating on? Is that an additional pressure that teachers are having to deal with?

**Mr Haggart**—You will find the word 'relatively' in the submission.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—I should have qualified that. I will make sure that it goes into the *Hansard* correctly.

**Mr Haggart**—Our schools remain one of the safest places in the community, and far safer than the ordinary family home. What we have experienced in our schools that has increased the pressures on teachers' work is a withdrawal or a winding back of a range of government services previously available for families and students so that teachers are now often the first and the last resort in providing assistance for a lot of students. In that sort of environment—this applies at the primary level as well as the secondary level—we are finding that levels of student stress are increasing. Consequently, teachers are having to deal with more and more difficult students, so levels of teacher stress are increasing as well.

We put a submission into the ACT Assembly's Children at Risk inquiry recently. It was done subsequent to the report that was written for this inquiry. It really has highlighted the withdrawal of support services within our department, and external to our department, to schools. Often left to cope without the training, expertise, time and other resources, teachers are finding it increasingly more difficult. We can make a copy of that submission available to the inquiry, if you wish to have one.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—I know that we will explore this in more detail today, but I am curious about the feminisation of teaching. I am curious whether the union has any particular views on the ratio of male to female teachers in the territory. Do you have any views as to whether the fact that there are more women involved is a problem or a good thing for the status of the profession in terms of compensation and facilities

available? Is it a problem that there are more women involved in teaching?

**Mr Haggar**—There is no question in my mind that every parent in Australia would prefer their child to be taught by a competent female professional rather than a less competent male. It has been a slow process in the ACT, but what we see in terms of the changing levels of females in the work force is a reflection on the gradual diminution of the wages and conditions of teachers, certainly in the last 20 years. What we are now finding with the teacher shortage is that, as other professional avenues have been opened up to women, teaching is certainly, in comparison, no longer as attractive to them. We have a developing overall shortage. A number of authors have written in recent times on role models for young boys and the like.

There is no question in my mind that, irrespective of gender, we have high levels of commitment from all our teachers. I would be concerned about a return to the practice that existed in New South Wales in the late 1960s and early 1970s where males with lesser qualifications and lower tertiary entrance scores were admitted into teaching. It was quite clearly discriminatory. I realise that it is a popular issue for people to focus on.

**Ms MacGregor**—The starkest statistic relates to primary schools and preschools. There are very few men working in those sectors. Where there are men in the primary schools, they are often in promotions positions, not necessarily level one classroom teachers.

There is growing concern about the question of the number of men, particularly in those years of schooling, because there are more men teaching in the secondary sector. When you look at the work that has been done through the Gender Equity Task Force and all the questions about the construction of gender and issues relating to gender equity in schools, you find that the role of male role models is not necessarily seen to be the most important focus; it is how gender is constructed and what happens in schools. We have to be very careful to see that the problem of the modelling and construction of gender is not to do with the number of female role models.

The recommendations from the task force are quite extensive about what needs to be done with the issues related to the construction of gender in our schools. A lot of work needs to go ahead. That is not to say that it would not be really good to have more men coming into the profession. It goes to the heart of the status of teaching. This year in the ACT there were some statistics published about end of school destinations for students in the ACT through the public sector and the private sector. Not one graduate from the Canberra Grammar School was headed for education as a tertiary destination.

Very few from the other private boys schools were headed for the destination of education in tertiary education. There were considerably more in the public schools from our colleges, but still not very many. If you look at subject areas, you will find that boys start selecting at quite an early age in their high school careers what paths they are going

to go down. Teaching is not one of them. It has a lot to do with the question of what gives money and power in society. There has been quite a bit of research work done in that area by Professor Richard Teece in Victoria.

**Senator STOTT DESPOJA**—Do we have that information available to us?

**Ms MacGregor**—Yes.

**Mr Haggar**—I want to make one final comment. There is the issue of precarious employment for teacher graduates. Most people come into our system after having spent many years working as casual relief teachers. They experience erratic employment patterns and relatively low wages and often do second jobs simply to provide some consistency of income. This is unlike, for example, 20 years ago, where you came out of your training institution after having had a teachers scholarship to assist you with your study. You now come out of the training institution with a substantial HECS debt, and what is available to you is casual relief employment.

Given the way in which gender is constructed and given their working responsibilities, that is not an attractive situation to anyone, let alone to young males who are wanting to start a family and so on. It is very difficult to get a mortgage, a house or a car loan if you are not in a situation of regular employment. We are seeing people on a regular basis come to us in the union office expressing concerns about economic insecurity in trying to break into teaching. The ACT would be the last place in the country where that problem would be a major one. In Victoria, with the nature of contract employment there, it is a very serious problem.

**CHAIR**—How many teachers in the public sector in the ACT are there?

**Mr Haggar**—There are 2,700 working in our schools as full-time equivalents.

**CHAIR**—FTEs?

**Mr Haggar**—Yes. You then have a very large number of casual employees. There would be in excess of 1,000 registered casuals, but not all of them are working more than a limited amount of time.

**CHAIR**—How many schools are there?

**Mr Haggar**—You are looking at about 100 different schools. We also have a large number of preschools.

**CHAIR**—How many are high schools and how many are primary schools?

**Ms MacGregor**—We have 16 high schools, nine secondary colleges and 69

primary schools.

**CHAIR**—Then there is early childhood education, which includes kindergartens and preschools. What do you call them in the ACT?

**Mr Haggart**—Stand-alone preschools. Our kindergarten component is included within our primary schools.

**CHAIR**—Unlike the rest of Australia, which has a kindergarten program prior to the school years. We have to be aware of these differences. How many young people leaving college trained as teachers this year will expect to get full-time work? To put it another way, how many full-time teachers does the ACT take on each year?

**Mr Lee**—That has varied over the last few years, depending on the economic situation in the ACT. The fact is that a large number of our members took leave without pay with an intention of perhaps not returning. They may take leave without pay for a range of reasons. It is normally available for up to 12 months or even two years. Many of those people would be expected not to return, but that has changed drastically as the economic situation both locally and in other places for teachers in alternative employment has shrunk. They are actually coming back, and that is one reason why recruitment recently has diminished.

Next year, the ACT department expects to take on roughly—it is not finally determined; it is happening as we speak—100 people who were not permanently employed this year. They may be renewal of contract people. Only about 40 people will be offered permanent employment in the ACT. Already the shortages are showing in some subject areas, such as the sciences, the technology area, the information technology area and in some languages other than English. All those areas are experiencing the beginnings of teacher shortage, even here, where we expect to be the last affected geographical area of Australia for teacher shortage.

**CHAIR**—So you are telling me that about 100 people will come on the books next year. Will they be full time? I did not catch that.

**Mr Lee**—Out of that 100, I would imagine that about 60 would be contract people, who may have been on contract prior to next year. Forty of them will for the first time be offered permanent employment. They, too, may have been on contract employment prior to that. In terms of people who have never taught in the ACT before, I would say that very few of them next year will be on the books.

**CHAIR**—Is the department recruiting outside the ACT?

**Mr Lee**—Yes. The department does go out of the ACT, particularly in those subject areas I referred to, yes.

**CHAIR**—All over Australia, or mainly to New South Wales?

**Mr Lee**—They have retreated from mass recruitment campaigns all over Australia because the numbers they have needed have diminished, as I have already mentioned. They certainly go to Sydney and Melbourne—I think they went to Adelaide this year—and interview prospective teachers.

**Mr Haggar**—They went to Perth once and recruited two people, neither of whom actually arrived.

**CHAIR**—Did you ever find out why not?

**Mr Haggar**—They were offered jobs locally.

**CHAIR**—Can you tell me a little more about the advancement of physical education? Another committee, which I chaired with Senator Robert Bell, did an inquiry into physical education. I am rather chuffed to find that it is actually being advanced. However, you are saying that it is being advanced at the price of retreat in other areas.

**Mr Haggar**—Within our department, there is no centralised curriculum support for most of the key learning areas. However, because the minister is the Minister for Sport and is a keen sportsman himself, the sports unit is very well resourced in comparison to other areas. Primary and high schools were directed last year to implement a sports policy that had the effect of reducing, for example, options in the area of the arts.

One particular high school declared compulsory transferees of two of their art teachers—there had been a successful arts program going on—because it was necessary for the school to recruit additional sports and physical education staff in order to meet the ministerial directive in the area of sport and PE. The level of cynicism attached to that exercise had quite a substantial impact on teacher morale. There are associated issues of resourcing and professional development for teachers in the area. No-one was opposed to greater attention being given to physical education in schools, but it was the manner in which it was done and the political arbitrariness of the exercise that had the effect in a situation of declining resources, of skewing the direction in a way that created a lot of hostility.

**CHAIR**—If the minister wanted to promote an area, why was there a trade-off with arts teachers? Why not maths teachers?

**Mr Haggar**—Again, it becomes a matter of parity of esteem between the curriculum areas.

**CHAIR**—You do understand a question of heavy cynicism or at least irony. Why can you be sure that arts teachers had to go so as to fulfil the sports requirements, or was that something that the local school decided?

**Ms MacGregor**—It was a school based decision. Here in the ACT, for many years, we have had quite a devolved system. There is a lot of school based decision making, particularly in the area of curriculum offerings. It would have been a decision of the school to try to cater for all the different needs of students in terms of learning needs.

**CHAIR**—So the minister suggested that each school should up its ante on physical education and recreation?

**Ms MacGregor**—They were directed to do it. Every student had to have a certain number of minutes of physical education per week.

**CHAIR**—Were physical education teachers required to do this, or were general teachers required to do it?

**Ms MacGregor**—PE teachers.

**Mr Haggar**—One of the concerns with that exercise—it was opposed by the Physical Education Teachers Association—was that large numbers of students had heavy PE and sport programs outside school. There was very little consultation before the initial announcement was made that this was to happen. Some modifications were achieved. It took extraordinary efforts on behalf of us, the school principals and the professional associations to try to get the minister to recognise that he was creating a climate that would probably turn students off sport and physical education rather than do as he wished, which was sustain an ongoing increase in the level of activity.

**CHAIR**—I found it very interesting to do the PE and sport inquiry, because it highlighted the terrible difficulty schools had in trying to decide how to allocate their resources across the key learning areas. Sport had been chopped out of most schools in large part. PE teachers were a thing of the past and were employed by sporting organisations rather than in most Australian schools. That occurred in the face of evidence that showed that if kids do some physical activity each day they are much more likely to learn well.

There are some wonderful studies out of France and Hindmarsh that measure this very nicely. So it is a bit of a shame, as far as I am concerned, that the way this has been proposed or promoted has turned out to be a bit of a negative. Of course children were doing sport outside school because it was no longer being offered in school. That is one of the sad implications of the cuts that happened previously. You are saying that it is the process as much as the outcome that troubles you.

**Mr Haggar**—Certainly in relation to that exercise. To be fair, we have seen levels of political interference in school curricula before that have had quite a significant impact. If we use languages other than English, we have an experience in primary schools now where some of our students are getting, for example, 20 minutes per week or half an hour

per week of language and the poor teacher providing the program is facing something in excess of 500 students in a week. That is not a languages program but a political initiative that has inadequate resources. It was put into a school program that was already substantially crowded. With increased pressures on school resources, some schools are contemplating their withdrawal from language programs because they cannot sustain them and do not have realistic, worthwhile programs operating.

**CHAIR**—We are coming to the end of the allocated time. I am pretty sure that my colleagues would like to ask some questions. Before they ask them, I will ask one last question. We are examining the status of teachers. We have heard about crowded curricula and the pastoral work issues, and you have reiterated them. Another issue that interests us is whether there should be a professional body for teachers apart from an industrial body. You say that many of the teachers seem to regard professional and industrial areas as more or less the one thing. Given that comment in your submission, what would you say about a peak teachers professional body?

**Mr Haggar**—We were supportive of the Australian Teaching Council. The make-up of that body was perhaps not as broad as it should have been. But the peak professional association that has been contemplated by government at the moment will be handicapped from the start because of the exclusion of the teacher unions. Our members criticised us heavily on occasion for supporting the ATC, because, in their view, the professional responsibilities were ours and we were seen to be shirking them and directing ourselves towards a purely industrial agenda if we did not pursue them very forcefully.

**CHAIR**—Some people have argued to this committee very strenuously that one thing that would improve the status of teachers is anything to advance it as a profession. Some of us have thought of teaching as a profession for years, but others are seeing that the development of a professional status for teaching would be an advancement. Would you see your proposal for a peak body with union representation as advancing the status of teachers?

**Mr Haggar**—The answer to that would be yes. I know that my colleague would like to make a comment about it as well. In pursuing a greater level of professionalism within the teaching service, we have pursued the notion of a registration board within the ACT.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Mr Lee**—You only have to look at the agenda of the various state employers in Australia when it comes to enterprise bargaining time with teachers, as it periodically does, and the range of issues they put on the table for us to negotiate. There is such a mishmash of industrial, professional and pedagogical issues that you could not possibly take professional issues out of the industrial arena of teachers' unions, even if we thought it was a good thing to do so. The employer is constantly bringing professional issues to

the enterprise bargaining table. They could not take those issues to that sort of body, which may be a good thing for others reasons. At the end of the day, the industrial matters will be resolved around that table with the various teacher unions.

**Senator CARR**—The Chair has raised the question about the relationship between professionalism and industrial issues. You have responded that essentially these are arbitrary divides and that it is difficult to distinguish among them. You also raise the issue of the relationship between the industry and politicians. Is it the view of the ACT branch of the AEU that the industry lacks advocates? Are the people you are seeking to defend the industry—that is, the responsible ministers—more often than not involved in a political assault upon the industry? For instance, in the area of literacy, Minister Kemp and the Prime Minister have argued that schools have failed. Does the union see that as a failure of politicians to act as advocates for the industry and teachers?

**Mr Haggar**—In our experience within the ACT, we have seen circumstances where, in order to please all comers, the local minister has been quite positive about teachers within our schools and then the following day found himself photographed with a parent activist who has produced a rather peculiar survey on literacy that has no basis in the reality of literacy in our schools. It is a mix of populism and support for teachers and jumping on particular bandwagons in terms of the educational arena that has led to a situation where the minister is unfortunately held in very low regard by the teaching force.

Before you came in, Senator Carr, I made the point that I believed the last two years have probably been the worst we have seen in the last two decades in terms of the federal government targeting teachers as a profession, particularly public school teachers. I used the example of the recent youth employment report from the House of Representatives to indicate what we and our members believe is quite a profound prejudice amongst some of the more conservative commentators and politicians in the country against public education and teachers as a profession.

**Senator CARR**—What impact does that approach, as you see it, have upon the status of teachers? What effect does it have on morale?

**Mr Haggar**—It comes down to having teachers ask themselves, ‘Why teach?’ Certainly we have found that a great many of our teachers who are themselves the sons and daughters of teachers and, in some cases, the grandchildren of teachers, are saying to their own children, ‘Don’t go into the profession. It’s simply too hard. The rewards are too few. The community pressure on you as a working professional is too great. Find your career path elsewhere.’

**Ms MacGregor**—Here in the ACT, teacher morale is at its lowest ebb in my experience, which goes back to 1985. There are complex reasons for that. The view that the community at large holds about the role of teachers in schools and their lack of

understanding of the complexity of teachers' work is probably absolutely central to the question of low morale. The community has a very simplistic view of what schools and teachers are about. No amount of telling the story by teachers themselves will change that view. It really needs to be a community effort, in a way, to value schooling and to value the work of teachers.

**Senator CARR**—There is the question of what remedies are available. One option this committee has is that it can recommend the national registration of teachers. I take it from what you have said previously that that is a course of action you would support. Would you support the national registration of teachers for all teachers, public and private, across all sectors of the industry, including TAFE, early childhood, secondary schooling and primary schooling?

**Mr Haggar**—From our point of view, obviously, you would vary such a registration arrangement in terms of the sector and qualification levels. You would have to have industry experts, particularly in the TAFE and vocational areas of secondary education. But certainly we would strongly support it. We pursued it with our local department. We could have a registration system tomorrow in the ACT if teachers were prepared to pay for it out of their own pockets.

**Senator CARR**—What about a national registration scheme?

**Mr Haggar**—We in the ACT are so small that we would prefer to see national models operating in almost any area.

**Senator CARR**—What about university teachers? Why should they be excluded from such a proposition?

**Mr Haggar**—I can talk on behalf of our members, because we have discussed the issue within our forums. University teachers have their forums and advocates. I would be interested to see what the debate was and their response to it.

**Senator CARR**—Would you see such a registration procedure going to disciplinary matters, or would it be confined merely to professional development issues?

**Mr Haggar**—Our expectation would be that the professional association would have a view on disciplinary matters and certainly would be in a circumstance, if properly resourced, to provide leadership in the area of professional development.

**CHAIR**—Was any school or were any teachers in the ACT involved in the innovative links program with the National Schools Network?

**Mr Haggar**—We have a significant number of schools involved with the National Schools Network. Our department, to its credit, is continuing to fund the same level of

commitment to the National Schools Network. It is hosting a conference here in January with our support. One of the great tragedies of the National Schools Network is the withdrawal of the Commonwealth from that body, because it is about the only organisation capable of transmitting workplace changes across the country in a positive and realistic way.

**CHAIR**—Did you find that it gave heart to teachers?

**Mr Haggart**—I have been very pleasantly surprised, as someone who initially was cynical, at the commitment of our teachers to changing their work practices within the framework of the NSN.

**Mr Lee**—But they have to see it going somewhere. They do not want to experiment and find that it works but then find that in order to create that change there is neither the departmental support nor resources—or even willingness—to proceed to the next step. Some of them have even seen it as a bit of a cul-de-sac. They have become quite keen about some of the work that they have done, but it needs to progress to the next stage.

**CHAIR**—We are out of time. I appreciate that it has been brief. We thank you very much for attending today. We appreciate enormously being able to hear from the ACT witnesses this side of Christmas. It means that we can fairly much conclude our public hearings and now move to writing the report on the status of teachers. Thank you.

**Senator CARR**—You may not be aware that the parliament is sitting today. That has meant that we have been somewhat distracted. I apologise for not being able to get here earlier.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Senator Carr. I should have said that. Parliament has moved its starting time back to 9.30 a.m., so we are all racing in every direction. If we conclude our business today without being beeped out of here, it will be another miracle. We will be now looking to start the writing of our report now. We are assisted by your evidence. It is similar to but somewhat different from some of the other evidence, particularly in the weighting and emphasis you have given to some points. Thank you very much indeed.

**Mr Haggart**—Thank you, Senator.

**CHAIR**—If there is anything further you wish to tell us, feel free to contact us.

[10.56 a.m.]

**LAIRD, Mr Donald Richard, Chairperson, Standards Council of the Teaching Profession, Victorian Government, 2 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria**

**CHAIR**—Welcome, Mr Laird. The committee prefers that evidence be given in public. However, should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in private or in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I would point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened in recent years. The committee has before it document No. 271. Is there any other material that you would care to table at this stage?

**Mr Laird**—Yes. I will be tabling a couple of documents. I thought that I would refer to them in my introductory remarks.

**CHAIR**—Let us hear those introductory remarks. We will then proceed to questions. Thank you for very much for coming here, Mr Laird.

**Mr Laird**—Thank you, Senator, for giving me the opportunity to speak today about the submission that was prepared by us on behalf of the Victorian government. I want to make four points, because I do not intend to speak to the submission at length as it is already before you. First of all, it is important that employers and the community recognise that they can do much to support teachers. At the same time, it is equally important that it be recognised that only teachers themselves can confirm their own professionalism. As an aside to that, I would suggest that the quality, importance, and complexity of teachers' work, and therefore their esteem, will contribute to the community's perception, and that in turn will confirm their status. To put it another way, quantity of resources does not necessarily produce quality. Victoria's focus is on the latter. The submission does outline a number of the measures that have been taken in terms of merit and a merit career system, the quality selection, professional development support and the recognition of teachers as quality professionals through a number of awards.

The second point I would make is that it is important to note that the perception by the community does not necessarily equal the reality. I table this document, which is a school management report conducted by the Office of Review in the Department of Education in Victoria, in which there is a range of material provided as a result of the annual surveys that the Office of Review conducts in schools and in which, in fact, the morale of teachers in Victorian department schools is shown to be rising in the last few years. I will touch on that to make the point about the distinction between morale in this instance and how teachers feel and about some matters of public perception.

The third point I would make is that there are many current initiatives which have

been taken since the submission was prepared. I will table this document, which is entitled the *Graduate teacher outcomes review*. It is the review that has been requested by the Minister for Education in Victoria. He has asked the Standards Council to undertake it to look at the outcomes of graduate teachers. But there are other matters that have been undertaken since the submission was put to you. Those matters include our involvement and interest in such issues as supply and demand, in recruitment and marketing, in the resourcing of welfare and in developing flexible workplace options. I could go on, but there are a number of them.

The last and final point I would make in speaking to this is to suggest that a number of these matters could be productively and positively taken forward if there were some significant research undertaken. It is referred to in the submission that we have developed. It would be preferably independent research undertaken into the comparative skills of teachers compared with those in other occupations. It seems to me that they tend to be ignored. Not until and if we can establish such facts can we have a better basis for public debate in this country. That is all I want to say.

**CHAIR**—That has certainly stirred the pot. If it has been produced by the Office of Review in 1997, that means it is hot off the press?

**Mr Laird**—Yes, it is.

**CHAIR**—What is the Office of Review?

**Mr Laird**—The Office of Review is a branch of the Department of Education in Victoria.

**CHAIR**—Peopled by how many?

**Mr Laird**—I do not know the facts. There are less than 15, I would think.

**CHAIR**—Their task is to do this kind of review each year?

**Mr Laird**—Their task broadly is to undertake a range of quality assurance measures with respect to outcomes from schooling in Victoria. So that school management document is a part of the work that they undertake. It forms a part of what is referred to as the annual review. The data that is included in that management report comes from questionnaires made up of questions put to teachers themselves in this instance about issues such as morale and workload and so forth.

**CHAIR**—So this shows that teachers in Victoria have a somewhat increasing morale and that things are probably going better? At least that is what I understand you to be saying; this report shows that things are on the up?

**Mr Laird**—In that context, yes.

**CHAIR**—We might then have to come back to context. Why is it that Victorian teachers cannot tell anybody else that themselves? As I understand it, the Victorian government changed the legislation to prohibit teachers from making statements of this sort.

**Mr Laird**—Do you wish me to comment on the first question or the second one?

**CHAIR**—Both. The legislation has been changed to prohibit teachers from speaking. I have not yet heard back from the minister or the federal minister. I wrote to the federal minister and asked him in particular to raise this matter with the Victorian ministers, because we were concerned that we were having an inquiry into the status of teachers but that Victorian teachers may well be penalised if they came before this hearing. I have not yet heard back from the minister.

**Mr Laird**—I cannot speak for the ministers on that matter. It may be that you are referring to the Public Service regulations that apply to government school teachers in Victoria, as they do in every other state and territory, which do impose some constraints on teachers' behaviour of a number of kinds, one of which might be to make direct reference to their employers and matters concerning employment.

**Senator CARR**—That is right. The regulations were changed by the Victorian government to prevent public comment on education. Is that the case?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot comment on that.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Laird, what is the relationship between your board and the Victorian Minister for Education? Are you here representing the Victorian Minister for Education?

**Mr Laird**—Our council is a statutory body that gives advice to the ministers for education in Victoria.

**Senator CARR**—You have been asked by the ministers to appear before this committee?

**Mr Laird**—My name was put forward, and then the invitation came from this committee to appear today.

**Senator CARR**—But you are here representing the Victorian government?

**Mr Laird**—I am here to speak to the submission that the Victorian government asked the council to put forward.

**Senator CARR**—This is a submission signed by Mr Philip Gude and Dr Phil Honeywood. Is that the case?

**Mr Laird**—That is right.

**Senator CARR**—I take it that you are here representing the Victorian government?

**Mr Laird**—In that sense, yes.

**Senator CARR**—If you are here to represent the Victorian government, could you advise me on some of these matters related to resourcing. In your opening comment, you mentioned the relationship between resourcing and public perception. Is it the case that Victoria has suffered substantial reductions in resourcing for education since 1992?

**Mr Laird**—The advice I have is that the budget provision for education in Victoria is higher now than it was in 1992.

**Senator CARR**—Perhaps we could go through a few statistical propositions. You could perhaps indicate to me whether this is the case. How many primary school teachers have been removed from the system?

**Mr Laird**—I do not know the particular facts. I understand that there are some who have left the system.

**Senator CARR**—Is it the case that there has been a 16 per cent drop in the number of primary school teachers working in public education who are employed by the Victorian education department?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot confirm the particular percentage, but I understand that there has been an attrition.

**Senator CARR**—There are 2,494 fewer in 1996 than in 1992. In the secondary education system, there are 4,012 fewer teachers now working in the system. Would you be able to confirm that figure?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot confirm the particular figure. I must repeat that, as a statutory body, we do not have dealings with particular figures of that kind.

**Senator CARR**—You raise the question of resources. What figures do you have? Can you indicate to the committee in your opinion how many teachers are now being employed by the Victorian education department to work in Victorian public educational institutions?

**Mr Laird**—I understand that there are roughly 37,500 equivalent full-time teachers in employment in Victorian schools.

**Senator CARR**—That was the figure in 1993. In 1992, there were 40,550. In 1996, there were 34,044. There has been a 16 per cent drop in the number of teaching staff employed by the Victorian government to work in Victorian schools. I put it to you, Mr Laird, that there has been a drop of 12.9 per cent in total non-teaching staff in the Victorian education system. Could you respond to that proposition?

**Mr Laird**—All I can do is note your comment.

**Senator CARR**—The figures I have are in a public document in a submission put to this committee by the Australian Education Union, entitled 'Victorian government schools: trends data'. It is a submission prepared by Michaela Kronemann, a research officer at the AEU. It is based upon ABS schools Australia figures contained in survey No. 422120, Department of Education, 1996 summary statistics note. So presumably it is based on your own statistics, Mr Laird.

**Mr Laird**—On the department's statistics, I presume so.

**Senator CARR**—Could you advise the committee whether class sizes in the state of Victoria have increased or decreased between 1992 and 1996?

**Mr Laird**—I am sorry, but I have to repeat that my particular statutory responsibility or my council's responsibility is to deal with quality of teaching standards rather than the particular details of student-staff ratios.

**Senator CARR**—It is very difficult, since you have raised the issue of resourcing, to move away from the question of resourcing when we are looking at the question of the quality of education provision by the state of Victoria. You are saying that you are not able to provide us with advice on class sizes. Are you able to give us advice on the number of enrolments in government schools between 1992 and 1996?

**Senator TIERNEY**—Mr Laird has already indicated the range of his responsibilities in this matter. We should not be turning this into an estimates hearing, which is outside the purview of the witness before us.

**Senator CARR**—The witness is here representing the Victorian government. We have submissions put before this committee on the quality of education in the state of Victoria. I am seeking from an official witness of the Victorian government a response, and perhaps a refutation of the claims being made by other witnesses to this committee, that there has been probably the largest drop in educational resources provided to education of any state in this country in the last four years under the present government in Victoria. Mr Laird, you have made submissions to this committee—

**Senator TIERNEY**—Madam Chair, the witness has indicated that he is not the Victorian government. He has a range of responsibilities that does not cover the matters being raised by Senator Carr. It is just wasting time.

**CHAIR**—You have asked me a question and I have heard some argument from both sides. As I understand it, Mr Laird, you prepared the submission from the Victorian government to this committee?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—So I think it is perfectly reasonable for my colleagues to put questions to you about Victorian figures.

**Senator TIERNEY**—In the submission.

**CHAIR**—It is perfectly reasonable for Senator Carr to put his questions, but it may be that Mr Laird will have to take those questions on notice. Could you confirm those figures at a later date, if you do not have the facts and figures in your head at this stage? Would that be acceptable to you, Mr Laird?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Senator CARR**—I have one final question on resourcing. Mr Laird raised the resourcing issue himself in his opening comments to the committee. We have advice that, in Victoria, the primary school student-teacher ratios between 1992 and 1996 have increased from 15.8 to 18.2 and, in secondary schools, have risen from 10.8 to 12.3. This compares very unfavourably with the rest of Australia. I would ask Mr Laird to comment on that proposition. Has there been a dramatic increase in the student-staff ratios between 1992 and 1996?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot comment on those matters or on a comparison with other systems in Australia. I guess that I could ask the appropriate bodies within the department to find that out.

**Senator CARR**—That is appreciated. In your submission you talk about the questions that relate to job insecurity and the concerns that teachers are expressing about the levels of satisfaction in Victoria. You suggest that the level of morale is increasing. How many permanent teachers have been appointed in Victoria since the Kennett government came to power five years ago? Is it the case that teachers employed in Victoria are employed on fixed-term contracts and often for durations of less than one year?

**Mr Laird**—It is the case that there is short-term employment agreement in Victoria. I would like to comment on what I said about resources. I did not say that resources were irrelevant. I did say that the quality of teachers may not have a direct and a one-to-one bearing with respect to resources.

**CHAIR**—That is a bit risky, isn't it? I would like you to comment on the negative of your own claim. If there has been a significant reduction in resources, this may have an impact on quality.

**Mr Laird**—It may, but when one looks at quality, it is worth looking at quality in its own right.

**CHAIR**—How do you do that?

**Mr Laird**—I did present some of the work of the council in terms of the quality. I would like to refer to the professional code of practice in particular, which attempts to affirm those very positive qualities that teachers do have and do demonstrate in the work they do. It is incumbent on a body such as mine to disseminate that in a public place and to encourage teachers to do likewise.

**Senator CARR**—How many ongoing permanent teachers have been employed in the state of Victoria in the last five years? How many new teachers have entered the system on a permanent basis?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot give those figures, but I can take the question on notice.

**Senator CARR**—Page 6 of your submission, under what appears to be paragraph 8, states:

There is no reason why one teacher at Year 12 should not deliver a lecture in mathematics to 125 students . . .

That seems to me to be a revolutionary approach to the issue of class sizes. Given that we have concern that there have been no permanent teachers employed in the state of Victoria and people are put on short-term contracts, how do class sizes of up to 125 register with good teacher morale?

**Mr Laird**—With respect, I did not refer to class sizes of that order. What I was touching on was that it is probably valuable to look at work organisation in the present context to see whether there are ways and means by which teachers' work might be made more effective. I am an ex-principal of a school and it seems to me that if you have a lecture delivered to five parallel classes in mathematics—I stress that it would be a lecture—you would free resources for more detailed tutorial work that might take place with some members of those classes in another place. The point I was making there—and

I am not the only one to do so; it has been touched on by a number of other writers and Dean Ashenden is one of them—was about making workplaces more friendly and workable for the professional people who work in them. That is the context in which I made that remark.

**Senator CARR**—Can I put it to you that a TAFE teacher in Victoria—given that your responsibility covers all the teaching area—currently is being paid, according to the particular grade shown here, \$42,768. A similarly qualified and classified TAFE teacher in the state of New South Wales is being paid \$48,779. Do you think that lower salaries in the state of Victoria, combined with what appears to be declines in industrial conditions in terms of wages and conditions and professional standards would have an impact on teacher morale?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot see the full picture there. It is very hard to make those comparisons. I am not aware of those figures or what other benefits particular employees have in those circumstances.

**Senator CARR**—So you think that teachers have better conditions in Victoria?

**Mr Laird**—I am not able to comment on that.

**Senator CARR**—Given your surveys, how do you think the levels of stress, for instance, rate on an interstate basis?

**Mr Laird**—I have no idea, because we have not conducted research on an interstate basis.

**Senator CARR**—What do you believe to be the situation in Victoria with the level of teacher stress? Is it increasing or decreasing with these increased class sizes?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot answer that question.

**Senator CARR**—Perhaps you could give me some advice in terms of changes in the schools of the future program and the attempts to reduce the level of central support for teachers in terms of the removal of the curriculum branch and the various other systems and wide support that were once available. There is the removal of the special needs component in staffing formulas for schools. The disadvantaged schools formulas have been so dramatically reduced in the state of Victoria. There is the move towards global budgeting, with much greater emphasis put upon autonomy at the school level. How do you see the ordinary classroom teacher being able to cope with these increased levels of work demanded with the fewer resources that are being provided?

**Mr Laird**—The big change that has occurred in Victoria is to give autonomy to schools, which allows the people who are the professionals on the spot to undertake the business of educating children, which is that direct responsibility that must occur. After

all, it is not departments that educate children; it is the professional people themselves. In answer to your question, I would think that in general terms the intent behind the schools of the future program is to give that degree of discretion, to professional people operating with and having a say in decision making about those local resources, which is particularly critical in delivering effective outcomes within a broad framework of policy to the children in their care.

**CHAIR**—Does that not contradict a little your comment before about resources and quality?

**Mr Laird**—I do not imagine that it does.

**CHAIR**—I thought you were making the point—I guess it is a very critical one for this committee—about how much of the status of teachers concerns adequate teaching, adequate professional development and so on and how much of it concerns pressure on teachers, particularly from resources or the changing winds that are blowing through schools. I thought you said then that it is important for the local staff, particularly the principal, I presume, to have the resources and the responsibility for those resources and to be able to make decisions about them so as to get the best educational outcome for his or her children. Doesn't that seem to contradict a little your earlier claim that resources do not necessarily lead to quality?

**Mr Laird**—I was trying to emphasise earlier not that resources do not matter but rather that there is a quality element in whatever one looks at with respect to the status of teachers. I will now elaborate on the latter remarks I was making about the schools of the future program. It seems to me that the evidence we are getting in documents such as this is affirming that, while one can have an argument about resources that are available to schools on the one hand, it is also encouraging and positive to see that the teachers and principals, through the decision making that they have with respect to the school charter and in association with the school council, have a critical say in what they do. It gives them a feeling that they are in control of the professional work that they do with children in their classes. That is the point I was making.

**CHAIR**—This is contradictory to evidence that we have been getting—or I suppose it is one line that we have been getting. But we have also been getting evidence from many schools around the country, including in Victoria, that if you have the responsibility for raising the resources for seeking sponsorship, for looking for extra funding, for meeting with the community to decide the weighting of the curriculum in your school and so on, this runs exactly counter to what you are saying. It is nice theoretically to have some decision making, but you can exhaust people from the stress of trying to find the funding and seek the sponsorship and trying to manage all those things. Could you comment on that kind of conflict.

**Mr Laird**—There may be a sense in which teachers in particular are being

involved in a range of matters. I did hear the last witnesses say that it would be better for other professionals or non-teaching staff to be delivering those services. Point 7 of the submission I have put forward clearly says that one needs to look at the balance between teaching and non-teaching staff. In other parts of the submission, we did stress that by no means did we want to discount the very valuable support that other community agencies, such as health, welfare and so on, are able and should be able to make in support of teaching.

**Senator CARR**—I think your ministers have given you a particularly unenviable job to do today. I appreciate the difficulty that you personally have been placed in. But it really is pretty ordinary for ministers Gude and Honeywood to ask you to undertake this task without the appropriate support, given that all the material I put to you this morning is on the public record and is based on submissions to this committee. I would have thought they would have provided you with an opportunity to refute the claims being made. Perhaps you might want to take this on notice. Is it the case that relief teachers, particularly given the very large pool of unemployed teachers in the state of Victoria, are still paid a standard daily fee under the schools of the future program? Is it correct that schools are now using private employment agencies to recruit casual, daily emergency teachers and longer term relief staff or emergency teachers? Are you able to advise us on that matter?

**Mr Laird**—Not directly, but I will take it on notice.

**Senator CARR**—Can you confirm that it is the practice of some of these agencies to charge the teachers a percentage fee rather than that of the school? What action has the Victorian government taken on what seems to me to be a corrupt practice?

**Mr Laird**—I cannot comment on that. I have no knowledge of it.

**Senator CARR**—Your submission speaks of an expanding role for non-teachers within schools. Given the level of industrial disputation in the state of Victoria that has occurred over the last five years, could you outline what the government's view is on what these so-called non-teachers would be doing? You outline this in paragraph 7. You mention the balance of teaching and non-teaching staff. Would you see parents taking over some of the work of teachers at the moment? What sort of remuneration would they expect to receive?

**Mr Laird**—Victoria has a classification known as school support officers. Those school support officers undertake a range of—

**Senator CARR**—They have been cut back by about 29 per cent. They are the old teachers aides.

**Mr Laird**—In part. There is also the staff in offices who undertake administrative

and clerical work. What we did find in preparing this submission was that other countries elsewhere have a far more generous non-teaching staff ratio to undertake a range of that paid work, which has to do with administrative assistance and the work of aides in classrooms. We feel that that whole area really does need serious attention and that it would be of great benefit to teachers.

**CHAIR**—Serious attention?

**Mr Laird**—Of course.

**CHAIR**—Meaning what? What do you mean by serious attention?

**Mr Laird**—Within the global budget that a school has, it is important to consider the way in which those resources are used and the way in which people who are not teachers can undertake work and therefore relieve teachers of their proper professional duties. I am thinking of bus duty, lost property and other functions.

**Senator CARR**—What about in classrooms? These are people who are employed under the current award, which is something less than 60 per cent of a first-year out teacher. There are very low rates of pay for teachers aides.

**Mr Laird**—I know that the career structure for SSOs in Victoria goes up to a top of \$60,000 plus for a range of the responsibilities in the non-teaching area.

**Senator CARR**—Most of them are employed on a part-time basis, aren't they?

**Mr Laird**—That is not my impression, but I could not give you figures.

**Senator CARR**—I would appreciate any information you have on the award rates for teachers aides in Victoria and the numbers that are employed on a part-time and full-time basis. What specific duties do you expect these teachers aides to perform in the classroom in directly dealing with children in a learning environment?

**Mr Laird**—In the early years of schooling, for example, a lot of the work has to do with reading. That important back-up support is critical. In other words, it is an expansion of the work that aides have been doing and undertaking over a long time. I am simply saying that the balance needs to be looked at to make more effective those resources that a school has at its discretion. I cannot give you those figures. I am sorry that I did not come prepared with them.

**Senator CARR**—Perhaps we could take that on notice. Does the Victorian government have a detailed proposal for the expansion of the teachers aide role in schools?

**Mr Laird**—The Victorian government takes the view that the best and most effective schooling that occurs is best delivered close to the children. As I said before, it is a matter of devolving professional responsibility for the whole decision making in respect of the delivery of the program within the state wide policies.

**CHAIR**—Does the Victorian government have any concern that, in devolving to the local area, one school will do very much better than another? What would the Victorian government policy be about a clear and emerging inequity between schools?

**Mr Laird**—I apologise for not having the particular figures for the ways in which schools are funded. I understand—this is an impression, because it is not my direct area of responsibility—that a loading is given with respect to school global budgets for those areas to take into account equity. That is as it should be. In respect of the other matter you raised, my impression is that there have always been circumstances well before any particular government came into office where communities have agreed to support the work of the teachers and principals and the councils in the schools.

**CHAIR**—This committee has just finished a report entitled *The private funding of public schools: not a level playground*. What emerged as probably of most concern to schools was the fact that, in the devolution, some schools had a much better capacity to raise funds or seek sponsorship than others. Even though there was a loading that you mentioned in the Victorian government, for example, that did not go anywhere near ensuring something approaching equity between the schools. We are not looking at turning every school into exactly the same dollars and so on. But one school can have a fete and raise \$5,000 while another school will not raise \$100 in a year. That was a major concern. I am interested in whether you or your professional code of practice organisation is concerned about major inequity in resource allocation to schools.

**Mr Laird**—The matter you have raised is one that is a matter for public debate and policy setting. It is not a responsibility of our council to engage in.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I am looking at your *School management* report. I have heard a lot of comments this morning about what is happening in Victoria. You have presented in this report some very impressive evidence. I would like to ask you a few things about the survey. The survey instrument used in 1994, 1995 and 1996 was an identical instrument?

**Mr Laird**—I believe it was. I believe that there are some changes for 1998 which will take into account professional development.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It will add a new dimension?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So we are comparing apples with apples?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What we have here for Victoria is showing a consistent improvement from 1994 to 1995 to 1996 across both primary and secondary schools on all dimensions.

**Mr Laird**—I believe that that is so.

**Senator TIERNEY**—So quality of work life in the primary school as well as morale, leadership and goal congruency in the primary school and quality of work life in the secondary school as well as morale, leadership and goal congruency in the secondary school, in all cases in Victoria increased in all dimensions—primary and secondary—from 1994 to 1995 to 1996. Is that, in summary, what these graphs are showing?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I seek the committee's agreement to have these graphs incorporated in the record.

**Senator CARR**—No, what we want is the whole document.

**Senator TIERNEY**—We are talking about the results of a survey and it is quite appropriate to incorporate those results in the *Hansard* record. They are on page 18.

**Senator CARR**—But—

**Senator TIERNEY**—I know this is embarrassing for you, Senator Carr.

**Senator CARR**—It is not embarrassing. I just—

**Senator TIERNEY**—It should be, after all the nonsense you have gone on with in the last few years. This is actually countering all that.

**Senator CARR**—You put up a bodgie report at this time of the day.

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, that is enough, thank you.

**Senator TIERNEY**—In terms of this survey, tell us what is wrong with it?

**CHAIR**—That is not a question to Senator Carr. This is a public hearing and you can ask the witnesses questions, Senator. As I understand it, you were wondering whether we could incorporate such information in the *Hansard*. I believe that that is something we

will have to ask Hansard about because I am not sure of their capacity to print graphs of that sort.

**Senator TIERNEY**—Well, subject to the technical requirement. If the technical requirement is not possible, the actual figures would be possible.

**CHAIR**—That is clearly a matter of some disagreement. I suggest that we take note of your comments and raise this issue at a private meeting.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I will finish what I was saying, which referred to pages 18, 19, 29 and 30. I move that they be incorporated in the *Hansard*.

**CHAIR**—Subject to the caveats I have put on them.

**Senator TIERNEY**—What caveats are they?

**Senator CARR**—I am saying that I do not want to see a selected version of a bodge report, which we have only just been given. If the Victorian government has copies of this report, perhaps we can all have a look at it. I am happy to see the whole document, not a selected version of a few graphs that you have picked.

**CHAIR**—I have decided—

**Senator TIERNEY**—I have expertise in this field. There is no problem with it except that it is embarrassing to you.

**Senator CARR**—You don't show much sign of any expertise.

**Senator TIERNEY**—You know that that is not right.

**CHAIR**—I have said that, first of all, we will have to find out whether Hansard can incorporate it. I am pretty sure that they will not be able to. I also suggest that, in light of difficulties about whether to incorporate it, we might defer this matter to a private meeting of the committee.

**Senator TIERNEY**—I will do it in the main chamber if this committee will not do it.

**Senator CARR**—Go for it. I will enjoy that.

**CHAIR**—This is certainly not assisting the witness, me or the committee. I propose that we incorporate the whole of the report to ensure a proper context for the graphs. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows—*

**CHAIR**—Mr Laird, I want to ask you a little more about that. As I understand it, you said that that report is from questionnaires sent out to teachers.

**Mr Laird**—Yes, that is right.

**CHAIR**—How many questionnaires were sent?

**Mr Laird**—There are three dimensions to the annual review. I hope you understand that I am speaking at a position of remoteness from them. There is the survey of teachers in terms of the matters that have been just touched on and which are contained in this report. There is a survey of parents in terms of their satisfaction with the work that their schools are doing. There is also a survey of students, which takes into account a whole range of matters to do with attendance and discipline and so forth. All of them make up the annual report which schools are obliged to publish as part of their annual accountability. That in turn makes up a part of the accountability process where, every three years, there is a validation of those figures from external sources. That is the best way I could describe it.

**CHAIR**—I would be interested in knowing how many questionnaires went out. Would it have been the same number each year?

**Mr Laird**—All of the schools that are in the schools of the future program are surveyed each year.

**Senator CARR**—How many are there?

**Mr Laird**—There are 1,740-odd schools in Victoria.

**Senator CARR**—How many surveys went out? One per school? Was it up to the principal to fill in, or individual teachers?

**Mr Laird**—No. It goes to each teacher in the school in the case of the teacher survey. I understand that it also goes to parents.

**Senator CARR**—How many surveys were sent out?

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—Is the methodology set out in the document?

**CHAIR**—Can you comment on the increased satisfaction. Some of these graphs seem a little hard to necessarily compare, because I have not seen this kind of line graph exactly before. The shift towards increase is, I think you might allow, a modest one?

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—It is very modest?

**Mr Laird**—It is a matter of interpretation.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It is also a matter of averages. If you have a huge volume of people, shifting an average on a five-point scale is fairly difficult.

**CHAIR**—You are saying that you can take some heart that at least the red line has moved a little towards the plus side in terms of morale, leadership and goal congruence but that you would not necessarily write home about the major increase?

**Mr Laird**—I am very encouraged by the evidence that is presented by this management report. I see it as a positive which we should affirm on behalf of teachers and their professionalism. That is the point I wish to affirm.

**Senator TIERNEY**—How many people responded to your survey? If it were a half-dozen school principals whose performance bonus depended upon the answer, you would have one set of results. If it were every teacher in the system, you might have a different set of results. How many people participated in these surveys?

**Mr Laird**—I would have to take that on notice but I understand that it was every teacher of every school in that cohort of schools each year. I am guessing, but I would imagine that it would be one-third of the total number of schools in the state each year.

**Senator TIERNEY**—It is a very respectable sample.

**Senator CARR**—You do not know that. He said that he ‘imagined’.

**CHAIR**—Is there anything further you can provide us with about how that the questionnaire was sent out? It might assist the committee in terms of how to weight this.

**Senator CARR**—Do you have the raw data? Is that available to the committee?

**Mr Laird**—I will take it on notice.

**Senator TIERNEY**—You will find that embarrassing too, Senator Carr.

**Senator CARR**—Could I have the raw data, such as how many people participated in the questionnaire and that sort of thing?

**Mr Laird**—I will take it on notice to see what can be provided.

**CHAIR**—One big problem we have had all through this inquiry is a tension, if not a lively tension, between what is called the industrial part of teachers’ working life and the professional part of their working life. Some people see that it is possible to talk about

the professionalism of the teaching staff apart from their industrial demands and commitments and so on. Can you comment on that split? I understand from this survey that teachers are talking about a lot of things in terms of their professional development. I note the comments you made at the opening of this submission. There is still a concern for the committee to try to work out how you would weight that. If the class sizes grow considerably, and if a lot of time is spent on fund raising or seeking sponsorship and a lot of things distract teachers from getting on with teaching, this may be leading to a lowering of their status. Can you comment on how much you think the industrial conditions—that is, class size et cetera—of teachers affect their professionalism, and perhaps vice versa?

**Mr Laird**—It is difficult to know how to respond. The view I am expressing is that it is important to give a greater balance to the professional issues in teaching as distinct from those industrial and resource issues which have almost exclusively occupied the time of people in the public arena for a long time. As to the balance and how class sizes have this particular effect or that particular effect, I am really not expert enough to say just what difference it does make. I am aware that there is a range of different research on the particularities of class sizes and the effects that they have.

I would be very unwilling to give an opinion on that matter but it is very clear that it is quite critical that we give some professional affirmation to teachers and that it be seen as something that is quite distinct and separate from the range of industrial issues—not that they do not have legitimacy but separate from them. In part, if I may say as an extension of that, that is really the role of our council—to identify those and to give recommendations on matters to do with professional development as we have done. We have had, I would venture to say, some success in that matter, so that teachers' professionalism can be affirmed.

**CHAIR**—Does your organisation support a national registration, let alone a state registration, of teachers?

**Mr Laird**—It depends on what you mean by registration but to answer your question, I have not put it to our council as to whether they would support national registration. I would think that it may well be outside of their legislative charter but the real issue is what you mean by registration. I would say that our council is very clearly and firmly of the view, because of the name of our body, that there is no way that we would back off from an absolute minimum of qualifications and therefore authorisation to that effect in the concept of professionalism that I have tried to put forward. It will be helpful for the committee to know that what we do in the schools of the future context in Victoria is to put out a list of those courses authorised by us after a quality assurance process in terms of teacher education. That is the important matter.

**CHAIR**—Registration as numbers of witnesses have put to us, Mr Laird, would include minimum standards.

**Mr Laird**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Very few people have wanted to shy away from that. In fact, there is a growing support for it but there are certainly people who have got reservations. The other thing that would possibly include is the capacity to hear cases of unprofessional conduct against teachers and even possibly a way in which teachers might be able to be dismissed. We have also had concern raised with us about questions of paedophilia—a person may be highly qualified with degrees but not necessarily be an appropriate person to be around children. A registration board may indeed have a capacity to look at that kind of thing, too.

**Senator CARR**—Time is pushing on. I notice that we have mentioned the question of professional development. The national professional development program, as I understand it, up until its abolition provided the bulk of professional development funding for Victorian professional development. What impact has the abolition of the national professional development program had in the state of Victoria?

**Mr Laird**—Senator, I am not aware of any research on that nor can I confirm whether it was the bulk of the funding or not. I am not denying it and I am not confirming it. All I can say is that professional development is one of our critical areas of responsibility. It seems to me that the renewal and refreshment of one's professionalism as a teacher is a critical part of any profession and it has to occur, just as the matter that Senator Crowley touched on is a critical part of the profession. Those people who do show themselves to be grossly incompetent, or indeed worse in that they have erred very greatly in a criminal sense, must be expelled from the profession. I would simply say that the mechanism for doing that is a matter that I guess will gain a bit more attention as the debate goes on. Our council is very strongly in support of a whole range of these measures in addition to qualifications, which is why I touched on merit earlier, that are critical to affirm and to give public status to the profession.

**Senator CARR**—What amounts of money is the Victorian government spending on professional development and how has that increased or decreased over the last five years?

**Mr Laird**—I am not in a position to give details in total of all of that. I do know that one part of that program—and the part which we have had some influence in—was to do with equipping teachers to be skilled in the use of new learning technologies. On that score, the government put in \$14 million a year over a three-year period to retrain 6,000 teachers a year. That is a very useful measure of professional development indeed, but it is not the only one; there are other measures as well as that one that have contributed to teachers' professional development.

**Senator CARR**—It was for 6,000 teachers a year, and there are some 34,000 teaching staff. Is that the sum total of the professional development contribution the state

is making?

**Mr Laird**—No, it is not. The department in Victoria has a professional leadership and development centre. Within that centre there is a whole range of programs, part of which is delivered centrally by subject associations or by other bodies and part of which goes direct to the school as an entitlement for teachers' personal professional development, along the lines of the philosophy of using some discretion as to how one can enhance one's professionalism. But I cannot quantify all of those.

**CHAIR**—We have to finish, Mr Laird, so I will very quickly ask you for either answers or answers on notice, if you do not mind. We do not expect a 20-page thesis; short notes might assist the committee, thank you. You mentioned before the prospect of perhaps looking at alternative ways of teaching and maybe, instead of giving the same lecture to five separate classes, giving the one lecture to the lot. Does your organisation have any information on the pedagogy of teaching large groups, such as in lectures, as opposed to teaching small classes?

**Mr Laird**—No, not specifically, but it is quite possible that an organisation such as ours, and in conjunction with others, ought to be doing some work in that area.

**CHAIR**—If there is anything you could provide to the committee about the different kinds of teaching requirements for giving lectures as opposed to taking a class, I would appreciate it, thank you. The Victorian government has commissioned some work from Professor Brian Caldwell on the resourcing of schools at various levels of the schooling process. Is any of that work available to the committee?

**Mr Laird**—No, it is not at this stage.

**CHAIR**—Do you know whether it may be available to us at some stage?

**Mr Laird**—I am unable to say, Senator.

**CHAIR**—If there is anything further you could provide on that matter, Mr Laird, we would welcome it, thank you. Can you also briefly note for us whether you think teacher recruitment over the next five to 10 years should change?

**Mr Laird**—Briefly, I believe that some positive moves are happening now. I represent Victoria on one of the ministerial working parties that are looking at recruitment. There are some very interesting matters that are beginning to emerge from that, although it is early days yet. I do believe that recruitment and—I am looking for a better word—marketing of the profession are very important in order to encourage young people of high quality to enter the profession, because that would do more than anything else to turn around some of the perceptions that occur in public.

**CHAIR**—Can you comment about whether or not you have found that the federal government cuts in education, particularly in some of the specific purpose payments—for example, for equity or for maths and science and so on—have disadvantaged Victoria? Certainly, one of your ministers seems to suggest so loudly and lengthily.

**Mr Laird**—I will have to take that question on notice.

**CHAIR**—Yes, please, because it is a point that matters a lot. Finally, thank you for coming, Mr Laird. It has been a very difficult task because what the committee thought the Victorian government might provide for us is not exactly what your submission went to. The submission is very useful indeed, but it is only one part of what we wanted to hear because, in most of the evidence that we have been provided with, the question of resources goes very close to the satisfaction of teachers and therefore to their own sense of themselves.

Could you briefly tell us on notice whether you have any concern about what is now being called the feminisation of the teaching profession and whether you have had any evidence that suggests reasons why it is a good thing to have male teachers—apart from modelling? Some people have been brave enough to say to us that in some schools students are getting pretty violent and that maybe it is because there are mainly only women to deal with them.

**Mr Laird**—I cannot comment on violence. I can comment, though, that the department is undertaking some exploration, as we speak, of encouraging more males to take on teacher training in primary schools, and that some of the discussion to which I have been party in that area has shown some concern about modelling and the ratios of primary trained men to women.

**CHAIR**—That is very interesting. If you could provide anything by way of outlining what has changed so that we are now encouraging men into teaching, the committee would appreciate that very much—and also any other reasons, apart from modelling, that it is a good thing to have men teachers around, apart from the obvious answer that it is a good thing. Mr Laird, thank you very much for your evidence. I am sorry we are very squashed for time. We appreciate very much your contribution and, as I say, I think you had a hard task to fulfil.

[11.56 a.m.]

**ALLEN, Ms Sarah Jane, Co-convenor, ACT Branch, Association of Women Educators, Gold Creek Primary School, Kelleway Avenue, Nicholls, Australian Capital Territory**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but, should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or part of specific answers in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate. The committee has before it a document which is numbered 278. Is there any other material you would care to table at this stage?

**Ms Allen**—No, not at this stage.

**CHAIR**—I invite you to make some introductory remarks but, given the level of interest in questions and also the lateness of starting—for which I am sorry—could that be shorter rather than longer? Then we will get to questions.

**Ms Allen**—Certainly. I would like to quickly comment on what I came in on at the end about resources and class sizes. I am qualified to speak about the effect class size has, and it has a huge input into the status of teachers and their professionalism and how they feel about their work. If you had to do one thing, it would be to reduce class sizes: that would make all the difference in the world.

That aside, I believe that one of the issues you wanted to talk about was the feminisation of teaching, and it would be useful to come to a shared understanding of what this term means at the beginning. If you are looking purely at numbers, it is clear that there are more women than men in teaching. From this fact, however, assumptions are being made about the implications this has on education: namely, it is used to paint a negative picture of the influence of women and the influence that we are supposed to be having on the direction that education is taking.

There are some points that need to be drawn out of the idea that teaching is becoming feminised. Firstly, we must remember that the education system, like all institutions, was set up by men, by and large, to benefit boys and men. Because they occupied the positions of power, they decided what would be taught, how it would be taught, to whom it would be taught, and who would teach it. These values are ingrained in our system, so much so that school structures and what we value in curricula basically have not changed over the past hundred years. And so women have not had much input into the way that school is set up, or what knowledge is passed on to the next generation.

Secondly, we need to ask where women are positioned in the teaching profession. It is still abundantly clear that, even though progress has been made, women do not hold

leadership positions in proportion to their numbers in the teaching force. Men predominate in all promotional areas, whether it be in the education department as education ministers or as advisers, union leaders, principals or others in executive positions. There are more women in teaching, but the women clearly predominate in the lower levels, if you are talking in hierarchal terms. Leadership positions equate to decision making, therefore it is appropriate to say that decisions about education are still made by a majority of men.

In no way is this a criticism of this committee and its task, but it would be very interesting to do a gender analysis of the witnesses to this inquiry: not only of the basic numbers of how many women and how many men but also of what positions they hold. I am sure not every day has been like today but, in light of this discussion, it was interesting to note that I am the only woman listed, and the only level 1 classroom teacher.

Thirdly, we need to take a look historically at the teaching profession. Interestingly, the history of education would show that teaching has always been female dominated—that is, if you simply counted the number of teachers in the classroom. But, as we would expect, there has always been a gender division of labour: men in the positions of power and women in the nurturing role of teacher, particularly in the area of early childhood.

Historically, women have been actively kept out of leadership positions through laws regarding marital status, promotions based on length of unbroken service, as well as strict social mores as to a woman's position. The social construction of masculinity and femininity has ensured a clear division of labour, based on what is seen as appropriate for men to do and as appropriate for women to do. For example, men teach older students: the subjects they teach are things such as maths, science and physical education; whereas women teach younger children and the humanities.

If I may read a quote from a 1938 report of the Royal Commission on Youth Unemployment and Apprenticeship Scheme, it articulates a problem with getting men into teaching:

Women are in the main employed in avocations to which they are particularly adapted. In some industries . . . a lighter touch is required, or a more deft operation of some machine is necessary and it will be found that for the most part women predominate . . . I may cite the case of machinists working on adding and computing machines. This type of work is of a tedious and monotonous nature and is essentially sedentary, and it was found that men would not stick to the uninteresting and, for a while, mechanical process of working a machine, especially as that line of work offers little or no prospect of advancement . . . The fact is that males generally show no inclination to take up these classes of work. In the teaching profession, too, this is the case. The department has difficulty in obtaining men teachers. Yet here is a profession in which discrimination in wages for a similar class of work is actively praised to the extent that on an average the male receives approximately one-fourth more than the female.

**CHAIR**—What year was that?

**Ms Allen**—1938.

**CHAIR**—It was said by whom?

**Ms Allen**—It is in the report of the Royal Commission on Youth Unemployment and Apprenticeship Scheme. This shows many things, but of interest to us is the fact it highlights that it is not a recent phenomenon to have a lack of men in teaching positions, and that paying them more than women certainly does not help.

In summary, I would urge caution when using the term ‘feminisation’ of teaching, as it has always been a feminised industry—according to the numbers of women involved in it, albeit in the lower levels. If the term is being used to describe education as being overly influenced by females, then this is a highly questionable claim. What we need to do is ensure that women are not inadvertently put down and that the work they do is not undermined through a debate on the so-called ‘feminisation’ of teaching, as the implication in many of the debates is that it is undesirable to have so many women involved in teaching. The status of teachers should not be determined by the gender of its teachers.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. You said to us that, when teaching started, it was organised by men to teach boys. When did women come into the profession? The late 19th century, or the early 20th century? Or can you not tell us?

**Ms Allen**—If we are talking about Australia, we would be looking at our convict history and the first female who set up a school, right back in the 1790s. But teachers who are women have been there mainly to educate girls and to educate children who are younger, and they have not been in the positions of influence to decide on how schooling should be structured.

**CHAIR**—Yes. They did not really get into universities until the late 19th century, did they?

**Ms Allen**—No. And you can certainly trace the different stages of history of how teaching has been constructed to be attractive to women, that it does not impinge on the social construction of femininity, so that it is appropriate for females to be involved. As you go through history, you will see that in war times—when there is a space, where there are no men who will take up the job—women were used as a stopgap measure to be put into those positions.

**CHAIR**—Notwithstanding the fact that all that you say is true, that we should be resisting the temptation to use the word ‘feminisation’ of the profession as it may indeed be then associated with putting down, or have negative connotations towards, the profession, do you think—this is maybe not a fair question—it is a good idea to try to increase the number of men in the teaching profession?

**Ms Allen**—The first question you would have to ask when asked that question is: why? What would be the purpose of increasing the number of men? What would the aim be of that?

**CHAIR**—I suppose I could ask you then: do you think it would be satisfactory to have the teaching profession 100 per cent female?

**Ms Allen**—It is not a reflection of all the experience of people in our society; you want to get a range of people's experiences. I think what we desperately need are teachers who are good at their job, whether they are male or female. Having a male in teaching—what will that do? That is what we have to ask.

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—One of the issues that has been consistently raised in this context of looking at the feminisation of the industry, or the use of that term to describe the overwhelming predominance of women teachers in the industry today, is the concern about the role models that teachers provide for children in the school environment, given that children spend a fair bit of their day with their teacher, or teachers, and therefore learn not just the three Rs but a wider range of things from the teachers or from the schooling environment.

There is a real concern about the balance between genders in the teaching profession and, in particular, the lack of males at the primary school level, the very early development stages of children. The concerns about that go to issues such as paedophilia and a reluctance of males not to get into that area. There was evidence given, I think, by some student teachers, or graduate teachers, in South Australia, saying that they deliberately had steered away from the area because of those sorts of issues which do not go to the question of their ability or skills to teach the children. They go more to the societal pressures that might be on them in that environment and the difficulty of having to deal with those societal pressures.

It is in that context the question is raised about feminisation of the teaching profession, not in the context of whether or not women have the skills to teach. They obviously have, and they obviously do a very good job in the areas they are in, but it is much more in the context of the role model that they provide for children in the classroom environment and what is perceived as being an imbalance that is projected, particularly at the primary school level, by the predominance of women teachers.

**Ms Allen**—I would have to come back with a question again. What would the males be role modelling? What are they role modelling that women cannot role model, and having—

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—How males behave in certain circumstances—in the same way males cannot role model how females would behave in certain circumstances.

**Ms Allen**—In schools we are teaching children to be ethical human beings; women and men can do that. There is nothing magical about their gender that means that they have something that women do not, and that they can teach boys or girls a certain way of being. Having males in teaching does not necessarily ensure that we are teaching our boys to be the sorts of boys that we want them to be. We have to know what the aim of having men in teaching is and then ask how we will achieve that. Because we have men in teaching does not ensure that boys will come out a certain way. I would also question how much of an influence a male teacher could have on a child's life, considering there are role models throughout our society for children and that most of them are male. It seems like just another area where boys need to have another male in their lives. They see them most of the time in society, so what is it that that male teacher would be doing?

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—It is not so much what specifically the male teacher would be doing; it is being in the environment where there is a male and observing how that male reacts in given sets of circumstances.

**Ms Allen**—Which could be negative.

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—For example, with my own upbringing. I grew up in a family dominated by women. I had three sisters and a mother, and I was dominated by them. I know from my own experience that one particular school teacher I had, who was a male, had a very strong influence on my thinking on a whole range of issues. I do not know whether that was because he was a good schoolteacher or because he was a male. I tend to think—

**Ms Allen**—There are a few assumptions there—that if you do not have a male role model you will not know how to be a man—

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—No, I am not suggesting that at all, because there are male role models outside the school environment. I am saying that children spend a fair bit of their day in the school environment, in a learning environment, and presumably the school environment has a fair influence on not only what they learn in terms of the three R's but the way they perceive how people react in given sets of circumstances.

**Ms Allen**—There is certainly no assurance that the male teacher would be a positive role model. Research has shown there is no correlation between how boys take up being male and the role models they see around them. In fact, the new way of thinking or the way thinking has developed has gone past the sex role socialisation theory. On their own, role models do nothing. That is one of the shifts that we need to make in our thinking. It is operating at a level of access and participation—that, if you have women in a certain role or men in a certain role, you will bring about changes because they are in that role.

We can see now that clearly that is not the case, that it is not enough just to have women in politics; it certainly does not assure us that our politicians will do what is right by women. It is the same with teaching. If you have men in teaching, it does not ensure that they will be role modelling positive behaviours for boys and girls to see.

On its own, role modelling is not effective. You need to work at three levels. There is a French feminist, Julia Kristiva, who works on those three levels, and a lot of our gender equity policy throughout the country now is based on those levels. There is access and participation, which is having the ability to join in all activities, to have boys and girls involved in things and to have male and female teachers involved in things.

The second level is celebrating and valuing what is female and what is male, assuming there is a difference, because here we are talking very definitely in binaries. We are saying that there are men who are male and women who are female and that they display two different ways of behaving and that there is no flowthrough, that you are either masculine or you are feminine, that you do not have behaviours on a continuum.

The third level that needs to be looked at is the critical analysis. It is not enough just to have men who are teachers; they need to look at their behaviours and to address the issues of power. So there are three levels to work on, and role modelling is just working on one of those levels.

**CHAIR**—I should have thought, Ms Allen, that you have just made a very good case for why we should have men and women teachers.

**Ms Allen**—I do not think I have ever said we should not have male teachers.

**CHAIR**—No, this is not a question of your ever having said anything, but what you have just spelt out there is probably a very good reason for why we should try to have qualified people of both genders available to our children at most ages.

**Ms Allen**—But it is certainly not enough just to say, ‘We need male teachers.’ We need to ask what difference is it making to have male teachers. If we had male teachers who were perpetrating violence against children, then what are we teaching our children? What do we want by having males in teaching, and how do we get what we want?

**CHAIR**—I think we should presume that, when we are canvassing for teachers, we are presuming that none of those teachers will violate our children, that one of the marks of quality teachers is that they would be respecting the students and not putting those students under threat. I take your point. It has been raised by a lot of witnesses that one of the reasons there may not be male teachers is that there were some negatives in the past about male teachers, if not at the present. That is not a presumption that we should start off with. If we are wanting men or women to come into the profession, there should not be the idea that women will damage gentlemen or boy students because they will not be

strong enough. I think that we should presume that in canvassing for teachers from both genders, we are canvassing for capable, competent, qualified people who would have a passion about teaching, which is probably not too different from what you were saying at the start.

I think that you have done this committee a great benefit because you have actually confronted us with the question of how we balance the arguments for a better gender mix in the profession against not putting women down. It has been the history of some of us for a long time. Could you briefly say some more about that? For example, what sorts of things will assist women in their professional development? You have made the case that if you look at the profession, there are lots of women there, but when you look at the senior positions, or the managerial positions, they tend to be much more dominated by men. Would you see the profession assisted by women getting into those more senior positions? And just for your comfort, one of the AEU witnesses before the committee was a woman.

**Ms Allen**—Yes, I know Fiona.

**CHAIR**—If you know anything about the Teachers Union, you will know that there are a fair representation of not only good but excellent women in that part of the teaching profession and probably through it all.

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—Dominant—

**CHAIR**—I would never say such a word about that. Women are just equal, never dominant. Do you have a sense that I have just asked you a question, or is it—

**Ms Allen**—I have got a sense that you said a lot of things.

**CHAIR**—Sorry. Could you comment about any of that? You said before that you were concerned that we do not, in using the words ‘feminisation of teaching’, put women down.

**Ms Allen**—One of the arguments at the moment about how it is used negatively is that it is said that boys are being alienated from schooling as a result of the feminisation of teaching which, as I hope I have explained, is not a new phenomenon. It is something that has always been there. Again, it is going back to blaming women for the problems that are occurring in society without looking deeper at why, perhaps, boys are being alienated from schooling. Whenever the argument comes up, as a woman you feel inadequate: you are not doing the right thing; your approach is wrong, and men could do it better than you could do it. That is certainly not the case. But the argument, especially from parents, is that boys need a strong hand, that women cannot cope with that, and that men would be far more proficient.

**CHAIR**—Is there any truth in that, Ms Allen? A number of witnesses have pointed that out to us, too, that particularly as boys get to be physically stronger—

**Senator GEORGE CAMPBELL**—Young men.

**CHAIR**—I was about to say young men, Senator, except that we were also told about teachers who cannot cope with four-year-olds. I am a bit worried about any male or female adult who cannot really cope with a four-year-old. Certainly, we have had it put to us by witnesses that as some children display enormous violence at school, and boys more so than girls—anyhow, the boys are stronger on the whole—that this creates a terrible challenge for teachers.

**Ms Allen**—But having men there will not change that. If children are controlled because there is a man present, what is that saying? That is not saying they are controlling their behaviours because they know that what they are doing is wrong. It is saying that they know that perhaps they cannot challenge a man because he is physically stronger and they are operating within a patriarchy. If you want to bring about change, you need to change children wanting to be violent towards men or women. It does not help me that someone wants to hurt me but they will not do it if there is a man standing next to me. That is what the argument is saying: if men are in teaching, there will not be as much violence. It is not changing the fact that children are wanting to act out violence. It is just that they know that in certain situations they cannot act it out. Again, there is nothing at that level of critical analysis. They are not doing anything to challenge those violent behaviours.

**CHAIR**—Those points are very well put. The problem is that that is happening today—the children are being very disruptive with that sort of behaviour. Parents ask, ‘What can be done so that my child gets an adequate education? I am concerned that that kind of disruptive behaviour by a child in the primary or the secondary school means that the rest of our kids don’t get a fair go.’ I am just paraphrasing what parents say.

**Ms Allen**—Teachers are hugely concerned about that. It is the sort of thing you get really upset about because you know you have given all your time and attention to maybe one or two children—perhaps three or four, depending on your class. Normally they are boys. It always seems unfair that the other children are missing out. It is not a case of looking just at the schools. It is a much broader issue of violence in our society—how dominant masculinity is constructed and what is accepted. I would also say that many of the children who display these behaviours come from families where there is violence at home. There is not a lot we can do about that. Teachers always feel as though they have their hands tied behind their backs because you know what the situation is at home and you cannot do anything about it.

**Senator ALLISON**—Another thing that is put to us on occasion is that the reason we need a better balance of male and female teachers is that in many homes now children

are growing up without a male figure. Do you feel strongly about that perspective too? I understand what you are saying about discipline questions—as a teacher myself, I would argue that women are no more or less able to cope with those issues. Do you not see that there is an argument for another stable figure—a role model—in a child's life that is not otherwise there in a home background?

**Ms Allen**—Again, what are they role modelling? The research does not support the idea that role models make a big difference in a person's life. It is much more complex than that. We want to teach children to be ethical human beings. I get that phrase from a man called Christopher Maclean who talks a lot about boys and men. We do not want to teach them how to be men or how to be women but how to be ethical human beings. Men and women are capable of doing that. Society is full of male role models that you can pick and choose from. There are not the same role models for girls. Again, it is the type of modelling that we are doing for children. What is it that we are modelling? What is it that men can model that women cannot?

**Senator ALLISON**—Can I push that a bit further and suggest to you that a role model like a football player or somebody else on television is one thing—boys, and girls for that matter, certainly do imitate behaviour and so on—but isn't there an argument that the personal contact that a teacher has with a child in their classroom is a lot more intimate, direct and more like a father or mother relationship than almost any other person in that child's life—apart from other family connections?

**Ms Allen**—Possibly. It depends again on the teacher involved. Many men are not available in that way for the children in their class. Only a special teacher can develop that sort of relationship with a child. Perhaps not all men would be there in that way for children. Having a man there does not ensure that you are getting that sort of role modelling and that sort relationship for a child. Certainly if a child does not have a father in their life and they are in a class with a teacher who is not warm and does not do the sorts of things I am assuming we are wanting them to do then that will not impact positively on them.

I think it is not enough just to have a male teacher. When you look at all the influences in a child's life outside of school, you would have to argue that a teacher does not have a huge impact on children's lives. There are other people around them and peer influences that go towards constructing the sort of person they desire to be. If we are looking at the male teacher as developing a relationship between a boy and a man that is a bit nurturing and softer and shows them that other way of being that is possible for men, that might be highly undesirable because that is not the dominant form of masculinity that is popular at the moment.

**CHAIR**—We have pretty much come to an end of our time, Ms Allen. I have to say you have stirred all our brains. It is very useful indeed for us to be provoked to think even further about questions like the feminisation of the profession. Certainly a number of

people have raised that with us as though it were a negative and we should be looking further for a better balance within our classrooms to reflect, perhaps, more what is going on in society. It is very interesting indeed. I think the committee is considerably assisted and somewhat challenged by some of the things that you have had to say. I wish we had more time to push the ideas around.

As a last question before you leave and we move to the next witness, you seem to be suggesting that we could get men who were in all sorts of ways not necessarily the perfect male. I would hope if we are recruiting men into schools that we would be getting a whole variety of men, just as I hope we get a whole variety of women. There is some whispered evidence that not all teachers in the classroom are warm, motherly and kindly, at least not all the time. It is certainly true, it seems to me, that one of the impacts of the women's movement has been a significant change in how, at least, some men now see themselves, particularly vis-a-vis women and maybe vis-a-vis children—that is, you do not lose your manhood if you cuddle a child. There are considerable changes going on in our society and maybe it would be a better thing, rather than a worse thing, if these were reflected with gender divisions amongst teachers.

**Ms Allen**—Again, only if you could be sure that you are getting the sort of person who would be able to reflect that.

**CHAIR**—We have spent a lot of time talking about what I think is terribly interesting. We have not really gone into the importance, although I think we have by implication, of how these words may be a very negative thing for the teaching status. The profession is open to all sorts of subtle and less subtle attacks. One of those is to say, 'Well, the teaching profession is on the slide, because it is now full of women. It is feminised.' For a committee like ours that is looking at writing a report on the status of teachers that certainly has been an issue that has come up on a number of occasions. I think we are assisted in our deliberations by your coming today and your submission. Thank you very much indeed.

**Ms Allen**—Thank you.

[12.28 p.m.]

**MORGAN, Dr Ian George, President, Australian Council of State School Organisations, c/- Hughes Primary School, Hughes, Australian Capital Territory**

**CHAIR**—Dr Morgan, welcome. The committee prefers that evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. I point out, however, that evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate as has happened of recent years. The committee has before it a document which is numbered 195. Is there any other material you would care to table at this stage?

**Dr Morgan**—No, not at this stage.

**CHAIR**—If you would like to make some brief remarks, please do so and then we will ask questions.

**Dr Morgan**—Certainly. The basis of our submission is that we believe there is a significant problem with the status of teachers in Australia today. It is a problem which is already leading to recruitment problems and it is likely to lead to more significant recruitment problems in the future.

The problem essentially revolves around two issues. One is teachers' perceptions of the status given to them by society. I stress that teacher perception of their accorded status is quite distinct from teacher perceptions of the importance of their role, and we certainly share with teachers a belief in the real importance of teaching as a profession. There is almost a circular link between teacher perceptions of the low status accorded to them as a profession and public perceptions of teaching as a low status profession. Essentially, you can summarise by saying that the public perception of teaching as a profession is that it is a poorly paid profession and that it is a highly stressed profession.

I will deal just very briefly with a few issues that contribute both to teacher and to public perceptions. There are a set of very material issues such as the level of teachers' salaries and the size of classes that teachers are having to deal with, particularly when dealing with those large classes is compounded by the increasing incidence of behavioural problems that schools are having to deal with. Teachers are having to deal with an increased set of demands while resources remain essentially fixed and, effectively, are decreasing because of the increasing costs that schools bear.

Teachers are effectively having to carry an increasing curriculum load. This has led one of the current ministers, Dr Kemp, to argue that we should narrow the curriculum in order to achieve certain literacy goals. But at the same time, in the period since I have been president of ACSSO, which is only six weeks, I have heard two government

spokesmen ask for additional things to be inserted into the school curriculum—an emphasis on drug education, which comes from the highest level, and an emphasis on road safety. So schools are under pressure to expand the curriculum while having fixed resources and fixed numbers of teachers.

Schools and teachers are also under massive pressure to come to grips with information technology. They do not have the resources to deal with this sort of technology and they do not have the professional development and training to deal with that technology.

Finally, and very currently, schools are being asked through the current literacy debate to do something that they have never been asked to do before and never achieved before, which is to provide good literacy outcomes for all students.

That is actually a good link on to some less material issues, issues of perception. It is unfortunate that in much of the debate around education at the moment, the general perception that teachers are to blame for failings in the schools is one that is increasingly evident. Current literacy standards are described as scandalous although when you look at the data, current literacy standards are better than they have ever been before.

We have had comments on faddish teaching methods, as I said, narrowing the curriculum. These are comments which tend to undermine confidence in the professional expertise of teachers and it has certainly led to severe morale problems within the ranks of teachers. Since I have been speaking on these issues on behalf of ACSSO, I have been surprised at the number of teachers who have sought me out to say, 'Finally, somebody is saying something good about the teaching profession, other than the teachers' union.'

**CHAIR**—Dr Morgan, I must interrupt. The Senate commands our presence for a division.

### **Short adjournment**

**CHAIR**—The committee will proceed. We thank you for your tolerance, particularly the witness, but also everybody else involved. You had just finished giving us your contribution; are you ready for questions?

**Dr Morgan**—No, I have a couple more things to say. I wanted to conclude by saying that we believe that the perception that teachers have low status is already leading to recruitment problems. That is already evident in specialist areas, where there is a shortage of teachers, and we heard from the previous witness about issues related to gender balance amongst teachers. We do think these are issues that ought to be taken seriously. There is also an issue about the problem of the TER scores of applicants for the teaching profession. We certainly do not believe that a high TER score necessarily means a good teacher. There are many other factors that come into being a good teacher. But we certainly think very low TER scores will pose a problem.

There is, then, a crisis already in the supply of good teachers and we believe this is likely to become more of a problem, perhaps more general a problem, as the teaching work force ages. So what do we do about the problem? We think there are two different sets of things that can be done. The first is to start dealing with some of the material issues—and that essentially means resource issues—around the resources within schools, and teacher salaries.

We also think it is time that, instead of the rather negative publicity the teaching profession has had, we ought to stress some of the achievements of schooling over the last 20 to 30 years. There have been spectacular successes in terms of retention rates within schooling and educational outcomes for girls. We also believe—and this may be somewhat controversial but very current—that the available evidence indicates that there have been spectacular successes in the area of literacy as well.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Dr Morgan. Senator Ferris, do you want to open the batting?

**Senator FERRIS**—Yes. I think you were here for some of the evidence from our previous witness and I would be interested in any comments that you might like to make as to whether your organisation has concerns about gender balance, particularly with primary school teachers. I also wonder if you could expand on a comment that you made in the first part of your introduction in relation to levels of literary skills and demands being placed on teachers.

**Dr Morgan**—First of all, to deal with gender balance, yes, ACSSO is concerned about gender balance. I agree with the previous witness that that should not be seen in any way as a criticism of the ability of women to teach, but there is a question of role modelling. The available evidence also suggests that those children, particularly boys, who provide the greatest behaviour problems within schools often come from family backgrounds which are still characterised very much by male dominance and they do not see female teachers as having the appropriate levels of authority. They would relate better to male teachers. Injecting some of that balance back into the system would be a very worth while step forward. But we certainly do not mean that in any way to indicate that women cannot teach. In relation to the question—

**Senator FERRIS**—Just to follow that up before we move on to the question of literacy, what about the child of either sex who comes from a family where there has not been a male in the family? Do you have any difficulties in relation to behaviour particularly perhaps with boys, but maybe also with girls, who do not have the opportunity to have a male role model at all within the immediate family? Would that be something else you would be interested in?

**Dr Morgan**—We would certainly be interested. I am not aware of detailed evidence on that point—there may well be some in existence. I would have to stick to the general point that there are certainly some children, and I suspect predominantly boys,

who relate better to male authority figures. To the extent that the teacher is an authority within the classroom, they may feel more comfortable and relate better to male teachers than to female teachers. Now, the question on literacy was what?

**Senator FERRIS**—I was interested in the earlier comment that you made about achieving high levels of literacy skills for everyone. I thought I heard you say that trying to achieve high levels of literacy for everyone was something that had not been achieved before?

**Dr Morgan**—That is absolutely right. That is what I said, and that is absolutely correct. I can refer you to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on adult literacy, which were published just in the week before the national school English literacy survey results were released. They show very clearly that literacy standards are much lower in older generations than they are in younger generations. You find the highest level of literacy when you look at the youngest age group, which suggests that in the past literacy development was not at nearly as high a level.

Although the data is not there to back this part of my statement up entirely, it is very likely that what has happened over the years is that, as schools have done a better job of developing literacy amongst students who have gone through the schooling system, so the literacy problems have been concentrated more among students who are characterised by the background variables that the national school English literacy survey picked up. We can run through those: low socioeconomic status, non-English speaking background and male gender. You have a core problem of literacy, and teachers are being asked to make these children become literate or to help them become literate, when nobody worried too much in the past.

**CHAIR**—Do those figures from the past take into account the large number of migrants to Australia?

**Dr Morgan**—They are not entirely corrected for the large number of migrants. But the changes are very spectacular. I would have to look at the document to get the figures absolutely correct, but, in the two lowest levels—skill level 1 and 2 of the ABS data—in the over-60 group we are looking at about 50 to 60 per cent of people who have those low literacy skills. That goes down to 10 to 20 per cent in the youngest age groups. Those changes are too big to be accounted for simply by people who have been educated outside Australia.

**CHAIR**—It probably does make a difference. I once came across some figures in the United Nations that assessed Australia has having 99 per cent literacy.

**Dr Morgan**—I would like to make a clarification there. We need to distinguish between formal illiteracy—being unable to read and unable to write—and low literacy levels. The ABS data used definitions such as ‘Would have considerable difficulty with

everyday written material such as, for example, reading and understanding the instructions on a medicine bottle.’ That is different from illiteracy of the one per cent level, which is no ability to deal with written material at all.

**CHAIR**—Dr Morgan, we have gone over time. Our next witnesses are waiting patiently, but I will persuade them to wait another seven minutes or so, so as to give you some justice. I suspect you know that we were called to a division. I would like to ask you very quickly what your view of a national or state registration of teachers is?

**Dr Morgan**—That is quite a complicated issue. Essentially it rolls in two issues. The first one is the issue of teachers as a self-regulating profession, with a self-regulating teacher registration board. That has been a longstanding issue and is something ACSSO, as a body, has a lot of sympathy for.

However, we also note that politically it is a somewhat difficult agenda. It raises all sorts of problems. And there has been an issue about teacher registration which has come out of the recent controversies about paedophilia and sexual harassment within the context of schools. To some extent, that issue of teacher registration overlaps with the issue of the free flow of information about these issues between employing authorities around Australia.

**CHAIR**—Most other registration boards cope by having a subcommittee that looks at, in the main, the registration of people according to minimum agreed and set standards. There is also a sub-plot of the registration board that might hear evidence and complaints about why a person should be dismissed for criminal or non-professional conduct.

**Dr Morgan**—When I was alluding to a politically difficult agenda, I was not alluding to those sorts of problems, which can certainly be solved, but to the fact that there is some controversy and, I think, some reluctance from some of the employing authorities to have the teachers constitute themselves as a self-regulating body.

**CHAIR**—By employing agencies, do you mean state and territory—

**Dr Morgan**—State and territory departments, yes.

**CHAIR**—And the federal department?

**Dr Morgan**—I do not think the federal department is a significant employing authority any more. There may be some different—

**CHAIR**—It may not be an employer but does it have an opinion that you know of?

**Dr Morgan**—Not that I am aware, no.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Do you believe that we could assist with the recruitment of better teachers by a media campaign advertising the virtues and benefits of the teaching profession?

**Dr Morgan**—I think that would be of help. As I said, I think there are two sets of issues that are leading to the low status accorded to teachers. One is the very material issues about the nature of teachers' work and the organisation of teachers' work, and a media campaign certainly will not deal with that. But a media campaign which deals in a different way with the status of teaching, and the importance of teachers' work, would make some contribution. As I said, it seems to my organisation that there is a lot said in the public domain that is negative about the performance of teachers and we think there are certainly things that can be, to use a term, celebrated—things such as retention rates, education of girls and literacy outcomes where there really have been significant improvements over the last 20 to 30 years.

**Senator CARR**—The representative of the Victorian government put before us a survey which they said that parents had contributed to in that very fine state of Victoria. Yours is a national body. Is Mr Keith Staples still your president.

**Dr Morgan**—No, I am president now, after the last election.

**Senator CARR**—That is good. The fact is that you do have some access to people in Victoria and I would appreciate any comments you have got to make on this survey that the Victorian government loudly trumpeted this morning.

**Dr Morgan**—I have not seen the survey.

**Senator CARR**—It comments on methodology and says that, given the circumstances in Victoria where there has been a decline in resourcing, there has been a lift in morale.

**Dr Morgan**—Without seeing the survey, it is very difficult for me to comment. For the information of the committee, I could find out from our affiliated bodies in Victoria whether they, in any way, have been involved in the survey that was carried out.

**Senator CARR**—Yes, and any comments they have got on the methodology that has been employed.

**Dr Morgan**—We, I think, as an organisation, would be happy to have a look at the survey and give you some written comments.

**Senator CARR**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—I think the other thing you said that the earlier witness might have been

interested to hear—and we would have been interested in him hearing it—was about resources and that where those resources are provided does make a difference to the outcome of teaching. Is that what you were saying?

**Dr Morgan**—There is absolutely no doubt about that. It is equally true to say that providing resources does not of itself solve the problem. The resources have to be appropriately directed and appropriately used, and that is quite clear.

**Senator CARR**—That will be a question we will take up with the officers from DEETYA.

**Dr Morgan**—But there is little doubt that anyone who sets foot in a school, whatever analysis of the figures may show, knows how strapped for essential teaching materials schools really are. Any parent who has been in a school knows that. Putting more resources into schools is going to give teachers the opportunity to do a better job.

**CHAIR**—Should we do that by more teachers aides? Does your organisation have a view of at least two levels in a school of core teachers, highly qualified and able, and teachers aides qualified to a different level, if at all, to do the backup and support work as apart from administration and so on?

**Dr Morgan**—Our organisation has been traditionally rather sceptical about two levels of teachers and teachers aides, not from a matter of principle but because we think that opens up a window of opportunity to replacing qualified teachers with essentially unqualified people. With appropriate controls and appropriate protection so that you maintain the necessary levels of qualified teachers, we would see no problem with additional support being provided to teachers in the classroom through teachers aides. But we would stress that one part of our policy has argued for a long period that we certainly need to do something significant about class sizes in the early primary years to assist with that early development of literacy and numeracy which is regarded as so important.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Dr Morgan. Your words have been interrupted and brief, but very beneficial. Thank you very much for your submission. If there is anything further you want to ask us, please feel free to contact us. I presume that, if there is anything further that we would like to ask you, we should be able to contact you.

**Dr Morgan**—Certainly, and we will provide you with some written comments on this survey from Victoria.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed.

**Dr Morgan**—Thank you.

[1.01 p.m.]

**DANIELS, Mr William Laurence, First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 16 Mort Street, Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory 2600**

**HART, Mr Denis John, Director, Occupational and Skills Analysis Section, Skills Analysis and Research Branch, Analysis and Evaluation Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, L1, 12 Mort Street, Civic, Australian Capital Territory 2601**

**JOHNSTON, Ms Mary Christine, Assistant Secretary, Quality Schooling Branch, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 16 Mort Street, Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory 2601**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. Evidence taken in camera may subsequently be made public by order of the Senate, as has happened in recent years. The committee has before it document 276. Is there any other material you would care to table at this stage?

**Mr Daniels**—No, Senator.

**CHAIR**—If you would like to make some introductory remarks, the committee will then ask you questions.

**Mr Daniels**—Thank you. I thought it might be useful if I very briefly outlined the Commonwealth's role vis-a-vis the role of the states, the territories and the non-government systems in schooling in Australia. As most members of the committee will know, the Commonwealth has been involved since the early 1960s in funding in schooling. It was not until the early 1970s that there was a very substantial input by the Commonwealth by way of general recurrent and capital grants and other specific purpose programs.

We are now at a point where Commonwealth outlays amount to around \$3.7 billion a year. About \$2 billion goes by way of general recurrent grants to the non-government sector and is distributed on a relative needs basis. About \$1.4 billion is paid directly to the states and territories on a per capita basis by way of general recurrent grants. There is about \$200 million per year paid to the states and territories for capital purposes.

In addition to the general recurrent and capital programs, there are six other heads of specific program expenditure by the Commonwealth. One comes under the broad heading of literacy; one under 'school to work'; one quality outcomes; one languages;

special learning needs; and then there is a raft of indigenous education programs which vary from payments direct to individuals to payments direct to states and territories for recurrent purposes to assist indigenous students. Overall, the Commonwealth contribution amounts to about 12 per cent of the total cost of running government schools in Australia and about 38 per cent of the cost of non-government schools. I thought putting that in context may be useful at this stage.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Daniels, we have had long discussions over what is the Commonwealth's contribution to schooling in this country. I notice that Mr Evans is not with you today but he has produced figures for this committee in the past that have said that, if you include FAGs, Commonwealth contributions could be as high as 47 per cent. I take the department still stands by that proposition?

**Mr Daniels**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—But the general thrust of your submission is, basically, 'We provide the money. We want nothing to do with the system.' How would you respond to such a proposition?

**Mr Daniels**—That was not the intention of the submission. The intention of the submission was to try to outline the factors which we thought impinged on the issues of the status of teachers and then to emphasise, in particular, the specific issues of supply and demand. There is significant analysis in the paper on those particular issues. In terms of the Commonwealth's responsibilities for implementation of change or of addressing issues, the Commonwealth does it, or attempts to do it, in association with the employers—that is, with the state and territory governments and with the employers in the non-government sector.

**Senator CARR**—The point of your submission is that you are saying, 'Really, the states are responsible for the management of the education systems in this country, not the Commonwealth.' Would that be a fair categorisation?

**Mr Daniels**—The states are certainly responsible for the provision of schooling services.

**Senator CARR**—Yes. Doesn't that argument then flow through to the effect that, if there is a problem, really it is a state problem; it is not a national problem?

**Mr Daniels**—That is not necessarily the case. If you take the case of literacy, for example, the paper clearly outlines that, from the Commonwealth's perspective, literacy and numeracy are national priority issues and sets out ways in which the Commonwealth is working with state and territory ministers and education departments and the non-government sector to address the goals that state and territory ministers and the Commonwealth have signed up to.

**Senator CARR**—I will come back to the question of literacy. I think that is an important one. Since you have raised it, Mr Daniels, it will provide us with an opportunity to explore what the Commonwealth is seeking to achieve at MCEETYA meeting on 11 December and which states are likely to sign off and which states are not. I am sure you will enjoy giving us the benefit of the Commonwealth's experience in that. What do you think is the average age of the Australian teacher?

**Ms Johnston**—We do not have any definitive evidence of the average age of teachers. I believe in the 1991 census it was 38. I would imagine that there has been a small increase, or some increase, since then.

**Senator CARR**—The committee has received evidence that the average age of teachers is increasing one year every 10 months. While it varies from state to state, it is in the mid-40s. About 47 seems to be a common figure that is used. The average age of Australian teachers is around 47. If that is the case, is it your expectation that Australia is facing a shortage of teachers in the foreseeable future?

**Mr Hart**—On the question about age of teachers, in the submission one of the tables that we presented looked at providing an age profile as opposed to an actual average age. It is interesting that the age in which teachers—

**Senator CARR**—That is on page 28.

**Mr Hart**—It is interesting that the age group in which teachers are most represented or, if you like, overrepresented relative to other professionals is actually 35 to 44 years. Although the age profile for teachers is certainly older than other professions, it is particularly in that 35- to 44-year age group. We would expect that, when the census data gets released late this year or early next year, classified by occupation, we would be able to give an update and a fairly accurate picture on what is happening as far as the average age of teachers is concerned.

I should also mention that, as part of some ongoing work that we are now doing with the states, we will be able to update these figures from information provided by state education authorities.

**Senator CARR**—What we have got here, according to your submission, running through pages 28, 29 and 31, is a basic proposition that says that you think that essentially there is no pending problem, because the states tell you there is no pending problem. Yet if you look at the data and you look at the material presented by Barbara Preston, there seems to be a view accepted by the Australian Council of Deans of Education that, in fact, this country does have a problem and that it is already emerging in regard to teacher shortages right across the north of Australia—that seems to be the pattern. This has been already identified in a range of specialised areas, in English, maths and science and various other highly skilled areas. What does the department say about the prospect of an

impending shortage of teachers in the period shortly after the turn of the century?

**Mr Hart**—We do ongoing monitoring as part of my section's role, in conjunction with Labour Economics Offices, of shortages of occupations, including teachers. Our main focus has been on secondary teachers because that appears to be where the shortages are currently restricted to. Certainly, there are shortages in some parts of Australia, particularly in some rural areas. At present though, those shortages are limited to a specialisation such as information technology, some languages—

**Senator CARR**—Would you agree that there is a shortage of English teachers?

**Mr Hart**—No, our intelligence does not indicate a shortage of English teachers. It indicates a shortage of teachers of some languages other than English. We have people who talk directly to education authorities and others that are trying to recruit. At this stage, we do not have a shortage of English teachers.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Hart, evidence put to this committee by state departmental officials would contradict the evidence that you have just given. How do you respond to that?

**Mr Hart**—The teaching labour market is obviously a very regulated one. It is one in which we have got access to certain information and we have done comprehensive work on looking at teachers—the supply and demand—that is, for secondary teachers. That is the case except maybe in some rural areas where there are shortages that do not apply across states. We are not aware of any particular shortages of English teachers.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Hart, that is evidence that you say is on the current circumstance.

**Mr Hart**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—I must be clear about this, so that I have not misunderstood you. What Preston and the deans of education are saying is that, because it takes four years to train a teacher and perhaps five—depending on the standards from state to state—and given the rapidly ageing nature of the Australian teaching service, particularly in the public sector, this country is in fact facing a major crisis. What do you say to that proposition?

**Mr Hart**—We have obviously seen the deans' work and looked at that information. On the age profile of teachers, there are aspects about the current supply and demand for teachers which are matters of concern. In some cases, you are approaching the age group where teachers may take early retirement.

We have provided in the submission some comparisons as to why we have slightly

different views to the deans. There are two or three critical aspects to that. Firstly, at present there is a substantial pool of teachers who are not working in the teaching profession. We have particularly good evidence in New South Wales that there are over 20,000 teachers who are not currently working in the profession. We are not assuming that all of those 20,000-plus people could be joined into the teaching profession as the demand for teachers picked up, but certainly there are substantial pools that have come about as a result of oversupply in recent years. Similar situations apply in other states, although to a lesser extent.

There is difficulty in working through what the ageing of the teaching work force means for the future supply of teachers. On the one hand you do have a group of teachers, a cohort, that is fairly substantial and moving into the pre-retirement and retirement age groups. On the other hand, the separation rate for teachers from the profession tends to decline as they move into their 40s. It has about the lowest separation rate of any age group. So there will be some counterbalancing factors.

We are concerned about it and there are arrangements now in place for us to be able to get more information about what is happening with teachers in terms of their separation from teaching and to get quite a lot more information about age groups. We will be monitoring this whole area very closely. Certainly, we do not feel that the shortage is as significant as the deans' report might indicate.

**CHAIR**—Mr Hart, I am very sorry to cut in but we are pressed for time and we would like to cover a few more areas.

**Senator CARR**—Questions have been raised in this committee for four years about this matter. We have been told for four years there was not a problem and now we are told some concern has been expressed by the department. At the end of the day, what you are really saying to us is that this is a state problem because all you are doing is monitoring it. What is the Commonwealth proposing to do to actually alleviate this shortage?

**Mr Daniels**—The Commonwealth has within the last couple of weeks responded to an invitation from the states and territories following a decision of the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs to set up a working group to monitor and analyse teacher supply and demand arrangements. That group is headed by the state of Victoria. It is being handled by the chief executives of the state and territory education departments. They wrote to us early in November and we responded that we would be delighted to work with them.

**CHAIR**—Does that mean that the states and territories appreciate that they do have a difficulty?

**Mr Daniels**—It means they have the council of deans' information and analysis

and presumably their own analysis of their figures on recruitment.

**CHAIR**—The answer is probably yes, isn't it? Why are you involved in it?

**Mr Daniels**—They asked the Commonwealth, because of our knowledge of the labour force, to participate and help them to develop modelling, basically.

**CHAIR**—Did you want to be there?

**Mr Daniels**—Certainly.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Daniels, the whole question that arises regarding teachers' sense of status and their morale, all the issues that relate to their industrial and professional wellbeing—class sizes, rates of pay, their relationships within the school system and levels of stress—have major policy implications, particularly on the question of demand for teachers. It comes back to this fundamental question. If there is in fact a shortage of teachers, the capacity of governments in this country to respond to those issues is directly related to the shortage of teachers. So this is a bedrock, fundamental issue. Would you agree?

**Mr Daniels**—I do not think we see it as an issue of crisis at all. We see it as one of the many issues on which we are happy to work with the states and the territories collaboratively to try to come up with an agreed process for analysing what the situation is. It is not a state of crisis at all.

**Senator CARR**—The minister has been speaking at length about the role of the Commonwealth in regard to a range of areas. I just note that there seems to be a marked departure when it comes to the issue of literacy—

**CHAIR**—Senator Carr, is this a slightly different point, because I know Senator Allison wanted to follow up on the number of teachers?

**Senator CARR**—Sure.

**Senator ALLISON**—I was rather disturbed at one of the points which you have in your submission as to the reasons why there might not be a teacher shortage. It was that the continuation of declining apparent retention rates for secondary school students would act to lessen demand. What sort of modelling have you done which shows a further decline of retention rates; and is this not something we should all be concerned about?

**Mr Hart**—That was just a comment. I should stress that the deans' work was a mathematical modelling; ours was perhaps statistically based but more qualitative. It was saying that there has been a recent trend towards declining apparent retention rates. If that were to continue, then that would obviously reduce the demand for teachers. But it only

applies to the latter part of schooling. It certainly was not a major factor in our conclusions about future shortages.

**Senator ALLISON**—But I must ask you to quantify it to some degree, given that this is a point that you make in support of the fact that there is not going to be a shortage of teachers. I think it is reasonable to ask you to quantify that and to tell the committee to what degree it is an issue.

**Mr Hart**—In looking at comparing the work by the deans and our work, the main differences in terms of the extent of any future shortages of teachers do not relate to enrolment projections. There is really only a slight difference between the deans' and our own projections. It has also got to do with this question of the pools of unemployed teachers and the extent to which they could be drawn on. It also relates to separation rates. Certainly, the apparent retention rates would only impact on the enrolment figures, and the differences between the deans' projections and ours on enrolments are fairly minor, so really it has a very small effect on any conclusion.

I should stress that we do work on skill shortages across all occupations. At the moment there is only a limited number of occupations for which there are shortages, and secondary teachers in some specialisations are part of a relatively small list.

**Senator ALLISON**—You say that you expect a sizeable pool of teachers who have been made redundant or retrenched to return to the work force. What sort of requirements would there be on those teachers who perhaps have been out of the work force for some time? Does the Commonwealth accept that there might be a need for retraining or for some sort of updating of skills? What, in your discussions with the states, would be an acceptable model of somebody returning to teaching?

**Mr Hart**—On the pool of unemployed teachers, I should actually say it is teachers who are not currently working in the teaching profession. Some would be unemployed; many would be working in other occupations. The teaching labour market has obviously moved through a transition. During the early part of the 1990s there were excess teachers. There were not enough jobs for people coming out of the universities so there was a build-up of teachers not working in their profession, not able to get a teaching job. That still applies in some states.

**Senator ALLISON**—Can I ask this question more directly: how many teachers on your calculations—and you must have done some sort of mathematical figuring—will need to come back into the teaching profession in order to enable your prediction to be accurate? What are we depending on?

**Mr Hart**—We have only stated that there is a substantial pool. In New South Wales it is over 20,000. We do not assume that all of those people could come back into the teaching profession, although many would need only brief updating of their training.

We have not done a mathematical analysis; we have not said, ‘There are 20,000 teachers here.’ And we do not have figures for some of the other states on teachers that could potentially be available. We have just said, ‘Because of the build-up over the period of excess supply of teachers there is a pool of teachers who could move into teaching.’

**CHAIR**—When we opened the matter, Mr Daniels gave us a brief run through of Commonwealth expenditure on education in the states. Presumably, as a large part of that bill is recurrent expenditure, it goes to teachers’ salaries. Presumably you, the Commonwealth, have a fair handle on what numbers of teachers are out there and what kind of teacher demand is out there. Is that not true, Mr Daniels? Don’t tell me you believe what the states tell you.

**Mr Daniels**—Senator, it depends what you mean by ‘large’. The Commonwealth contribution to general recurrent funding for government schools is somewhere between 10 and 12 per cent, so the Commonwealth has an interest. Whether it is a large interest is in the eye of the beholder.

**CHAIR**—The premiers and education ministers come cap in hand for their FAGs grants for the same sort of effect. Does the department know what number of teachers around the country you are paying recurrent expenditure on? Do you have a concern about the up and down movement in these numbers of teachers?

**Mr Daniels**—We certainly know how many teachers there are and we do not try to attribute Commonwealth dollars to teacher salaries. So we are certainly across the overall data on teachers.

**CHAIR**—You also have to forward each year a budget for the next four years.

**Mr Daniels**—That is correct.

**CHAIR**—From what witnesses are telling us, in four years time there could be a dramatic shift in the number of teachers in this country—what is sometimes called in shorthand a ‘significant shortage’.

**Mr Daniels**—On the basis of the analysis done to date, we would not agree with that. We have agreed to work with the state and territory chief executives to come up with a model which more accurately forecasts the likely supply and demand movement.

**Senator CARR**—Are you aware that overseas governments are recruiting in Australia?

**Mr Hart**—Yes, we are aware of that. We are not aware of the quantity of it at this stage. We are also aware that there have been suggestions that there may be an increase in demand for teachers globally. We do not have any detailed information on that. We are

moving, as we mentioned, into a situation where we are getting much more information on the whole issue. We will certainly try to factor in at least some qualitative comments about that.

**Senator CARR**—This committee is led to believe that Australian teachers are highly regarded internationally and that the services of Australian teachers are demanded by governments in Canada, United Kingdom and New Zealand. They are the three that I am aware of. Recently they have advertised in Australian newspapers for teachers. What impact do you think such campaigns will have on your expectations of a reserve army of unemployed teachers?

**Mr Daniels**—Senator, I do not think that is something we could answer at the moment, given the description we have given you of the way the issue has been analysed, to date. I have no doubt that that will be taken into account in the Victorian-led working group.

**Senator ALLISON**—You say in your submission that the growth in student numbers is likely to be concentrated in the non-government sector, which generally has lower full-time student to teacher ratios than has the government sector. What are your figures to back up that claim?

**Mr Daniels**—On page 33 in our submission, there is a table which sets out for secondary schools the full-time student to teacher staff ratio by category of school. You will note that, for government schools in 1995, it is 12.5; for Anglican, 11.7; for Catholic, 13.6; for other non-government, 11.6; and for total non-government, 12.8.

**Senator ALLISON**—We are talking about projecting into the future, are we not?

**Mr Hart**—The source of that information is the ABS publication called *Schools Australia*.

**Senator CARR**—With regard to the industrial conditions of teachers covered by the Independent Teachers Union and those covered by the AEU, the gap has closed quite dramatically. These figures are somewhat out of date, aren't they?

**Mr Hart**—These figures are up to 1995. It would be unlikely that the gap would close completely. Once again, if anything, this factor increases the demand for teachers. This would mean that, if there is such a shift and the student-teacher ratios remain low in this sector, the demand for teachers obviously will rise.

**Senator ALLISON**—Is not the growth in new non-government schools, in perhaps the smaller Anglican schools? What is your evidence to show that there are smaller student-teacher ratios in those schools?

**Mr Hart**—This is information that is actually based on an ABS publication. That is the source of this information. They are not estimates but actual figures provided in the ABS publication *Schools Australia*.

**Senator ALLISON**—Up until 1995?

**Mr Hart**—Yes.

**Senator ALLISON**—And you have used the 1995 figures, even though we have had a major shift and change in government policy on non-government school funding? You are using figures from 1995 and before to project what is likely to be the case over the next few years: is that correct?

**Mr Daniels**—We are using the best available data.

**Senator ALLISON**—What are those figures, then? Given the current projections, what will that mean in terms of actual numbers of teachers being demanded as a result of that shift?

**Mr Daniels**—For the non-government sector?

**Senator ALLISON**—You have indicated, in your submission, that these factors will tend to increase demand for secondary school teachers: by how many will that factor increase the demand?

**Mr Daniels**—I am not sure whether there is an answer to that, but I am happy to take it on notice.

**CHAIR**—Your submission indicates that you, DEETYA, have done an evaluation of the national professional development scheme in 1995. What were its findings? Have you done anything more about it? Did you provide those findings back to the states?

**Senator CARR**—Have copies been made available to the committee?

**Mr Daniels**—Taking the last question first, I have a recollection that, via the Senate estimates process, you had a copy but, even if you did, I would be happy to provide you with a copy of it.

**CHAIR**—We are a separate beast, Mr Daniels. If there were something available, we would very much appreciate having it.

**Mr Daniels**—I am happy to provide copies.

**Senator CARR**—I do not recall seeing it, Mr Daniels. I freely confess that I lose

things, but this is one document that I would be very interested in.

**Mr Daniels**—The evaluation was carried out in 1995, which seems to be a long time ago to me; hence my memory of it.

**Senator CARR**—When were the results made available?

**Mr Daniels**—I would have thought that it would have possibly been at the end of 1995 or early 1996. My understanding is that the report was generally positive about the program as it was then—bearing in mind that this was a program that lasted for three years, and that the evaluation was done during the last year of the program.

**CHAIR**—What were its findings?

**Mr Daniels**—It was generally quite positive.

**CHAIR**—Has any further work been done along these lines?

**Mr Daniels**—In terms of evaluating that program, not to my knowledge.

**CHAIR**—Or in terms of professional development?

**Mr Daniels**—Since the 1996-97 budget, professional development moneys from the Commonwealth are by and large directed through the targeted programs, all of which have an evaluation component. I am not familiar with any recent further evaluation.

**CHAIR**—Mr Daniels, is that report or evaluation available for the committee?

**Mr Daniels**—The 1995 evaluation? I will make sure that it is made available to the committee.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much; we would appreciate getting that.

**Senator CARR**—And any later evaluation? Presumably, you have now had a year of operation of the new targeted assistance for various professional development programs. What evaluation have you had?

**Mr Daniels**—I will check that. I suspect that, for most of those programs, it is still too early in the program cycle to evaluate them, but I will check and will make available to the committee any evaluation that there is.

**CHAIR**—What evaluation have you done of the National Schools Network?

**Ms Johnston**—I do not believe there has been any evaluation. It is an organisation

rather than a government program, and so a formal evaluation would not have taken place.

**CHAIR**—Did you not provide funding for this area?

**Ms Johnston**—Yes, we provided funding for the organisation.

**CHAIR**—For what organisation?

**Ms Johnston**—For the National Schools Network.

**CHAIR**—And you are happy not to evaluate the benefit you got for those dollars?

**Ms Johnston**—We evaluate programs rather than individual organisations.

**CHAIR**—So the Commonwealth government has done no evaluation of the innovative links program?

**Mr Daniels**—I am not familiar with that program.

**CHAIR**—It is one of the programs that the National Schools Network has instituted. As I am advised, they are greatly concerned that the funding is not continuing.

**Ms Johnston**—The funding for the National Schools Network was previously provided as a core grant. It is correct that the government has decided not to continue funding the National Schools Network with core funding; however, the National Schools Network is registered with us and would be welcome to submit tenders for specific projects—under the quality outcomes program, for example, and under other programs.

**Senator CARR**—But they currently do not receive Commonwealth money: is that what you are saying?

**Ms Johnston**—They are currently not in receipt of any core funding.

**Senator CARR**—What other type of funding are they in receipt of?

**Ms Johnston**—I do not believe that they are undertaking any projects at this minute.

**Senator CARR**—So they do not get any Commonwealth money at the moment?

**Ms Johnston**—Not from the programs that I am aware of.

**CHAIR**—The trouble about that is that witness after witness before this committee—people who have been involved in one way or another with those programs—

has talked about the importance and significance of them in that they have given teachers a whole different sense of their place in the educational scheme of things, I suppose. Some, in particular, where they have been associated back to education departments, have talked about being very keen and very involved in the closeness between what they were doing each day and the research data that might come out about the advancement of education or how to do it better or what pleases our children and so on. We have received nothing but good words—that does not mean to say that there were not hiccups here and there—so it seems quite amazing to me that you do not have any evaluation. Have you had any feedback, any word of mouth stuff, that says that this was good? Has the National Schools Network not wept on your doorstep?

**Mr Daniels**—Oh—

**CHAIR**—It has, Mr Daniels? Thank you for that droll laugh. Yes, it has.

**Mr Daniels**—To my knowledge, I have not spoken to any operative from the National Schools Network.

**CHAIR**—But is the stuff that I am talking about the feedback that you were getting to?

**Mr Daniels**—My expectation is that there would be a significant difference of view across the country on the value of the work done by the National Schools Network; that you would get a very different view, by and large, from the employers of teachers than you might get from education or teacher professional organisations.

**CHAIR**—Employers meaning state departments?

**Mr Daniels**—State departments and non-government employers.

**CHAIR**—That is really quite interesting. That is very counter to the examples that we have looked at very closely. When we talked to the schools—the principals, the teachers and the researchers—we got a sense that, on balance, it was a considerable plus. It depends who we mean by ‘employers’, but if we are talking about school based funding and the local schools having some say in those sorts of programs being in their schools—I know that is not the education department or, in the case of the private schools, the employment agency; a lot of private schools actually do fairly much their own employing; they are their own employers—they gave us evidence that was very much in support. If you do not have a comprehensive report on that area, I urge you to certainly try to find out because it would give you some encouragement. It would also add to the depression that occurs when funding that gets things up and running is cut back.

The next point I wanted to talk to you about is this. One of the complaints we have received all across the country has been about the huge amount of change. A lot of that is

not Commonwealth change, but to what extent does the Commonwealth interest itself in what goes on in the states in terms of good results and bad results? Teachers tell us that they are required to jump through a new set of hoops far too often. They have changes to curriculum, they have changes to what they have to include, they have changes to pedagogy and they have changes to the books.

Which place was it where we saw that teachers had to fill out great detailed forms rating themselves? It was in Victoria, wasn't it? Teachers are exhausted not only from doing things but also from the changes. One group of witnesses showed us volumes of one inch, two inches and three inches in thickness that all had to be read—and read fairly quickly—before they could proceed with being teachers.

Is the federal department concerned about all these changes, partly because of the massive costs involved if departments go on producing all this stuff which gets everybody but the teachers excited, and then you see the teachers' status falling because they are overloaded and they are burdened with things? Just when they have begun to understand it, a new system has come in.

**Mr Daniels**—I will make a couple of comments about that. Obviously, because of the circles I move in, I am aware of the sense of frustration which a great proportion of the teaching profession experiences, particularly when there are significant curriculum changes or other changes. The government took that into account in a program sense in that one of the first acts of the current government was to reduce the number of targeted programs from about 40 to the five or six that I referred to earlier in my remarks. In part, that was an attempt to move away from whatever the Commonwealth was doing by way of putting impositions on teachers and on school systems where there were other ways of measuring outcomes and results.

In terms of school based arrangements and reporting, we work with the states through the MCEETYA mechanisms, particularly on the annual national report on schooling which, from a Commonwealth perspective, is the most significant document for reporting outcomes. Again, in working with the states on that, we have tried to simplify and to reduce the reporting requirements quite significantly over the last two years.

**CHAIR**—We have moved away from my question, Mr Daniels, and I am very sorry that you would interpret excessive behaviour at the state level as a reason for cutting Commonwealth allocations of dollars, but we do note that that was your comment. It is not quite the question I was asking. Maybe you could take that on notice and come back to me later.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Daniels, I read in the papers that the Commonwealth is thinking of preventing or cutting off money for literacy to states that do not sign up to benchmarking arrangements at the 11 December MCEETYA meetings. Are those reports accurate?

**Mr Daniels**—I am not sure which reports you are referring to.

**Senator CARR**—Over the weekend the reports in the *Melbourne Age* said that—in fact I understood the minister, Dr Kemp, had said it—if states do not agree to the benchmarking arrangements for literacy, then the Commonwealth will reconsider the allocation of Commonwealth moneys to those states. Are you familiar with those?

**Mr Daniels**—I have not read that report, but, certainly, we are working with the states through the benchmarking task force at MCEETYA to try to reach agreement.

**Senator CARR**—Is there no proposal for the Commonwealth to deprive those states that do not sign off on the Commonwealth's view of the benchmarks?

**Mr Daniels**—I have not caught up with the weekend media, but, certainly, as of last Friday—and I was dealing with the chair of the benchmarking task force—we were working through the process of trying to reach agreement on the benchmarking arrangements.

**Senator CARR**—Yes, but there is no proposal within the Commonwealth Public Service? No advice to ministers? You are not aware of any proposal that states be deprived of literacy moneys if they do not agree to the Commonwealth minister's view of those benchmarking arrangements?

**Mr Daniels**—I have not seen advice along those lines.

**Senator CARR**—You have?

**Mr Daniels**—I have not seen advice or prepared advice along those lines.

**Senator CARR**—Are you aware that Victoria does not intend to sign the benchmarks or sign off on the benchmark arrangements?

**Mr Daniels**—Only through today's media.

**Senator CARR**—You are not familiar with the letter dated 27 November from Minister Gude to your minister which states that he is not willing to approve—that is the current term—literacy benchmarks in their current state and sees it as crucial that he puts Victoria's concerns to you?

**Mr Daniels**—I saw that in today's *Age*.

**Senator CARR**—You are not familiar with the particular correspondence?

**Mr Daniels**—No.

**Senator CARR**—Are you familiar with the concerns or reservations of the chief executive officer of the Victorian Board of Studies, Professor Sam Ball? I think that ‘reservations’ would be a fair word to use in these circumstances.

**Mr Daniels**—I am.

**Senator CARR**—Is it the case that there are concerns in Victoria that despite six months of work by the curriculum corporation, these benchmarks remain ‘raw’, and ‘lack clarity and precision’.

**Mr Daniels**—I have seen a document which was produced by Professor Ball and I have also seen the response which the chair of the benchmarking task force—that is, the Director-General of Education in Queensland—provided to those claims.

**CHAIR**—Has anyone in your department prepared a response to those claims?

**Mr Daniels**—Those claims have not been made to the Commonwealth. Unless they are part of the letter, which I have not seen, the answer would be no.

**Senator CARR**—This is a letter dated 27 November. You are not familiar with that letter?

**Mr Daniels**—Apart from the fact that it was referred to in today’s media, I have not seen the letter.

**Senator CARR**—Are you aware that Victoria does not intend to sign off on these benchmarks until:

. . . the benchmarks are validated such that the meaning and interpretation is more precise and less subjective; the benchmarks are guaranteed by assessment and evaluation experts as being able to be interpreted in a consistent manner and able to be confidently used as measures of ability in literacy and numeracy; there is agreement about the protocols surrounding the use of the benchmarks data; and there is agreement about procedures for the allocation of Commonwealth literacy funding to states and territories?

**Mr Daniels**—As I say, I have not seen that letter, but all those issues are issues that are being worked through collaboratively between the Commonwealth and all the states in the context of the benchmarking task force of the ministerial council.

**Senator CARR**—A question arises about the level of agreement about the allocation of Commonwealth literacy funds. Are you telling me that now there is not agreement about the allocation of Commonwealth literacy funds?

**Mr Daniels**—The issue of benchmarks and the issue of the guidelines surrounding the literacy program are matters that are on the agenda for the ministers of schools education meeting next week. As to the process which that letter appears to refer to, there is a process in train for the Commonwealth to work with the states.

**Senator CARR**—Is it the case that there is agreement about the allocation of the literacy funds, given where we are now in the budgetary cycle? Is there agreement about that allocation of literacy funds or not?

**Mr Daniels**—The Commonwealth has issued a document to all the states and territories on the literacy guidelines for 1998 and has invited the states and territories to comment.

**CHAIR**—We have to conclude there. We have actually passed the time in which we are allowed to meet. We are fortunately assisted in this matter by it being lunchtime, so we are not breaking any rules for the next few minutes.

Mr Daniels, there is a series of questions that the committee would like to give you on notice. We do not want a thesis but a response back, if you would not mind.

**Mr Daniels**—Certainly.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. I would certainly like some more information about supply and demand issues, particularly as—as I think Senator Allison was saying—it is no longer just a question of the patterns of predicting the need for teachers that might have applied up until 1995. There have been significant changes since then, including the nature of a teacher's role, the level and skills that teachers now have to impart to students, sophisticated curricula and so on. If you could give us a response to any further data that you are taking into account in your forward planning for teacher education and assessment of teacher numbers, that would be useful.

We have had any number of witnesses tell us about the feminisation of education. I would also like you to comment on that. Is it a matter of concern to the Commonwealth government that such a disproportionate number of teachers are women, or are you concerned not about gender but only about the ability of the teachers? Does the Commonwealth have a view that we should be moving toward increasing the number of men in teaching, at both primary and secondary level? Would you see the necessity for anything like an affirmative action program to try to foster that?

Could you give us a comment about whether you think a media campaign might be the way to go—advertising the virtues of teaching and trying to persuade people other than those with low TER scores who fall into teaching to take it up as a profession and participate in it? From your submission, I note that you start off addressing our terms of reference, which are about the status of teachers, and you own a considerable interest at the Commonwealth level, so I am presuming all these questions are within the purview of

our inquiry and your responsibility.

**Mr Daniels**—Certainly, Senator.

**CHAIR**—How does the Commonwealth monitor the implementation of national curriculum guidelines and the achievements of schools against national goals? I know how fraught that is and I appreciate that we have been particularly dealing with that with literacy, but what about the other areas too?

Have you had any feedback about changed equity funding arrangements as a result of no longer operating through the disadvantaged schools program? We have certainly finished our inquiry, which I suspect you know about, called ‘Private Funding for Public Schools: Not a Level Playground.’ There is certainly great concern about differences in funding to schools and the inequity questions raised by those.

What are the Commonwealth’s expectations of the states regarding professional development of teachers? Has the Commonwealth considered the report by the Australian Council of Deans of Education on teacher education standards and curriculum? Do you have a copy of that report and, if so, would it be available? Can you say whether the Commonwealth is disposed to a teacher education national curriculum?

What is the Commonwealth’s view on national registration of teachers? Not a response that says ‘For it’, or ‘Against it’, or ‘That is interesting’. Could you comment, too, on how you would see a board constituted, and whether it should also be a place where complaints could be brought against teachers, particularly complaints of inappropriate or criminal behaviour, as apart from just lack of professional standards? Is there a role for the Commonwealth in ensuring an equitable spread of IT in Australian schools along the lines of its commitment to science labs and libraries in the 1960s and 1970s? Is DEETYA monitoring IT levels in schools? It was one of the areas our report highlighted as an area causing great inequity.

The Commonwealth is using its clout, perhaps, to ensure that the states achieve the literacy targets set by the Commonwealth—though it is interesting in the light of the Victorian education minister’s letter. What other areas would it be appropriate for the Commonwealth to set targets in and insist on their being reached?

To what extent, too, is the Commonwealth funding teacher training for vocational education and training teachers, particularly as we have got a large emphasis in getting that into schools? To what extent will the Commonwealth be assisting with the training of teachers’ appropriate skills?

I beg your pardon for it being a bit fraught this morning. The Senate is not supposed to sit on a Monday morning, but the Senate, as you probably know better than I, has a very large mind of its own and it therefore intruded on our capacity to meet with you. I do thank you very much for coming because, as I say, you addressed the terms of

reference. While very few witnesses have suggested that quality is not a matter of resources, I think that there is no doubt at all that the resourcing of our schools and the resourcing of our teacher training are matters of the greatest concern if you are talking about the professionalism and the status of the teachers.

It is also true, from all the evidence that we have been given, that if the status of teachers declines, then so does the benefit to our society, particularly in terms of prospects of better education for our children. It seems to me, as I understand it, that the Commonwealth has an interest in seeing good education happening all over the country. So, I do thank you for participating. It is particularly important that you do, and I thank you for agreeing to take those questions on notice. As I say, the committee does not require a thesis; some dot points or brief comments would be of help. If you would like to get back to us, please feel free.

**Mr Daniels**—I am happy to take those matters on notice and to make relevant comment on pretty well all of them. Can I get some idea of time lines, please?

**CHAIR**—Sooner, rather than later, because we are going to move into the writing of this report now. Would it be possible before Christmas?

**Mr Daniels**—I think that is possible, yes. I was hoping you were not going to say tomorrow.

**CHAIR**—No, we are bit more generous than that. I think that if you are clearing your desk of things, it would be a great assistance to the committee and possibly to you. I think that it is probably necessary to say before Christmas, if at all possible.

**Mr Daniels**—Certainly.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Committee adjourned at 1.59 p.m.**