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# Official Committee Hansard

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

**Reference: Civics and electoral education**

FRIDAY, 28 JULY 2006

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**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ELECTORAL MATTERS**

**Friday, 28 July 2006**

**Members:** Mr Lindsay (*Chair*), Mr Danby (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Brandis, Carr, Hogg, Mason and Murray and Mr Ciobo, Mr Griffin and Mrs Mirabella

**Members in attendance:** Mr Griffin and Mr Lindsay

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The adequacy of electoral education focusing on but not limited to:

- the current status of young people's knowledge of, and responsibilities under, the Australian electoral system;
- the nature of civics education and its links with electoral education;
- the content and adequacy of electoral education in government and non-government school programs of study, as well as in TAFE colleges and universities;
- the school age at which electoral education should begin;
- the potential to increase electoral knowledge through outside school programs;
- the adequacy of electoral education in indigenous communities;
- the adequacy of electoral education of migrant citizens;
- the role of the Australian Electoral Commission and State and Territory Electoral Commissions in promoting electoral education;
- the role of Federal, State and Local Governments in promoting electoral education;
- the access to, and adequacy of funding for, school visits to the Federal Parliament; and
- opportunities for introducing creative approaches to electoral education taking into account approaches used internationally and, in particular, in the United States, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

**WITNESSES**

**MORDINI, Dr Tony, Head of Sadadeen Campus, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College ..... 1**

**PENDLEBURY, Mr Bill, Senior Teacher, English and Humanities, Our Lady of the Sacred  
Heart College ..... 1**



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**Committee met at 1.45 pm****MORDINI, Dr Tony, Head of Sadadeen Campus, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College****PENDLEBURY, Mr Bill, Senior Teacher, English and Humanities, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College**

**CHAIR (Mr Lindsay)**—It is great to be at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Alice Springs, here in the centre of Australia, this afternoon. This is parliament coming to your school. We are here not to talk to you but to enable you to talk to us. We are going to ask you some questions. It is very important that you all relax and give us feedback. This session is being recorded for the parliamentary *Hansard*.

I am the member for Herbert, which is in Townsville, North Queensland. I am a Liberal member of the House of Representatives. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which we represent, is a bipartisan committee. We also have members of the opposition and senators on the committee. A joint standing committee is an unusual set-up. Normally, committees are of the Senate or of the House of Representatives, but this is a joint committee of both houses.

Also with us this afternoon is our inquiry secretary, Sonia, and she is doing a fabulous job. Many submissions have been received by the committee and much work has to be done in examining and putting together all the relevant issues; in addition, a lot of work has to be done to organise meetings such as this one.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—My name is Alan Griffin. I am a member of the opposition. I represent the electorate of Bruce, which is in metropolitan Melbourne.

**CHAIR**—Because this is a formal meeting of the committee and of the parliament and it attracts the respect given to parliamentary proceedings, I must go through a formal introduction. I declare open this school forum at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College as part of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into civics and electoral education. The inquiry was referred by the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Gary Nairn MP, on 24 March 2006. To date, the inquiry has received over 100 submissions from various parts of Australia. Submissions have been received from a broad range of groups and individuals, including teachers and schools; federal, state and territory parliaments and electoral commissions; academics; and governments. Copies of these submissions are available on the committee's website.

One of the major focus points of this inquiry is the quality of education provided to young Australians. The committee is quite concerned about Australian Electoral Commission reports that indicate that young people are more likely to be underenrolled than older people. Given this finding, the committee is interested in discovering better ways of inspiring and engaging young people in Australia's electoral processes. Today we are pleased to be speaking with teachers and students of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College.

That completes the formal introductory comments. Now we will be a little more informal. We need you to engage with and talk to us. It is only by listening to you about your experiences that we will be able to report to the parliament at the end of this inquiry about what we need to do to

improve things in relation to electoral matters and civics education in schools. We have until 2.30 pm to do this, so we are going to have to move along quite quickly.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We are trying to get feedback from you guys about how you see and what you know about politics—whether you think you are taught enough about it at school and whether you think the teaching is relevant. In particular, we are focusing on what sorts of things work in terms of engaging young people and getting them interested in this sort of stuff, given the fact—let’s be honest—that most people do not really care that much about it. In that context, can anyone go through what sort of education you get now through your formal schooling about electoral matters, elections and those sorts of issues?

**CHAIR**—Who has had some experience? Do not be backward in coming forward. I will nominate somebody if we cannot get a taker. Tell us what sort of education you have had in the schooling process about electoral matters and civics education.

**Rainer**—Within school, nothing really. In grades 9 and 10 there was a little bit. In grade 9, we studied Parliament House but only learned where all the different people would sit.

**CHAIR**—That is how easy it is to talk to us, so you can all be involved now. Hands up who is 17 or older. I note that most students here raised their hand. Of those who put their hand up, before you turned 17, who knew you could enrol to vote when you turned 17? Could I have an indication? Five; thank you. Do you think a mechanism should be put in place so that every young person knows that they can pre-enrol when they turn 17? If you do, what should that mechanism be?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Of those who put their hands up to say that they are 17, can you now put up your hand if you are on the electoral roll ready to go?

**CHAIR**—Three; thank you. Do you think there should be more information out there so that you know you can enrol? Do you think there should be better opportunities for young people approaching 17 to know that they can enrol?

**Lauren**—I do not know.

**CHAIR**—So you are saying that it does not matter to you.

**Lauren**—It does not really matter to me because I do not find it interesting.

**CHAIR**—How many of you have that same view?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Does anyone at all find politics interesting?

**CHAIR**—Of those who find electoral matters interesting—we have two girls down the back, a fellow up here and the teachers—can you explain why you do?

**Chris**—It seems that they are not talking about matters that concern us.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Part of your concern is that politicians are out of touch; is that right?



**Chris**—Yes. If this is how our country is run politically, what will the country be like in a few years time? We're screwed. We're going to die, man.

**CHAIR**—This is a serious point. All of you are the future of our country—do you understand that?—and it is important.

**Matt**—I just do not like the way decisions are made whether or not we need or want them to be made. I am also interested in how foreign affairs work.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We should probably ask questions of those who are not interested. Of those of you who do not give a stuff, could someone articulate why?

**Mark**—Good old Matthew!

**Matt**—It is not that I do not give a stuff, Mark; it is just that I do not know enough about it to be voting and so on.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Is it just that people see it as being not relevant to their lives and they have too many other things to do like partying and so on, or what?

**Lindsay**—For me, it is more about how it is presented in the news and so on that makes it boring. If you are not educated, you do not know what any of the words they are using mean and you are like, 'Whoa, I will watch cartoons instead.' It is not so much what happens that is not interesting; it is just how it is presented.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Is that a view that is commonly held? By the response received, that appears to be a commonly held view. Are there ways in which you could become engaged? You have said that you did some study in years 9 and 10 looking at some of the structural issues.

**Matt**—It looks at how the parliament is structured and the different houses. It is fairly basic.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—What about the question of looking at parliament in terms of the sorts of issues that we actually decide, that actually influence your lives? Have you thought about that at all—the sorts of things that I guess Matthew and Chris were talking about, that essentially decisions are taken by representatives which actually have a direct impact on your lives, how much tax your parents pay, which is therefore a question as to how much money they have to spend on you et cetera, how much support your school gets, which then determines the question of what sorts of facilities you get for your education and things like that?

**Mr Pendlebury**—If conscription or national service were an issue at the moment, as it was when I was 17 or 18, I am sure these people would be very interested in politics.

**Dr Mordini**—That was when Mr Pendlebury was young.

**Mr Pendlebury**—At that time the Vietnam War was on and they wanted more cannon fodder or whatever. They decided that the best way to do that was to make people do two years in the Army and, because people would not join willingly, they put numbers in a hat and drew out the dates of birth. Fortunately or unfortunately, if your number came up, you did two years in the

Army. That occurred from the early 1960s right through to the 1970s. Many people were burning flags and doing all sort of things against the Vietnam War at the time. People of your age would be much more interested in politics if you were to spend two years of your life in another country holding a gun.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So, if conscription were to be reintroduced, young people would be more interested in politics and the electoral process.

**Joy**—I think another thing that makes youth not so interested is that it seems that there are plenty of older people in the parliament and not so many who are young. So it does not seem so relevant to us, because the people who are involved in the political process are older.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—As an old person, I understand what you are saying. Addressing that question of understanding, one of the things this committee is looking at is whether there are ways of teaching how the system works while actually making it interesting so that people can understand that there are direct impacts. Mr Pendlebury has given a clear and obvious example of what occurred back in the 1960s and early 1970s when there was a policy and an issue that had a direct impact on people your age, which meant that they had a real and obvious interest in what was going on. However, with a lot of the issues I have mentioned and others that you might think of, there is a direct impact on you. They are not as stark as the issue of the Vietnam War, but there is no doubt that they still have a direct impact on you. From the school's point of view, is there a civics and electoral education component in years 11 and 12?

**Mr Pendlebury**—There is a roundtable junior parliament, which some of the students here have been involved with. In addition, we have a member of the roundtable with us here, in the room—not wishing to dob her in. So there are a few people involved.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Does an SRC form part of your student structure here?

**Dr Mordini**—Yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Is that elected?

**Mr Pendlebury**—It is meant to be.

**Dr Mordini**—There is no corruption in our SRCs.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—When did you last have a contested election?

**Dr Mordini**—At the end of last year.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Did a vote occur?

**Dr Mordini**—Yes.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Was that the whole school or just years 11 and 12?

**Dr Mordini**—It was the whole school.

**Mr Pendlebury**—Year 9 and up.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Did almost everyone vote?

**Dr Mordini**—Yes.

**Unidentified Student**—It is done by secret ballot.

**Mr Pendlebury**—We had elections for house captains and I can assure you that it wasn't rigged.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—But the students here do not see that sort of internal democracy in the school as being linked to the wider question of parliament, state parliament and so on? You do not see those sorts of things there, do you?

**Emily**—No.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—In terms of elected representatives and so on—I am expecting that this will be the answer I will get again—does anyone know who your federal MP in this area is?

**Jeremy**—Warren Snowdon.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Correct. So some people know. Hands up if you knew it was Warren Snowdon? That is about 25 per cent of the crowd, which is not bad in the circumstances. I know that there are several Territory seats in the area. How many of you know who your Territory member of parliament is?

**Unidentified Student**—Is that Nigel Scullion?

**CHAIR**—No, he is a senator.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—So most of you do not know.

**CHAIR**—Students, I am going to market research on a couple of issues. Then—I want to give you a warning—I am going to ask you to ask us some questions. Have a think about what you might want to ask members of the federal parliament. It can be on any subject—not just this particular subject. Have a think about that. In relation to voting, actually voting, what impact is had by people going to vote? Does anyone have a view on that?

**David**—It has a big impact because, if no-one voted, no-one would get in. At least one person has to vote.

**CHAIR**—Is voting important? It is compulsory.

**Jeremy**—It is very important because, if someone gets in who does not do a good job, it is bad for the whole country.

**Josh**—It is, because it represents people choosing their own government to rule them.

**CHAIR**—Here is the following Exocet question: is voting more important for younger people or for older people?

**Nathan**—I think it is more important for people to actually know what the policies are and older people have more experience about what the government stands for and that sort of thing.

**CHAIR**—That is a considered view.

**Renee**—I think it is equally important because we are all Australian citizens and it affects all of us.

**CHAIR**—That is a great view.

**Scott**—I think it is more important for younger generations because we are the future.

**CHAIR**—Does anybody disagree with that? Say so if you think so. Well done. That was a good range of views and they were well put. Here is your opportunity. What would you like to ask us before we go on?

**Scott**—Why did you want to go into politics? As a kid when you were growing up, why did you decide to go into politics?

**CHAIR**—I was only a kid 10 years ago; it is too far to remember back that far! That went over like a lead balloon.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Just like most of your jokes!

**CHAIR**—I joined the Liberal Party in 1977. They did not come and ask me; I found them and said, ‘I want to be a member and I want to do good things.’ I have done that since 1977. I joined the Townsville City Council in 1985. I was on the council for 11 years. I always said to my family, ‘I don’t ever want to be in state or federal parliament because you have to go away from home.’ But when my kids grew up, they said, ‘Well, dad, we’re leaving, so you may as well go,’ so here I am in the federal parliament. But it is the most interesting job you can ever do. It is a privilege to be a member of parliament—it really is. Alan, do you want to comment?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It depends on the day. I was concerned about issues and I believed that parliament was a way to try to influence issues and outcomes, so I got involved in the Labor Party when I was about 19. That makes me quite strange, I know, and I sort of worked on from there in the Labor Party and the union movement; I was elected to council in the city of Springvale in Melbourne and then went on to stand for parliament and the rest is history. I guess it is from that point of view of thinking, ‘Okay, rather than just bitch about things I can try to change them.’ That is essentially how I got involved and why.

**CHAIR**—And at the coalface, you are able to influence decisions that affect our nation. Even opposition members can influence decisions that affect our nation. You can get involved in the debate that goes on inside the parliamentary process and you can say, ‘Hey, look, the cabinet

might have decided this, but look, isn't this more sensible?' and your view will prevail if it is more sensible. There is also another side to being a member of the Australian parliament. In addition, you can join the Defence Force for a week every year. For anyone thinking about a Defence career, I can tell you that it is a fabulous career these days and very well paid. There are many opportunities across all services, but you can also get to fly an F111 upside down at supersonic speeds 100 feet above the water, which is not bad either. A student down the back wants to make a comment.

**Angus**—Is it a lot of hard work being a politician?

**CHAIR**—Yes, it is seven days a week, but that is just part of the job. Nobody begrudges that you have to work seven days a week. People think that members of the public spit at politicians. It does not really happen. People are respectful. Yes, you get the odd fruit loop who comes to see you; that happens on both sides of parliament. But generally people are very respectful and are decent people. They will come and seek your help to do things and you do not begrudge having to work seven days a week. The first thing I do when I get up in the morning is go to the computer at home and log in to Parliament House and check what has been happening, answer all my emails. I do not know about you, but I get about 150 emails a day out of the system, so you have to deal with those.

**Beth**—Are you friends? Are you both part of the opposition?

**CHAIR**—No. I am government and Alan is opposition, but we are friends.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—We do not go out together, though!

**Angus**—Are there two basic separated parties, Labor and Liberal, in Australia or—

**Dr Mordini**—What makes your party different from other parties?

**CHAIR**—I will give my answer, which will be a political answer, and then Alan will give his answer, which will be a political answer, and we will shake hands and be best of friends. The fundamental philosophy of the Liberal Party is to give everybody equal opportunity. The fundamental philosophy of the Labor Party is to try to make everybody equal. Did I sum that up properly?

**Mr GRIFFIN**—No, but I did not expect you to.

**CHAIR**—So there is my political answer.

**Unidentified Student**—Labor is communist.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—The bottom line with this sort of stuff is that it is a battle for ideas but the ideas are represented by issues and those issues are the issues that come up every day. Both sides of politics and in a two-party system have a view about their opponents and a view about themselves which obviously is supported. The chair described his view of the underlying philosophy of the Libs and how he saw the Labor Party. That is a considered view. I do not begrudge him that, but I do not happen to agree with it. My view in terms of the Labor Party

versus the Liberal Party is that essentially the Liberal Party is about giving people the opportunity to achieve what they can but frankly in a position whereby they see the government being as hands-off as possible in order to allow people to do what they can and in that way prosper.

Basically, I believe that government can actually play a constructive role in giving people the help they need to realise their potential and to realise those opportunities. That is how I see it in terms of the difference. It then plays out in the context of issues. So, if you look at issues at the moment, which either relate to those principles or relate to other issues, you can look at what is happening around industrial relations law where essentially the government has freed up the capacity for employers to be able to employ and to dismiss and to otherwise adjust conditions. They take the view that it is about giving people the opportunity to negotiate with their employers to realise the best possible outcome for themselves. I take the view that those changes are in fact producing an unequal situation, a situation where in fact those who have power in the context of the employee-employer relationship, the employers, are able to exploit the workers that they employ, and they can use that power to drive down conditions, drive down pay and dismiss people more easily than they should, on the basis that those people are a nuisance to them. That is my view about that particular set of issues.

But there is a difference of view there, I guess. From your point of view, in the context of coming to voting age, going on the electoral roll and casting your vote, you have to look at your own views and how they fit in terms of those issues, even if they do not fit exactly with those philosophies. And you may choose another party. There are minor parties—the Greens; there are not many Democrats left these days. There are other options there and the question is how that fits in. If you are very concerned about environmental issues, you might say, ‘The Greens are more of an option for me in terms of my view.’ I take the view, and I think the chair does too, that society is about a whole range of things and that, although you may have concern about particular issues, you need to look at a range of issues in order to establish what is the best way forward for the country.

**CHAIR**—One thing that does happen is that from time to time there will be conscience votes in the parliament. You will get those in matters like stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia—those sorts of things. They are issues where I have found myself on two occasions now sitting on his side of the parliament and my Prime Minister on the other side and me looking across the parliament at my Prime Minister and saying, ‘Sorry, boss, I’m over here because I happen to believe this is the case.’ That is a very important part of democracy—that we are able to do that.

I would like to bring you back to some more formal questions and then there will be another opportunity for you to ask us some questions. Students, some studies show that Australian students’ poor understanding of the electoral process, which you have confirmed today, really results in apathy and cynicism towards politics. Do you accept that young people are apathetic and cynical about the electoral process and Australian democracy—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Or don’t you care?

**CHAIR**—Or don’t you care? Do you accept that young people are apathetic and cynical? Does anyone want to make a comment? We have not heard from anybody in this area. Is there a view here? Are you cynical?

**Fiona**—Yes, I think I am cynical towards the political system because, until we are of voting age, politicians do not actually care about what we have to say at all.

**CHAIR**—Do you think that is right—politicians do not care about young people who are not of voting age? Do you think that is right?

**Jeremy**—No, because they are still going to be voting in the future.

**Megan**—I think they do care or they might care; I am not sure. But, if they do care, they do not project it out to us, that we know of.

**Erin**—What puts me off politics is that, when you see that an election is coming up, one party will go, ‘Oh, this party sucks because of blah, blah, blah,’ and then the other party will get up and bag the first party out.

**CHAIR**—You do not like that attitude.

**Renee**—It is hard to take them seriously, when you see them debating. They yell at each other and call each other galahs—and you call us immature! That is only some of the time, not all of the time.

**CHAIR**—Perhaps I can explain that. I understand why you think that and it is because you watch question time. Question time is almost not about asking questions; it is about the theatre of the House. The government is trying to get its message across and the opposition is trying to destabilise and derail or to question the government about things. But a lot of noise goes on because it is appropriate to derail whoever is speaking. Both sides of politics do it. When I first went into the parliament, I thought to myself, ‘This is appalling,’ but I have got used to it. During the rest of the sitting time in parliament, that does not happen at all. If you go into the parliament then, you will find there is very considered and respectful debate. I just ask you, if you do get to Canberra, to go and look at parliament and see it outside question time. You will get a completely different view.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—It is a funny thing, though, in the context of how you view things. On one hand, people should work together—and a lot of the time they do. On the other hand, you are debating often really major issues: do we send troops to Iraq or don’t we; do we send people where they will be facing a life-and-death situation and where some of them will die? They are big issues and they mean an awful lot to the people involved. Frankly, in our defence, we ought to be angry sometimes if we do not agree; we ought to be passionate and we ought to be prepared to have a go and debate those issues, because they are very important. When we do that, sometimes it gets a bit over the top in terms of the language. The chair is right: parliament might sit for eight or 10 hours a day and question time takes up only one of those hours. It is very much like feeding time at the zoo. It is when the TV cameras are on and essentially we all behave like trained seals. That is the nature of the way the joint works, because we are trying to get the grab that will make the news that night. That is where people get their perceptions from in relation to the media about what is happening. But it is important, because the issues are important. It is true too in terms of what we said earlier about our not tending to focus on people below voting age. I think we often tend to focus on issues that relate to kids and to younger

people, but obviously it is about who votes, the electoral system and being able to gain support to win government.

To bring it back a bit, one of the problems of dealing with people under the age of 25 is where they get their information from so that we, as politicians, can connect with you. Again, you do not watch *Lateline*, you do not watch the news usually and you do not watch current affairs programs—and why would you?—so where do we get in touch with you in terms of mail, radio, meetings? How do we do that? How do you get your information? How many of you watch the news? Hands up. That is a larger chunk than in the last school—probably about half.

**Matt**—There are cynical shows on television—

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Which are designed to take the piss.

**Matt**—and they are humorous, so that is how they draw our attention really.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Yes, and politicians go on those shows, but normally it is to be humiliated and therefore you also think that we are a pack of geese as a result of that. That is okay.

**Joy**—Also, I think in our parents we have what is like a big pair of spies. If my parents were going to vote Labor, I would probably vote Labor.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Let us test that one as well. Hands up if you would get your political views from your parents. Hands up if your parents voted one way, you would go the other way. So your parents are influential with respect to that. Do you listen to radio much? Some do and some do not. What station? The general answer seems to be Triple J. Who listens to the ABC?

**Jeremy**—My parents do in the morning.

**Angus**—My mum listens to the ABC so I have to listen too.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—In the context of that, as a politician, part of what you are trying to do is communicate with the community. The question is: how do you connect? In the context of this inquiry, we are trying to look at what sort of things can or should be done, either through the education system or through other means, to try to ensure there is a level of understanding of what goes on out there in the electoral system. A big question there is: what sorts of things will you guys actually take notice of?

**CHAIR**—To sum up that question, I would ask whether school is the best place for you to get information on electoral and civic matters. Do you think school is the best place? Most people are agreeing. Is there anybody who disagrees with that?

**Brendan**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Why do you disagree?

**Brendan**—Because, other than the SOSE and politics we do in year 9, we hardly every get information on it.



**Nathan**—Because you can watch political shows and other shows like that to get information about issues.

**Ryan**—If you try to force something on someone who does not want to know about it, they will do all they can to ignore you. So what is the point of forcing it upon people who do not want to know at that particular time or in that particular way?

**Andrew**—I think potentially school could be the best place for that sort of education, but you would have to be careful to keep that teaching balanced.

**Nathan**—Doing politics at school is probably something you have to do rather than want to do. If you do something you want to do, it makes it a lot more understandable than something that you have to do.

**CHAIR**—Think about going to Canberra. Who already has been to Canberra? That is extraordinary. That is about 40 per cent of the class. Who has visited Parliament House? Was this part of a school visit? No. Thank you. Do you think it would be of value if parliament were able to get more students across to Canberra to see the operations of the parliament? So generally there is agreement to that. Does anyone disagree?

**Scott**—I am not really going to want to go all that way just for a trip to parliament. If I am going to go away somewhere, I can think of every other place but Parliament House to go to. Even if we were to go to parliament to learn and all that, I am still not going to be that interested.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Scott. That is a down-to-earth view.

**Mr Pendlebury**—The Northern Territory parliament comes down to Alice Springs and is held in the convention centre. Most of these kids would have been out there at some stage to see the operations of the parliament, which would be virtually the same as seeing those in Canberra.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Who has seen the Northern Territory parliament when it has been in Alice Springs?

**Matt**—I really do not think we should be going on excursions with things like this. I think we should go on excursions for things connected with our choice of vocations. We went on a biology camp this year and that was more useful to me. A lot of us chose to do biology and that was just for educational purposes. We were sent there just to become a little more enlightened.

**Mr GRIFFIN**—Those of you who have been to Parliament House, either here in the Northern Territory or in Canberra, have seen an Australian parliament in action. Did you find it interesting? Did you go there and think, 'This is boring crap,' or did you think it was boring crap before you went there and you found it a little interesting? Did it actually ignite some interest, or did you just find it was another thing you had to do while you were on holidays?

**Jeremy**—I was bored because I was a little kid at that time.

**Rainer**—I went there just these holidays and I thought it was quite interesting because it was something I had not seen before and I guess I am at the age where I am interested in learning things. I just soaked up the information.

**CHAIR**—We will wrap up now. I want to thank you for your participation. I want to thank the school for arranging this session and for your input. You have been a great group in taking to what we are trying to do and trying to hear. We will be comparing what you say with what has been said by students similar to you in the centre of Melbourne. That is why it is important that we are here in Alice Springs today to listen to you. Because this is a formal public hearing, we need to do a formal close. That means that all that you have said will now become part of the record of the parliament.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Griffin**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 2.33 pm**