HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Reference: Aspects of family services

SYDNEY

Friday, 20 March 1998

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

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Mr Andrews (Chair)

Mr Barresi	Mr Melham
Mrs Elizabeth Grace	Mr Mutch
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Mr Kerr	Mr Tony Smith
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Mr McGauran	Mrs Vale

Matter referred to the committee for inquiry into and report on:

the range of community views on the factors contributing to marriage and relationship breakdown;

those categories of individuals most likely to benefit from programs aimed at preventing marriage and relationship breakdown;

the most effective strategies to address the needs of identified target groups; and

the role of governments in the provisions of these services.

WITNESSES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

(Subcommittee)

Aspects of family services

SYDNEY

Friday, 20 March 1998

Present

Mr Andrews (Chair)

Mr McClelland Mr Mutch

Subcommittee met at 9.15 a.m.

Mr Andrews took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the committee's inquiry into aspects of family services. I welcome witnesses attending and any others who are present and thank you for making your time available to appear today.

The committee has received from the Attorney-General's Department the final report of the department's evaluation of the marriage and relationship education subprogram. As that report covers matters which are subject to this committee's inquiry, it seemed it would be useful for us to discuss some of the issues arising out of that report.

[9.16 a.m.]

HAYNES, Ms Frances Anne, Senior Researcher, Keys Young, 20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, New South Wales 2061

LORD, Ms Janette Anne, Consultant, Keys Young, 20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, New South Wales 2061

SCHWARTZKOFF, Mr John David, Director, Keys Young, 20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, New South Wales 2061

WALLACE, Ms Alison Elisabeth, Associate Director, Keys Young, 20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, New South Wales 2061

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament.

I thank you for coming along this morning. We appreciate the opportunity to talk about matters which are in common between your evaluation and our inquiry, as pointed out in the terms of reference of your evaluation. At the outset, can you tell me something about your experience in the area?

Mr Schwartzkoff—I will just say a little about Keys Young and the study team. Keys Young is a social research organisation that was established in 1970. It works largely for public sector clients: state and federal government agencies. Over the years the firm has had a very wide range of experience in applied social and policy research. Our clients have included numerous Commonwealth and state agencies. Keys Young has considerable experience in consultative and qualitative work of the kind that was required by this study and a very broad background in Australian social issues and social issues research. We also have some specific experience in matters involving families, youth, children and relationships.

I can leave a document with you which summarises some of our past work in these areas. Examples would include studies that we have done for the New South Wales government on adoption legislation and adoption services, and work that we have done for the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department on the issue of domestic violence within family mediation practice. We have recently done a major study for the federal health department on Australian young people and mental health issues. We have done work for ATSIC on assessing family violence intervention programs amongst indigenous people. They are some examples of the background that we bring to the study.

CHAIR—In the break-up of your team, who was doing what? Ms Haynes, I think you were described as the project manager. Does that mean you took most of the running in the actual day-to-day work of it?

Ms Haynes—Certainly for the overall project management. Alison was responsible for the major part of the literature review and Jenny and I shared the field work. Jenny did the bulk of the key informant

interviewing and the bulk of the services provider profile or going out to the actual organisations. John's main expertise in this particular field is the development of surveys and data.

CHAIR—Ms Lord, you described yourself as the outside consultant to the team. What is your background?

Ms Lord—I originally trained as a marriage counsellor and have been working in that field for the last 18 months. I am a qualified clinical supervisor of counsellors and a trained mediator. I went on to manage counselling and mediation services for Lifeline and for Family Life, and represented Family Life and Family Services Australia on the committee. I have a Bachelor of Adult Education, which I completed last year, which has involved me also in some research. I manage my own consultancy business which involves me now as an external supervisor to counsellors in rural areas. My main fields are counselling, mediation, training and education so it was the breadth of that experience that was called on.

CHAIR—Have any of you worked as marriage educators or relationship educators?

Ms Lord—My involvement has been in the training of counsellors and some involvement with educators through Family Life's marriage education program, both offering supervision and being involved in their original implementation of programs such as couple communication. That was around the time that they changed their program structure from being fairly didactic to a much more interactive style of communication.

CHAIR—Did you take lead programs and facilitate?

Ms Lord—No, I did not. That was mainly because I lived up the coast in Gosford. I organised them and brought in external leaders from Sydney usually.

Mr Schwartzkoff—In this study we used something that is a very conventional approach in policy research and social research work. Keys Young were commissioned because, while having a range of relevant skills, we, as a firm, were not actively involved in the field so that we came as objective researchers but we included in our team someone who was much closer to the specific field. That is a model which is widely used in commissioned research of this kind.

CHAIR—Is it that nobody is trained in the use of inventories such as PREPARE or Focus?

Ms Lord—Yes, I am. I am trained in both PREPARE and Enrich.

CHAIR—During the evaluation, I presume you sat in and observed a number of different marriage and relationship education programs?

Ms Lord—No, we did not, and the reason being that we were evaluating the subprogram and not the actual programs themselves so we did not offer to do that as part of our methodology.

CHAIR—You make many observations about programs in your report.

Ms Lord—Mostly based on what was given to us by interviewing the educators and also the coordinators of the programs who were involved at times in delivery.

CHAIR—So anything in the report is on the basis of your surveys or the interviews with the educators?

Ms Lord—And the focus groups. Some of our focus groups contained ex-participants who also were able to give us feedback.

CHAIR—I take it you would have collected manuals and workbooks and course notes for the various programs?

Ms Haynes—Yes, where they were available—not all programs want to give us their written material.

CHAIR—Can you tell us which ones you did collect?

Ms Haynes—Not off the top of my head. I can tell you some of them but it certainly would not be the full list.

Ms Lord—There were others that I looked at as part of my interview in the agencies as well.

Mr Schwartzkoff—Would it help the committee if we just briefly recapped on the range of research tasks that we were asked to undertake?

CHAIR—I have read your terms of reference and your report so I understand what you were asked to do and what you did do. I am just trying to clarify some things which, to me, do not seem to be in the report. Do you have a list of those manuals that you perused?

Mr McCLELLAND—We would not want you to refer to any individual circumstances but the organisations are a different thing.

CHAIR—If Relationships Australia New South Wales or Centacare Sydney or Family Life uses a particular manual for any one of their programs that is a matter of public knowledge. It is not a matter which is confidential because it is used by the participants in the programs.

Ms Haynes—Yes. Here in New South Wales we have viewed material from Anglicare, the Anglican Counselling Service, Relationships Australia and Centacare. Jenny could speak to Centacare here in Sydney.

CHAIR—So in reviewing that material, did you go through it to see whether that was the basis on which they presented their programs? For example, in your literature survey you make a distinction between different categories of which programs are based upon Rogers theory or behavioural theory and others. Did you look at the manuals from that perspective to say, 'What is the basis of this program?'

Ms Haynes—We did not see that our main task was to do a content analysis of each particular

program.

CHAIR—So what was the purpose of looking at the manuals?

Ms Haynes—Partly as a service delivery issue, and partly to see whether organisations actually had one.

CHAIR—So it was more to look at whether they had one in terms of service delivery than what the content was or the theoretical basis on which the programs were presented?

Ms Lord—To that level of in-depth, we discussed with them on a philosophical basis where they were coming from which was where that kind of information about the Rogers or the couple communication models emerged. It was mostly a question of what philosophical base they were working from and how they implemented that.

Mr Schwartzkoff—Beyond any written materials, we had the benefit of face-to-face or one-to-one discussions.

CHAIR—Were those discussions in Sydney and Adelaide?

Ms Lord—Yes.

Mr Schwartzkoff—And extensive telephone conversations.

Ms Lord—And informally.

CHAIR—So did you look at manuals beyond Sydney and Adelaide agencies?

Ms Haynes—No.

CHAIR—Did you only survey funded agencies?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—So the provision of marriage and relationship education outside of the unfunded agencies is not the subject of your evaluation?

Ms Haynes—No. It is only those agencies that were funded up to 1996.

CHAIR—Did you consult with PREPARE Australia?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—Who did you speak with?

Ms Lord—With Alan Craddock, and I also spoke with John Robson.

CHAIR—And what about Focus?

Ms Lord—In general terms, no, I found it difficult to actually access adequate information. There did not seem to be a particular reason to follow up on Focus in depth. It seemed to be being used quite adequately, so it was not an instrument—for me anyway—that we needed to comment on in depth. It was more its use in the subprogram that we were focusing on.

CHAIR—You obtained some figures about the use of inventories—

Ms Lord—From the agencies.

CHAIR—but you do not have any figures about the overall use of them in Australia?

Ms Lord—No.

CHAIR—And you did not ask PREPARE Australia, for example, for that information?

Ms Haynes—Our particular focus was quite specifically the activities of the funded agencies, not marriage and relationship education overall. We are quite aware—in fact, we make the point in the report—that the field as a whole, from many perspectives, is much broader than the particular programs offered by these agencies.

CHAIR—In the enrichment field, did you consult CMEA?

Ms Lord—Yes.

CHAIR—Who did you speak to?

Ms Lord—I would need to check. Was it Peter Binancini that I spoke to?

CHAIR—No, Couples for Marriage Enrichment Australia.

Ms Lord—Sorry, I will need to check. Who is the president of that organisation?

CHAIR—I do not know who is president at the moment.

Ms Lord—I can tell you who I did speak to from that field. Would that be useful?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Lord—As I said, I spoke to Alan Craddock. I spoke to Anne Ryan; Peter Binancini; Professor Kim Halford; Ilene Wolcott of the Australian Institute of Family Studies; Gerlinde and Ian Spencer, who

were very active members in the past; John Brooks; John Robson; Michelle Simons; Dianne Gibson; Gail Bacon; Ian Macdonald; Susan Gribben; and the different coordinators of the services currently being provided.

CHAIR—Were they the people that are described as key informants?

Ms Lord—Yes, and I am aware that we left some people off that list because of their involvement in this activity.

Ms Haynes—And that list was developed in consultation with and very much guided by the steering committee for the project.

CHAIR—The Marriage Educators Association is not on that list?

Ms Lord—No.

Ms Haynes—We spoke to Gillian Mickan.

Ms Lord—Yes, we did speak to Gillian Mickan as well.

CHAIR—She was a key informant as well?

Ms Lord—Yes. I am sorry that we missed her.

CHAIR—Can we have a copy of that list, please? It does not have to be now.

Ms Lord—Okay.

CHAIR—In the focus groups, I presume you followed the normal course of recording and transcribing?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Mr Schwartzkoff—We do not, as a standard matter, transcribe them. We record them, but we use tapes rather than transcriptions.

CHAIR—You don't make a summary of them?

Mr Schwartzkoff—We work actively with them. We make our own summaries in the groups, we make a recording and we work with our notes and the recording, but within a limited research budget it is not usually considered cost effective to produce transcripts of a large number of focus groups. As you can imagine, that is an immense amount of work.

CHAIR—Did you keep a summary of each focus group from the recording?

Mr Schwartzkoff—I do not believe we have made a separate summary. We were interested in what we could learn from the focus groups as a whole. As you can understand, there is nothing magic about any one group, but it is, as I say, what one can learn from the range of groups that one has contact with.

CHAIR—Was the membership of the steering committee the same throughout?

Ms Lord—Relationships Australia changed their representative part way through from a Western Australian one to a Canberra one.

CHAIR—How many times did you meet with the steering committee?

Ms Haynes—Four.

CHAIR—And when was the last meeting?

Ms Haynes—I would have to check the date. It would have been approximately October 1997.

CHAIR—Can I just clarify a couple of questions?

Ms Haynes—There were some interdepartmental committee members that changed.

CHAIR—Did some of the officers of the department on the steering committee change?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—Can I just clarify a couple of matters of terminology? In the report you use the descriptions: traditional and modern marriage. What is a traditional marriage?

Ms Haynes—In the report, the term 'traditional' is referred to mainly in the focus group section. The aim there was to let the focus groups themselves respond to those terms.

CHAIR—But you use the terms in an evaluative way in the report, so they must have some meaning. What do they mean?

Ms Haynes—From the community perspective, the traditional marriage—

CHAIR—Sorry, I want to know what you mean in your report.

Ms Haynes—was a formal marriage, perhaps in a church, or one where largely traditional gender roles were ascribed.

CHAIR—And what is a modern marriage?

Ms Haynes—On the basis of our reading group's review and focus group, in a modern marriage the

roles and tasks may be somewhat more fluid.

CHAIR—Is the essential difference, in your mind, the role of the partners in the marriage?

Ms Haynes—It is one of the essential differences.

CHAIR—What are the others?

Ms Haynes—The traditional view of the formal marriage process.

CHAIR—Do you mean by that the distinction of a marriage in a church or performed by a civil celebrant?

Ms Haynes—Largely through a church.

CHAIR—I just want to get this right. So when you refer to traditional marriage, you are referring largely to marriages that occur within a church and those in which roles are more conventional in a historical sense. Are they the two components?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Mr McCLELLAND—Did you find that people formed the intention as to what their roles would be before they walked down the aisle of a church? Did you find that couples had determined whether the wife was going to stay at home or work at that stage?

Ms Lord—Very often we found that many of the couples had lived together previously, so that the roles had emerged before the marriage. It had been more in the de facto type situation or had been an area of discussion. They saw their view of traditional as being different to that which they saw as their parents' model. Whether or not their parents had lived together was not relevant. It was more as they saw their parents existing as opposed to how they saw themselves, which was that they may or may not have lived together or discussed these issues. Certainly many of them had intended that it would be different for them.

Mr McCLELLAND—In my own marriage, it would have been extremely difficult to predict what our intentions were. It was almost something that you would have to define looking backwards rather than looking forwards.

Mr Schwartzkoff—In my experience, educators would often talk about the expectations that the parties seemed to be bringing to the marriage. It was certainly an issue. Expectations of roles and responsibilities and so on were perceived to be by educators an important aspect.

Ms Haynes—In a sense we are talking about a complex issue that could be viewed from many perspectives. Certainly, in the issue of expectations we were looking at educators' expectations and assumptions about issues, but we were also looking at potential participants' expectations. And the reinforcing the issue that Jenny raised, we found expectations around gender role, and so on—not just gender roles, but a

whole host of other things—for many relationships did not actually begin with the wedding because many people had actually been living together and had quite long, established relationships already. There were a set of expectations and experiences, and they may or may not change with the actual wedding.

Ms Lord—I think that was an interesting factor, even if it was not with the current partner that they were marrying. Many of them had previous partners, or de facto situations. We were quite surprised to find the level of thought that had been given by some of the younger people to these issues. I would agree with you that in our era these were not things that had even crossed my mind, certainly before I got married. I think that it was a surprise to us to find that they were actually very articulate in some of those areas, particularly the girls. But the men, too, had a high level of awareness, I thought.

CHAIR—Are you aware of much difference in the rate of cohabitation prior to marriage for those who marry in a church first, as compared with those who marry civilly?

Ms Lord—No, I am not. There was quite a high percentage of those marrying in the churches that had cohabitated, and the educators mentioned that in some of the issues that generated for them in dealing with the groups.

Ms Wallace—To add to that, in the literature review, I do not think there was data which actually specifically looked at that issue.

CHAIR—The other question of terminology that I wanted to clarify was: you refer throughout the report to a categorisation of programs according to whether they were church based, health based, community based, et cetera. Is that categorisation of church based programs based on your outline of broad theoretical frameworks in your literature review at page 31 or 32 where you go through general systems theory, Rogerian theory, behavioural theory and church base programs?

Ms Haynes—No. Sorry, you are referring to a page in the literature review, but the particular—

CHAIR—I am saying that you use the expression ‘church based’ programs—

Ms Haynes—Church based is simply the organisational affiliation.

CHAIR—When you use that expression, other than in the literature review, it does not carry any connotation as to the theoretical basis of the program?

Ms Lord—No.

Ms Haynes—It carries a value position which the organisations were very clear about when we conducted our interviews with them. From their perspective, regardless of the actual service and regardless of who actually came to them for their service, as organisations they explicitly worked from a Christian perspective of marriage. How much agencies claimed that affected their clientele and whom they saw as their main clientele, varied.

CHAIR—But my question is: it does not carry any connotation as to the theoretical basis of the program?

Ms Haynes—No.

CHAIR—Presumably, therefore, what you categorise as church based programs throughout the report could fit into any one, or a combination, of theoretical approaches?

Ms Lord—Theoretically, yes. The distinction that emerged was more about the values base, the perception of the public in relation to those bodies and the funding issues.

Ms Haynes—And in some cases, significant service delivery issues.

Ms Lord—Though not the theory, necessarily.

Ms Haynes—There are quite distinctive service delivery issues. At the end of the day—to reiterate—that is essentially what we were asked to look at. The church based organisations certainly had quite distinctive service delivery patterns. They are substantially different from secular organisations.

CHAIR—On page 32 where you referred to church based programs, are there examples of that type of program in Australia—the third dot point in the first column?

Ms Haynes—I would say that many of the programs described what they did in those terms. The actual skill, or particular topic, that they run might vary, but they would certainly, in terms of describing their approach and general mission, describe their programs—

CHAIR—So it is a description of their outlook, rather than their theoretical base: is that right?

Ms Haynes—Yes. I guess that is what I am essentially saying in terms of a self-described mission. It was quite clearly stated. It is certainly not a statement on their theoretical frameworks, because very clearly, as we state in the report, across the sectors there is a lot of commonality of programs.

Many, both church based and secular organisations, use the inventories, and so on. Many of them also use couples' communication, and they share the actual content, format and structure of the programs. Nonetheless, all of the church based organisations that we consulted explicitly stated that they operate from a Christian view of marriage, and their service delivery system, network, supports, funding and main target groups were substantially different because of that. So, in sense, that is what we were commenting on, but with a different service delivery.

CHAIR—I just wanted to be clear in my mind that you were not talking about a theoretical approach there. If you read that article which you take that categorisation from, that is referring, firstly, to marriage enrichment. The example which is given in that is marriage encounter, which I would suggest is very unlike most of what is provided by way of marriage and relationship education in Australia. So there must be some different connection.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—Is there any legal definition of marriage that you are aware of, or that was relevant to your evaluation?

Ms Wallace—The data on marriages was based on the ABS definition which was that it should be a registered marriage, whether through a minister of religion or civil celebrant. Having said that, we found that in the actual focus groups and talking with the community that the use of the word marriage was somewhat more fluid.

CHAIR—One of the most eminent researchers in this field in the world would be John Gottman, wouldn't it?

Ms Wallace—I am not aware of John Gottman's work.

CHAIR—You do not know John Gottman?

Ms Wallace—No.

CHAIR—You have not heard of, or read, his book *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail?*?

Ms Wallace—I have not read that particular book.

CHAIR—Nor 20 years of research and articles in journals like the *Journal of Marriage and Family*?

Ms Wallace—In relation to the literature review, the focus was on trying to look at Australian literature, primarily. Given that the terms of references were very broad, and there was a kind of limited ability to look at all the work that might be relevant to each of these terms of reference, I tried to draw on works which themselves overviewed relationships on, say, marital dissolution and break-up, rather than on looking at individual pieces of work.

Obviously, there is huge literature on research which has looked at factors which lead to stability or breakdown in marriages, and I could not look at all of them. I did try to draw on the most recent Australian ones. One of the most recent pieces of work, by Bradbury, overviewed over 100 pieces of research. I looked at his conclusions regarding the overall findings from that mass of studies. It may well be that Gottman's work was included in the overview that he was looking at.

CHAIR—You did look though at skills training at which Gottman is probably regarded as pre-eminent?

Ms Wallace—I am sorry, in what context, in terms of—

CHAIR—I am saying in his research and his development of skills training programs, Gottman is probably regarded as, if not the pre-eminent person in the field, one of the most pre-eminent.

Ms Wallace—In the course of our review of the literature via electronic databases and from getting suggestions from the steering committee as to what key relevant texts or resources we should be looking at—we did get lots of suggestions from the steering committee for that—I actually do not recall John Gottman's name coming up.

CHAIR—Can I just run through a list of other names. There is Ed Bader, who has done research on the longitudinal effects of marriage and relationship education in Canada. There is no reference to him. There is Herbert Anderson, who produced a series of books over the last five or six years including *Becoming Married*. There is no reference to him. Another is Don Browning, whose latest book looks at the relationship between religious based approaches and therapeutic based approaches, in part. There is no reference to him. Another is Mike McManus, who has been behind the marriage savers movement in the United States which is spreading through that country. There is no reference to him either.

Another is Judith Wallestein, who wrote *Second Chances, The Good Marriage*. There is no reference in the literature review to her. Again, there is no reference to Norval Glenn, who is probably one of the leading sociologists and demographers in the world and the editor of *The Journal of Family and Marriage*, and who has written extensively in the field and is on the editorial board of *Demography*. If you go to Great Britain there is no reference to Fiona McAllister's work. There is no reference to David Larson, who wrote *Costly Consequences of Divorce*. And, in Australia, what about Sotirios Sarantakos, whose work was in what?

Ms Wallace—There were 20 days allocated to the whole literature review. That involved looking at literature for all the terms of reference, and as you can see they are quite substantial. That 20 days had to cover finding literature, reading it and writing it up. With any one of these terms of reference there would be a vast body of literature. It was simply not possible for me to look at every piece of work that might be relevant to each of these terms of reference.

The strategy that I adopted was to try to locate pieces of research which themselves had overviewed the research in that area. They had reviewed the 50, 60 or 70 studies which had looked at marital breakdown and marital relationships and so they did the analysis for you. It was not possible for me to look at 50 studies. The strategy was to look at other pieces which overviewed that literature and to draw on their conclusions. It may well be that a lot of the work that I looked at would have incorporated work by them. But I did not specifically look at these studies individually.

CHAIR—Just to take one, Sarantakos is probably the most eminent in the field of cohabitation and relationships in the world. He is here in Australia. He has written books and articles. That is something that is relevant to this evaluation, but there is no reference to him at all. What about the very recent Western Australian child health survey? There is no reference to that either.

Mr Schwartzkoff—As Alison has emphasised, to do a cost-effective piece of literature review within the context of an empirical study of this kind is very difficult. It is not like an academic exercise; one has to be very focused. We were guided by our key informants and our steering committee as to work on authors which they felt was particularly germane to this particular study. Obviously, you know LAFS commissioned a range of other studies in the field as well. This was one particular task. As I say, we took advice from a range of people with expertise in the field as well as using our own—

CHAIR—Mr Schwartzkoff, you say that the steering committee did not make any suggestions about looking at any of these sources or authors. Is that correct?

Mr Schwartzkoff—I take it not.

Ms Wallace—I do not recall any of these names coming up. The steering committee at various times gave us suggestions about a number of pieces of work that we might look at. I certainly tried to look at as many of these as I could, but I actually do not recall—I could be wrong—these names coming up.

CHAIR—What about the research about the health impacts of marriage and divorce and separation? In the literature review there is no reference really to a huge body of research that has now amounted—

Ms Wallace—Yes, I am aware of that, but I do not think that was one of our tasks.

CHAIR—You say that was outside your terms of reference to look at that?

Ms Wallace—Yes, it was. The literature review was designed to set the context for the field work in looking at the different types of relationships that now exist in Australia—who is getting married, how they are getting married, how many are remarriages; all that kind of demographic stuff—and then looking at what the work has to say about the quality of successful and unsuccessful relationships, looking at the issue of DV, looking at the implications of different patterns of couple relationships and possible different stages that you could be looking at in terms of intervening at post-marriage level. They were the kinds of key things that we were asked to look at. At no stage were we asked to look at the impact of divorce on children and on families.

CHAIR—But you were asked in your first term of reference to look at:

the nature, types and stages of relationships; those characteristics that contribute to and affect the quality of successful relationships and those which indicate relationships "at risk"?

Ms Wallace—Yes, and that is why we looked at the marriage dissolution literature, to see what are the characteristics of marriages which are more likely to succeed and those which are more likely to fail. That is what we did. I did not perceive then that I had to go on and look at the impact of what that might be but just to try to identify the characteristics.

CHAIR—So you have simply taken those four or five topics that we well know like cohabitation and leaving home early, et cetera—I have not got them in front of me—and said, 'These are the things which are indicators, according to the data, of marital dissatisfaction and dysfunction,' and left it at that.

Ms Wallace—Yes. It says to identify:

. . . those characteristics that contribute to and affect the quality of successful relationships and those which indicate relationships "at risk".

It does not go on and say, 'What then is the impact of marital breakdown.' That was not perceived, and nor

was it anticipated, that that would be a reference.

CHAIR—You said in the literature review that what you concentrated on was those studies which provided an overview, the meta-analysis approach.

Ms Wallace—Yes, that is what I tried to do.

CHAIR—One of them which you refer to is on page 35, in the second column, the review by Giblin and colleagues in 1985. I want to ask you a couple of things about that. In your footnote there you say:

In attempting to explain this, perhaps surprising, result, Giblin et al postulate that couples' expectations or self-assessments change due to their increased self-disclosure concepts and skills as a result of having gone through the education program.

What is surprising about that?

Ms Wallace—The point that was being made, in relation to the point at the top of the page, was that he found the:

. . . studies which measured improvement and/or change utilising behavioural as opposed to self-report indices . . . consistently reported stronger and more positive results.

That comment down there is only in relation to that.

You might think that, the more successful marriages were, the higher people's assessments would be about the satisfaction about their relationships. Paradoxically, I think they are saying that, as people work more in their relationships, their expectations of their relationships might get higher. Therefore, their assessment of their satisfaction with the relationship might actually decrease. That is not being critical in any way. It is just that people, as they become more knowledgeable about relationships and are more anxious to achieve a good relationship through going through learning processes, might actually set higher standards for themselves.

CHAIR—Giblin's study has been described as the most comprehensive that has been undertaken.

Ms Wallace—Although it was done in 1985, I am still finding references in the literature in the 1990s. I think that is due to its size and the fact that it looked at so many programs and tried to include studies which had been fairly rigorous in methodology.

CHAIR—You say it also helps explain some of the inconsistencies reported in the evaluation literature and highlights the considerable importance of critically analysing the methodology employed and measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions. The point you seem to be making from Giblin is that we have to analyse the methodology and the measures used to evaluate the programs.

Ms Wallace—Yes.

CHAIR—I am wondering why, having relied upon Giblin, and accepting that it is, even today, regarded as one of the most comprehensive, you did not quote what seems to be the primary conclusion. It says the current study is the most comprehensive integrated summary of the enrichment literature to date; it should lay to rest the charge that 'enrichment' is ineffective. Isn't that a fairly important conclusion to have neglected?

Ms Wallace—I may not have used the exact words, but I said in my first point that overall his review of the 85 preventive programs yielded an average effect size of 0.44, which is also from his summary abstract at the beginning. It indicates that, on the whole, people who participate in these preventions will be doing better in a number of measures than those who do not. That is a positive. That is his major finding which, as I remember, is actually the key finding in the summary of his work here.

CHAIR—You refer to other American researchers, such as Stanley. Stanley has come out quite clearly and said that premarriage education programs are effective, but you do not quote that anywhere.

Ms Wallace—What I am saying, in terms of the evaluation, is that a number of studies say there are very positive benefits coming out, at least in the short term. I think the literature is saying that, if you look at longer term follow-up, there are not that many studies. The one that people seem to regularly quote is the Markman study, which looked at the longer-term impact of marriage and relationship education over several years. That is fairly unusual.

I quoted the Markman study because people say it is one of the most rigorous studies that has been done. I identify some of these positives. They are on pages 36 and 37. I summarise some of his key findings comparing couples who went through intervention as opposed to couples who did not. There was a kind of control group there. At one-, two- and three-year follow-ups, they were able to find significant differences between those who had participated in marriage and relationship education and those who had not. By the four- to five-year follow-ups, some of the differences between the two groups were not so significant.

CHAIR—Stanley, Bradbury, Silliman and Gurney all say that, over a measurable period of up to about six years, premarital intervention is effective. That is their clear conclusion. But if you read what you have on pages 35, 36 and 37 thereabouts, one only gets the impression that there are all sorts of problems. There is no clear statement, it seems to me, of what the recent research has been showing. Doesn't that reflect some sort of bias in the way in which you have reported the literature?

Ms Wallace—I tried to report this literature in as balanced a way as I could. What I was trying to get at was the state of evaluation I think particularly in Australia. A lot of the research has been done in America and there has really not been that much done, as I understand it, in Australia. The point that I would like to make is that I am a great supporter of there being more evaluation done within the Australian context. Markman and Stanley talk about the evaluation needing to be more thorough and to look in the longer term and to help the practice fields. I was trying to be constructively critical in this sense. They have to look more particularly at which programs work for which couples at which stage and for how long that effect lasts. Maybe there is a need for more booster sessions, but maybe there is only so much you can expect of—

CHAIR—And that is always a changing judgment, according to research. For example, you have not

read Gottman, but in the February issue of *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, Gottman reports his latest research on various things such as what is called active listening—there are a variety of names for that same process—in which he has measured that against six other modalities of intervention and finds, contrary to some of his previous research, that it is not as effective as he previously believed. There is a huge discussion, if not debate going on in the academic circles at the present time in America over the consequences of that. There is always going to be a judgment about research and I do not think anybody disagrees about the need for more research. What I am concerned about is that one would get the impression from reading this that nothing is working at all or that it is more negative than it is positive.

Mr Schwartzkoff—That is certainly not my impression.

Ms Wallace—It is certainly not the impression that I intended to give.

CHAIR—Well, I am reading it.

Ms Haynes—We also saw our task as very squarely attempting to place this in the Australian context. I would have hoped that we made it very clear that at the end of the day, based on the literature review and the review of the subprogram as a whole, we were not making a comment on the effectiveness of marriage and relationship education per se. We were asked to look at a whole range of service delivery issues and to be quite narrow about it. In a sense we were asked to look at the fact that potentially you could have the best program in the world but, if people are not using it, are not coming to it or are not attracted to it, that program is not being utilised. Secondly, there are difficulties even in determining the precise factors in Australia, quite apart from the intrapersonal, interrelationship factors, which may or may not be universal. There may be a whole host of other issues that could well be relevant in the Australian context—a different social context, a different legal system in regard to family law and so on. That is, in a sense, what the great gap was in the literature. We could not find it there and we attempted to explore that.

CHAIR—If that is the context, it may mean that the focus that ought to be given to your evaluation is much more narrow than it seems from first reading it. That is an important clarification if that is the use—and the limited use, if I can put it that way—of your evaluation. I have to say, having read it a number of times, that that was not the impression I got, but I am happy with the clarification.

Can I just take up a few more things? You talk, on page 32, about Australian best practice and you state that the:

. . . translation of these programs for use in Australia, given differing cultural and social factors, would be problematic.

This is the penultimate paragraph on page 32. Are you aware of any US programs that have been successfully used here?

Ms Wallace—Not based on the literature that I looked at. When I saw that that said 'would', I think it should probably have said 'could'; it should have read 'could be problematic'. I think that is careful; we just have to assume that whatever works in America—

CHAIR—Aren't PREPARE and Focus US programs that have been modified and are being successfully used here?

Ms Wallace—I was not involved in the other part of the research. I am just saying that it should not be assumed based on the research that has been done. Again, I was looking at the research, and so much of the evaluation and research that has been done has

been done in the States. I am just saying they might have achieved good or bad results in the States but we would not assume that these results would be replicated in Australia.

CHAIR—So this is a sort of theoretical abstract proposition, without any connection to what may or may not be happening here?

Ms Wallace—That is right. I think it is always a danger to assume that just because a program works well or does not work well in the States it would work well or would not work well in Australia.

CHAIR—If that is the context, I understand it. It seemed to me that you have got PREPARE and Focus being used quite extensively in Australia and being modified in part for Australian conditions. You referred to Professor Halford. As I understand it, he has an Australian version of PREP, which is being used successfully in Australia.

Ms Wallace—Sure. It is just the evaluation of that.

Ms Haynes—At the end of the day, it is the lack of documentation of that, of being able to actually have that described, documented, argued about, and so on, in the Australian context. I am talking from the point of view of our literature review.

CHAIR—I understand that, but if PREPARE and Focus had been validated, as they have in a whole series of studies now over longitudinal frameworks, then they have been validated. Are we saying that human nature in Australia is somewhat different from what it is in the United States? Or do we have to go through and validate PREPARE and Focus again in Australia to prove that the validation in America or the predictive validity of the instruments is also true in Australia?

Ms Lord—They are certainly going to attempt to do that, aren't they? My understanding, from John Robson, is that with the new changes to the PREPARE and ENRICH programs this year, he is going to embark on some Australian research too.

CHAIR—I understand it Alan Craddock has in fact done some Australian research, which supports David Olson's research in America. So there is some validation of that anyway.

You talk about a skills approach, you refer to American programs such as couple communication and PREP, and your general reference is that those approaches are not used in Australia. We have already established that PREP is used in Australia. Isn't it the reality that most of the programs in Australia have incorporated skills training into their programs? In my knowledge, I do not think there are many programs

that do not deal with communication and conflict resolution skills, listening and those sorts of things.

Ms Lord—They certainly have, and the factor seems to be more related to time, so—

CHAIR—How long?

Ms Lord—How long they are actually able to get the couple for, how much time, and particularly where they have selective processes about course content. Usually, communication skills is mandatory.

CHAIR—Can I come to that issue of time—

Ms Haynes—I would just like to add that, having said that most organisations said, 'We cover communication skills'—in a sense, listed it as a topic—and taking into account that many programs do have the option for participants to select out of a range of topics, and that the general range of topics covered by most programs was reasonably similar across the board, nonetheless there was a difference in time and there was also a difference in level of interactivity and actual practice time. Firstly, that came from educators themselves and, secondly, it was fed back from participants as well, who said, 'We talked about communication skills, but we did not necessarily get the chance to actually practise them.'

CHAIR—You say in the report that programs that are likely to obtain positive results are, amongst other things, longer rather than shorter, but I did not detect any discussion about any optimum length of programs in the evaluation.

Ms Lord—It was almost impossible for us, as we said in the data aspect of it, to come to that specific a recommendation, because of the variables. It was incredible the amount of variation in the number of educators, the level of skill and expertise of educators, the length of time of the program, who was in it, who ran it, so it was difficult to come up with an optimum as to whether it was week nights, weekends and what sorts of issues they had to deal with with the people that actually came in. And if they had people that did not want to be there, and depending on the number, that would impact on how the group would flow over the time that they were together. So there were a lot of variables.

Most of the agencies seemed to have established a fluid process—they had started out with the early programs and, over the years, those programs had moved and changed and continued to do so, and so had the time frames around that, so they had experimented with different periods of time. Most of them were settled at a kind of 'at the moment' time that they were working with; a lot of them were shorter for financial reasons and the majority of them wished they had longer time, trying to capture the audience. It was—

CHAIR—I suppose what I am getting at, at the theoretical level, is that, if you read David Olson or even what Kim Halford has said here, if you are going to embark on a program which at least endeavours to teach skills, then a certain amount of time is required to do that, but I do not see that you put forward any aspiration or ideal in that regard. Or, to put it another way, there is probably an amount of time less than which is probably a waste of time, if you know what I mean. If you go along to a one-hour session with whistles and bells on it, which makes you feel good, that might be great but it may not have any effect at all.

Ms Lord—The thing that emerged for us was that there was a need for a variety of approaches. We suggested the three-tier model as one model to look at, with something that was bells and whistles—the issue of attracting people in and getting them connected to the agency, that question of how you access these people and get them to then make a commitment to something in the longer term where you can offer a skills base. But, for the moment, a lot of the pre-marriage programs were attempting to accomplish all of those things in a very tight time frame, with people that were trying to get their commitment to primary level stuff and then move them to secondary level. In a sense it is not far enough along to be able to offer those sorts of clear structural guidelines.

When we approached it we certainly thought that would emerge and we would be able to make those kinds of comments. But what we found was still such a large level of confusion about those kinds of practical issues—accessing people, dealing with primary issues—that it did not clarify it to say, 'Okay, this is how we will deal with skills based stuff.'

CHAIR—Are you saying that the bells and whistles approach, if I can call it that, has a usefulness in attracting people in the first place?

Ms Lord—Yes; it is often used to get them used to accessing the agency and to give them a little bit of educational input or a taster, if you like. The agencies that tried that found they were more likely to return. I think there is similar information on the ones that do pre-marriage, that they are often more likely to seek assistance from the agency, and counselling and things, later on.

CHAIR—Do we have any empirical evidence about that?

Ms Lord—I do not think we do at this point.

CHAIR—One thing that seems quite clear from your observations and our survey of the area is that the rate of participation in what I would call post-marriage or enrichment, for want of a better description, is very poor.

Ms Lord—Abysmal and disappointing.

CHAIR—So people are not returning, with one exception—and I have not gone into why they seem to succeed.

Ms Lord—I think we need to qualify that. That is not returning to those programs, and that opens up some areas for discussion, as we talked about—whether those particular kinds of programs are what will meet the needs of those individuals.

CHAIR—Did your focus group or any of your talking with participants of programs actually have people where you asked them that question about what would attract them back?

Ms Lord—Certainly we did, yes.

Ms Haynes—I wish to make a range of comments on this because it does relate to your question about optimal length of time. We did not see it as our specific role to prescribe the program length. Rather, we saw our role as certainly having an idea of the theory, but also going to the field and asking the field to inform us about what, from their experience, is an optimal length. That is where we found tremendous variation. When we tried to explore that further, asking, 'What is your rationale for this particular length?', in some cases there was a theoretical perspective informing that rationale, but in other cases, it was tradition, with people saying, 'We would run weekend workshops, we know they work well, we love them and they are a good experience.'

In other cases, it was out and out service delivery in terms of cost to the organisation, with people saying, 'We have tried to run weekend programs. We know a weekend program would be better. We would prefer to run the weekend program, but we do not get the numbers, so we run six-hour programs instead.' In a sense, yes, there may well be theoretical optimal time, but there are a whole host of other factors that played a role.

CHAIR—All I am getting at is finding out if there is a theoretical optimal time. I am not saying that is one time; it depends on the level of intervention required. For example, I think it is generally accepted that working with step families requires a longer period of time than, say, working with a normal, if I can use that expression, pre-married couple who do not have any particular major issues in their relationship, so the optimal time will depend on the circumstances.

I am simply asking this: if it is accepted in some of the literature at least—people like Olson and Halford seemed to be supporting this—that there is a minimal period of time below which or less than which any intervention has to be dubious in terms of any affect or impact, shouldn't we at least be saying that?

Ms Haynes—We see our role as not necessarily to prescribe that. In a sense, we found that our role was to really, in a sense, get a state of play in the field at the time. When we posed those types of questions, we uncovered a wide range of complexity of understanding of theoretical positions and rationales as to why a program was offered in the way it was offered. That was one factor which needed to be looked at. That could be

from an individual educator to the coordinator. There was actually a very wide range of understanding. In some cases, certainly not across the board, it was because that was how the job was handed down to me through it.

When we explored the issues of rationale and what agencies claimed to be able to achieve or what they were hoping to achieve in a particular program over a particular time, we discovered that in many cases, taking your point about what you can achieve in a short period, it appeared to us that many of the organisations, because they felt compelled to defend, particularly pre-marriage programs, tend to overstate what could be achieved in a short period but, in fact, they may well have been achieving something else. For example, in the relatively short period that they were offering the program, they may not have skilled up the couple to deal with every major conflict. But the participant response clearly indicated that in that short period, they did help clarify the participants' commitment to each other and raised issues of concern that they may need to deal with.

Our observation was not that that was ineffective—quite the opposite. We felt as though there could be more work and it would be more fruitful for organisations offering pre-marriage programs and attempting to offer shorter ones or, rather, that the issue needed more clarification so that organisations could be clear. If we are running a short program, let us not make claims about this program having great benefits in terms of skills and behaviour further down the track. It may be of benefit in engaging people and attracting people to our organisation, leading to more acceptance of the need for early intervention later on and help seeking.

Mr Schwartzkoff—Helping to set an agenda for the couple at a later stage.

Ms Haynes—It was our observation that, because educators are so keen, they are saying, 'Because we've got this wonderful thing, we need to engage more people. We've got to have more people doing it.' But there was a sense of frustration and, because of that frustration they tended to overstate. We felt, okay, that is what they are evaluating; their sense of effectiveness sits on their capacity in a six-hour program or a two-hour program or whatever it is. But if we set about measuring what they claim—that this six-hour program will prevent relationship breakdown—that will fall on its face.

CHAIR—Does anybody claim that?

Ms Haynes—Yes, the educators were.

CHAIR—You are saying that educators have claimed that a six-hour program will prevent marriage breakdown?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—I have never heard that claim.

Ms Haynes—Okay. Perhaps in speaking to you they are speaking to someone within their own field. But when we as external evaluators asked educators basically what they saw they were doing and what their mission was and so on, that was a very clear statement to us. They were very strong advocates.

Mr Schwartzkoff—Certainly our general point—and it is a point that we come across time and time again in many fields—is that people often set themselves unrealistic evaluation goals. So one of the things that we are saying in this field is: be clear, sensible and realistic about your goals and you have got a much better chance of getting a relevant and positive evaluation.

Mr McCLELLAND—So you are saying that these pre-marriage education programs more or less flag to the couple, 'Expect that through your married life there will be problems and, when you confront them, these are the avenues available to help you through them'?

Mr Schwartzkoff—Exactly.

Ms Haynes—There was very clear feedback that that was very beneficial. We found, particularly in the follow-up interviews, that people were able to remember the one sentence, and they said, 'Oh, yes. I

remember about the conflict stuff.' They were able to remember that one sentence. They also said they did not feel skilled to deal with that, but that it sat there as an issue. They felt they had more distance in the particular incident and would look at problem solving strategies.

CHAIR—But if you come back to what people like Bradbury and Stanley are now saying, it is that, on the basis of the research done to date, programs are not going to inoculate people or their marriage against all the contingencies and exigencies that might arise; that, in fact, if a program has got a period of effect of, perhaps, six years or so, that might be the best that we could expect from the programs. You would hope that as people go through the life cycle of life changes, they would plug in again to other things to meet the new circumstances that they are facing.

Ms Lord—I think that highlights something else that was evident in the research. I think there is a point to be made about what happens at a theoretical level and at a management level in relation to the service of those who are in the field doing the reading, and what happens with the educators at the coalface. A lot of them are part-time workers; some of them may only work one or two weekends a year or something like that. What often was reflected was a lack of technical knowledge on their part, even though this stuff is emerging.

I think we are dealing with a field where it is emerging at this level but so far the trickle down effect has not happened enough. Many of them expressed concerns that they did not feel theoretically sound enough in what they were doing. They were really caring and responsive and trying to assist couples to make sure they did not have problems later on, and doing a good job of that, but the theoretical component and the educative component for themselves in that more theory based stuff probably is an area that was highlighted as needing some work. And there are factors, of course, in that.

CHAIR—In your intervention strategy you speak about relying on Halford's work on three levels of intervention, on primary, secondary and tertiary. Have you spoken to Kim Halford about that in terms of its application to the field?

Ms Haynes—He was a key informant. He was initially on the steering committee so, yes, we have spoken to him.

CHAIR—With respect, it seems to me that you have not critically discussed this approach in terms of its application. For example, if you look at his paper, either the one that is published or the one that is headed 'Appendix 1', there is a table in there which basically says that the primary level of intervention—if I can put it in my words—is pretty useless. If you look at the secondary intervention in the sense which he used it, taking the national institutes of mental health model in the first place, that is talking about intervention in terms of the characteristics of the personnel involved. If you come from a background where your parents have divorced, to take one example, then the data shows—it does not meet any specific case, simply the data—there is a greater chance that you will have marital problems and divorce. I think the latest research even bears that out once again.

The problem, it seems to me, with your primary, secondary and tertiary model is that you have taken them out of context. You have taken a model of intervention looking at the characteristics of the people

involved and then applied it to the way in which you mass market the program.

Ms Haynes—With respect, Halford is presenting a model of primary, secondary and tertiary intervention. We referred to him specifically because he is the only person we could find who actually documented the notion that maybe we need to look at levels of intervention. We made no attempt to tie our levels of intervention to Halford's specific levels of intervention. In fact, the notion of levels of intervention was raised by a number of key informants in the area, not with reference to Halford's specific thing but more in relation to the notion of a community development perspective.

CHAIR—But what you are saying confirms what I am putting to you. Halford has used levels of intervention in the way in which the national institutes of mental health use them. You are using levels of intervention in terms of service delivery.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—So they are two different things.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—And we should not base what you say about levels of service delivery on Halford. That is why I asked you whether you had spoken to Halford about this.

Ms Haynes—The notion of levels of intervention and the need for a more strategic approach was raised by many informants but he is the only one who actually documents and presents a model, and it is clearly informed by his perspective.

CHAIR—You say it is clearly informed by his perspective but I am putting to you that the way in which you use it is in terms of—if I can put it as broadly and crassly as this—advertising how you get bums on seats from particular categories of people that you might want to. His categorisation of interventions, as I understand him, is that it is related to the levels of relational difficulties between participants—between couples, whether married or unmarried or whatever. I am saying to you that to translate that categorisation, which is appropriate in a mental health perspective—to use American terminology—into what is basically service delivery, advertising, attracting people, you are taking apples and calling them oranges.

Ms Haynes—The mental health perspective is not the only perspective that uses the terms primary, secondary and tertiary. We refer to it quite clearly as drawing from community development and health education.

CHAIR—But you just told me that the reason that you took Halford as a model is that he is the one who has documented this and that this was the only model that had been documented.

Ms Haynes—No. In the conclusions, we have not said we are presenting Halford's model.

CHAIR—I know you are not but to get to those conclusions you start off with an intervention model

which Halford refers to, based on the NIMH. It is from there that you then take the jump to your service delivery intervention. I am saying that that is a jump you cannot take so any conclusions you draw from that cannot be based on Halford.

Ms Haynes—It was not solely based on Halford.

CHAIR—Who else was it based on? You have not referred to anyone but Halford and Behrens.

Ms Haynes—Actually, I do. I refer to a number of key informants.

CHAIR—So this is anecdotal evidence from key informants?

Ms Haynes—That is actually the heart of the point. We discovered when we spoke to some of the newer providers in the field that were coming from a community development perspective, and a number of the providers in organisations that were attempting to expand their services into areas that were not their traditional fields, that when they attempted to develop those new services they needed to incorporate a health education and community development perspective. Relationships Australia in Western Australia and, to a certain extent, Relationships Australia in Queensland have attempted, at a local organisational level, to do exactly that—to incorporate, if you want to say it in your words, a crass marketing campaign.

But it appears to us that they recognised, in their attempts to look at their service delivery in many of the key issues that we raised, that to get bums on seats there needed to be a primary level intervention which was straight out advertising—'Yes, relationships are work.' 'Yes, you need to do something early about them.' 'They are worth working on and so on.' That was a primary level intervention.

Another type of primary intervention was that a number of organisations did advertising campaigns. They went on the radio and talked about relationships as such. These were small scale things but they were an attempt to engage people and build awareness of the need.

CHAIR—I am not arguing with that. And just so that it is clear, I am not describing those campaigns as crass. There is a place for them. I was just trying to draw a distinction between what Halford and the national institutes of mental health seem to be talking about in terms of intervention. What you are talking about in terms of intervention is basically what do you do to attract people to these programs. That is what your intervention is—

Ms Haynes—At a primary level.

CHAIR—What I hear you saying is that your conclusions about that are basically motivated by what the key informant has told you.

Ms Haynes—Yes, essentially. At this point it was documented. The only person that we could find that refers—

CHAIR—I understand that, but do you concede that Halford is not talking about what you are talking

about?

Ms Haynes—Yes, there is no argument.

CHAIR—One cannot say, 'Halford said this. Therefore, we are going to do this and this is the conclusion.' There is no argument.

Ms Haynes—And we have not. We have separated them.

CHAIR—Again, it depends on how one reads it. I have spoken to Halford and spent some time with him. What he says to me, in terms of interventions, is that you have to use key transition or life cycle points. The three points he identified for me as key intervention points were: pre-marriage, the birth of a first child and post-divorce separation. He conceded that, if you are using secondary intervention the way you are using it, that is not the same as the way in which he is using it. There is an unreality about it.

You cannot say on his model, the national institute of mental health's model, that secondary intervention is relevant for those people who are more likely to have problems in their relationships because their parents have divorced or they have been cohabiting or they had a child when a teenager or any from the list of those sorts of things you have documented. The unreality is that you cannot ask people questions like, 'Have you been cohabiting?' or 'Did your parents divorce?' or 'Did you have a child when you were a teenager which may have been given away for adoption?' and then say that, if so, they had better go to a program.

Ms Haynes—That is interesting. When I discussed that issue with him, and it is not dealt with in here, he actually talked to me about doing just that and that his experience was that he could undertake screening, but not in a mass sense, and could promote programs which basically were advertised, 'If you are a child of this and this, you may well have a particular need for—'

Ms Lord—It was a part of his screening process, wasn't it?

Ms Haynes—Not only as screening but as a promotion—

CHAIR—His screening process where he has got people into his program.

Ms Haynes—But he also discussed with me the notion that, in the context of discussing ideas, he could see that done well and properly it was not out of the realms of reality and practice to specifically promote programs for those people.

CHAIR—I spoke to him last Friday.

Ms Lord—He obviously has some new information.

Ms Haynes—In fact, it was my discussions with him as a researcher that alerted us to that.

CHAIR—To be fair to him, and I do not want to be seen to be misquoting him in any way, I do not think he was saying that you could not do that. I think he was saying

that, if you are talking about a universal approach, there are considerable difficulties if you are doing it on the basis of people identifying some characteristic that puts them into a secondary category. Given what David Mace said about people having this belief that relationships are private and natural, you already have to get over those taboos, let alone any others.

Ms Haynes—This goes into the realms of discussing what could and could not work. We also attempted to convey that, while the conventional wisdom is that you would not want to put all these negative things out and people would not want to come to you, that was also contradicted in the focus group by the sense that people clearly got engaged around problems.

CHAIR—Hope springs eternal.

Ms Haynes—We are simply pointing out that we saw it as our role to point out that, as a service delivery issue, it presents a real dilemma. There is the commonsense wisdom that people do not want to come in and deal with all their problems, and in focus groups they clearly said that as well. 'We don't want to go to that, that's for people with problems,' they said.

Ms Lord—Certainly in the post-marriage group, or the older group, there was clear evidence that they went seeking education at crisis times.

Ms Haynes—And that is paradoxical and contradictory and human nature, I guess.

CHAIR—If I go back to people like Stanley and Silliman, the categories of those people we are talking about now is a three-part characterisation. I am talking about the program or the material or what is delivered rather than how you attract people.

Ms Lord—The content.

CHAIR—What it is will become clear when I describe the three parts. Firstly, there is what they call awareness raising, into which they put things like PREPARE and Focus—the inventories. Secondly, they talk about information provision and, thirdly, there is skills training. On my observation most of those more popular programs, at least the premarital and, probably, to some extent, the post-wedding—I am not sure about the separation and step families' programs—tend to be a combination of the second and third categories. Probably there is more of information sharing than the skills training, but there is some attempt, not merely to demonstrate skills, but actually to provide some opportunities for training.

Ms Lord—I think the majority that we saw use the Focus-PREPARE inventories, usually on a couple-to-one basis.

CHAIR—But that was as a separate—

Ms Lord—As an awareness.

CHAIR—As far as I am aware, it is only Centacare in Adelaide that tries to combine Focus into a group program.

Ms Haynes—Of the programs that—

CHAIR—Yes. I am not saying that it is not successful, but it has not attracted huge numbers. That is my understanding of the survey. Given that that is the way that the field is developing, and given that Focus and PREPARE are relatively new in Australia—I think Focus has been here only since the start of this decade and PREPARE a bit before that, the early eighties, I think, was when PREPARE was first introduced—and given that they have become relatively successful, should we be trying to encourage all service providers to offer each of those categories?

Ms Lord—There was certainly a lot of support for the joint process, particularly in the pre-marriage area. There was a lot of support from the workers to pick up important issues. It also gave them a little bit of individual time in the feedback session that they had. I think that the changes that have currently been made to PREPARE and ENRICH will highlight the issues of domestic violence, and things like that, more readily, so there will be an opportunity to do that, too, in the follow-up session. It seems like a good combination. From what we got from the field, people, particularly the educators, found that quite effective.

CHAIR—Should it be an ideal or an aspiration? I am not trying to be prescriptive, but surely we can say something about where we would like things to go, even if our knowledge is imperfect at this stage, and we accept that more research will provide—

Ms Lord—There was some cynicism about it in the Focus groups about the inventory taking. One girl had nicknamed it Dexter, the old computer, and people also mentioned that they lied in filling out the form in order to make sure that they got compatible scores. So that was an important piece of feedback.

CHAIR—That really was not my point. Should we be encouraging the service providers—because there is a range of what is provided—to provide each of those components? Should we be encouraging them to say that if you are a service provider, one aspect of what is accepted in the field is to do the awareness stuff, whether it is through PREPARE or Focus, or some other program—

Ms Haynes—Can I just clarify that? When you say ‘awareness raising’, are you really talking about the inventories?

CHAIR—Yes. I am specifically taking this from a paper which is referred to in your literature survey, a paper by Silliman, Stanley, Coffin, Markman and Jordan which has not been published yet, according to this. In strategies for prevention they say that there are three approaches: the assessment approaches, for which they give examples of Focus and PREPARE; the information awareness approaches, for which they give some American examples which are not pertinent here; and then the skills training approaches, of which they give examples of things like relationship enhancement, couple communication and prep. There has been considerable development of the first part of that in the last decade. According to our figures there are more

couples actually doing an inventory now than are doing a group program. There has been a huge expansion in that area.

Ms Haynes—When we talked with the Focus group participants, there was a clear indication of that. Some of them said, 'If we can do it privately as a couple and do not have to go as a group, we will,' and that was clearly very attractive to a wide range of people.

CHAIR—What I am saying is that, as an aspiration, as a goal to be achieved and given that the Commonwealth has a stake in this and that we are putting an inadequate amount of money into it and we have to have some policy about what you are putting the money into, it ought to be at least acceptable at this stage as to where it is going. Should we be encouraging service providers to offer programs at each of those strategic levels or ways—that is, offer programs of awareness raising, offer what they call the informational type programs and offer the skills training programs?

Ms Haynes—I do not know if we are in a position to make that recommendation.

CHAIR—If you do not want to, I am not asking you to. I am just asking whether you have a view on it.

Ms Lord—It would only be a personal comment about it.

Ms Haynes—Certainly the issue of options of modes of education was clearly very important. People wanted options across the board and they wanted the sense of having options there.

CHAIR—Something that I am curious about is this. Given the popularity of PREPARE and Focus in the last decade, I can understand that from a cultural point of view, it deals with those myths about relationships being private, so it is just you. The fear of couples going to programs is the 'will I have to disclose something about our relationship to the whole group?' sort of attitude. It is flexible, it requires less infrastructure, it is portable, it appeals to the tick a box sort of mentality that we live in these days and it is much more private. That explains to me to some extent why it is becoming attractive for many people to do that sort of program rather than a group program.

I am curious about why the agencies that mainly service the non-church field—that is, largely Relationships Australia in their various state guises but a few other agencies such as COPE in Adelaide and one or two others—have generally not offered or have been unsuccessful in providing these sorts of programs? Have they not marketed them or what?

Ms Haynes—I guess this goes back to the point made earlier in terms of trying to tease out with organisations the rationale behind why they offer certain types of programs. I do not know whether we are in a position to comment as to why they specifically do not offer PREPARE.

CHAIR—Some do; I am not saying they do not. The question in the survey was:

Does the agency offer Focus, PREPARE, REFocus, ENRICH or any other inventory? Yes/No.

Then there were some details about it. I thought that was fairly clear to people in the field. One agency that will remain unnamed said, 'We don't know what an inventory is.' If you look at the others in that sort of civil celebrant area, if I can put it that way, when you look at what is actually provided, it is very little, yet this has been highly successful in terms of people attending elsewhere. It seems to me that if you look at why people would want to attend, it meets the cultural criteria of the age that it is not people having to stand up and disclose their relationship in a small group or a larger group.

Ms Haynes—Can I answer in somewhat of a roundabout way because I prefer to answer more structurally about our observations about the field and why certain things were happening and certain things were not in terms of cross-fertilisation of information and so on. We had a sense that some of these decisions were often just based on tradition—a sense of, 'This is our patch, this is what we do, this is our particular niche of the market.' In fact, it was often expressed in those terms—'This is our niche of the market.'

It does not surprise me that some of the educators outside the church based organisations said, 'What is an inventory?' because there was quite clearly the impression that they were saying, 'We do not professionally align ourselves with what you would understand as marriage and relationship education,' even though they were doing that.

They do not see that as their professional orientation or their body of knowledge. They would tend, for example, to see themselves as social workers or educators or counsellors or therapists. Frankly, I had the experience of going to some agencies and talking about national conferences, and people said, 'What national conferences? Oh, okay.' So clearly there was an assumption from each sector, with both sides in a sense pointing the finger at each other at times and saying, We do this. You do that other thing.' Often, it was ill informed—and in every direction.

We attempted to point out that each of those areas was, firstly, often doing a lot of service development, as we found out. This was very contradictory for us, because we found that on the one hand a lot of people were expressing a sense of frustration—'We have got all these ideas, but it is not quite happening'—and, on the other hand, everywhere people were talking about developing programs, but not necessarily sharing resources or approaches across the board, and not getting together and saying, 'Look, we do this and it really works.'

Mr McCLELLAND—There is a strong recommendation in your report that there should be attempts to develop if not national best practice at least better practice on a more widespread basis. How much do you think those petty jealousies, for want of a better term, are going to prevent that occurring?

Ms Haynes—We had a sense in some sectors—as I was saying this morning before we came in—of the timing of this being very important. We clearly noted that many people were saying to us, 'We have been through tremendous change structurally over the past five years, with funding and the loss of the peak body, and so on.' In a sense, they were recovering from that disorientation. We came in right at that time, and so we got expressed both their frustrated vision for the future, if I can put it that way, and their resentments from the past. But also there was a sense of, 'We are not quite there yet, but now we are talking about

getting some issues on the agenda.' For all we know, the field may well have moved substantially on, even since the time that we came in. Nonetheless, having said that, there is still a sense of competitive funding environments and a proprietorial approach: 'This is our patch and we are going to keep it.'

CHAIR—I wanted to come to funding, but I did not want you to have the sense that this was an interrogation for three hours. To what extent do you think that what you have been talking about is reinforced by the fact that the peak bodies which are funded by the Attorney-General's Department appear to me to represent interests or interest areas rather than program delivery? By that I mean that you have got Relationships Australia funded by the Attorney-General's Department, and Centacare Australia and Family Services Australia funded. Looking across them, all of them have agency members who provide services across the whole range of subprograms.

That seems to me to reinforce the notion of lobbying for a particular area—that is, we are lobbying to make sure Relationships Australia or Centacare Australia or whoever else gets funding into their areas. Say we had either one peak body that represented no particular organisational base from a sector, or else several peak bodies that represented, say, preventive programs—such as relationship and marriage education and perhaps family skills—versus the counselling-mediation area as a distinct area? Is that a factor in what you are describing?

Ms Haynes—I do not know that we could comment on whether the peak body system works, as such. Almost across-the-board, the general points from our point of view were that, however it is achieved, there is a need for more diversity in service delivery, a wider range of services and a wider range of types of organisations. While educators themselves were clearly disoriented, in some sectors it was not across-the-board. As we say, clearly some educators actually do not align themselves—for a number of reasons—with the current professional bodies. So that would be a factor that would need to be addressed.

The issue, from a service point of view, is really the cross-fertilisation of ideas and the opening up of service delivery options and really thrashing out issues of values and objectives and so on. We felt it appeared that in future the fact that the educators had, in a sense, to struggle to restructure, in order to overcome some of the isolation that had clearly occurred once they had lost their own peak body—and actually to have a conference to draw people in, and also to have to go to other services and go outside their normal bounds—might all, in the long term, pay off.

Ms Lord—I think there was also a further factor in that, which was that the division between premarriage and other services related to marriage is sometimes a false boundary. If the goal is to prevent relationship breakdown, is there a clear delineation of where education actually occurs? Some couples need counselling as part of the process, which is still fairly educational but may also be dealing with other issues, and some couples in the actual education process need more than they are getting.

There were some concerns raised about those boundaries and whether they were actually useful boundaries to have. Education actually is something that underpins all the services of mediation, family skills, counselling, preparation and intervention later on; and perhaps that view of it being at the base of, or across, all services—rather than being a separate delineation on its own—is something worthy of consideration.

Mr McCLELLAND—On that view, Ms Haynes, you referred to values. I assume there that you are talking about organisational values as opposed to religious or cultural values.

Ms Haynes—In a sense, the issue of the impact of those on what you do at a service delivery level would be a relevant issue for any professional organisation.

Mr McCLELLAND—Yes. But, for instance, if there is a national summit and a national conference, obviously organisations are going to come together with different religious, philosophical or cultural values; and they will not be resolved. You would not get commonality amongst all organisations but you could get a commonality as to how those values are factored in to their programs.

Ms Haynes—Yes.

Ms Lord—We do get some difficulty with funding issues, again around that division—where LAFS may be funding, but the other bodies they are affiliated with may be funding more—when you say to them that they have to be in a peak body. The agenda of the external organisation that has funding involvement as well becomes a major issue in peak body decision making processes, doesn't it?

CHAIR—I would like to come to the topic of funding, after we take a short break.

Proceedings suspended from 11.03 a.m. to 11.16 a.m.

CHAIR—We will now resume and go to the question of funding. In your report there are a few things I noted. For example, on page 89 in the second column about halfway down you highlight the enormous discrepancy in funding per participant. I can say from some of the analysis we are trying to do at the moment, however you measure that—whether you measure it per participant, per participant hour, per course hour, or per whatever—that there are enormous discrepancies. There are many hundred per cent discrepancies in funding.

You also say on page 56, concerning the agencies:

Nor do they generally tie the LAFS funding they receive directly to the programs they deliver. Rather, it appears more typical for funds to be pooled and for organisations to reallocate resources according to their own program priorities.

This suggests to me, although you did not put it in these words, that there is a degree of cross-subsidisation going on between programs—

Ms Lord—We were not able to collect accurate enough information to make a clear statement about what happens, but generally the money goes into the bucket. It may well get allocated to marriage education, but where offices have regional branches or outreach programs, it may be used in head office for admin and the program may be somewhere else. It was incredibly difficult to—

CHAIR—You are not saying it specifically but you are saying there is a pooling. Whether that is used to cross-subsidise is not something you can comment on.

Ms Lord—It needs detailed financial analysis.

CHAIR—And that was not available to you?

Ms Lord—The people we dealt with did not have that kind of breakdown. Where there were central bodies that were in charge, often the central management would control the funds and allocate—

CHAIR—Nor was it provided to you, I take it, by LAFS?

Ms Lord—No.

Ms Haynes—I am not sure that even agencies could have provided it. I guess it depends how far you want to go in totalling the full costs of programs in the current mode of operation. Many of the larger, more sophisticated organisations, in the way they actually calculated their funds, were able to make the programs self-funding or able to recover some funds and so on. Those programs tended to have it worked out, for example, that this program takes 0.5 of a secretary and 0.1 of the capital costs and so on. However, many of the smaller organisations clearly had no idea, in a sense, where the money came from.

So there was cross-subsidisation in financial terms, we suspect, but there was also a question of how far you want to go in terms of the true costs of the program. This refers to my earlier point about the service delivery structure of the church based organisation. There was clearly a lot of philosophical subsidy. They took the view that since they as an organisation were committed to running the program, then therefore they would subsidise it. We suspected that that may mean, in some cases, that accountability in terms of costs was not necessarily a priority. There was a fuzziness in lots of different sectors for lots of different reasons.

CHAIR—All I am getting at is this. Reading what you have said—and I will not quote the other paragraphs that say similar things—I know this was not the particular point of your evaluation, but there is no transparency of the funding mechanisms. That is, there is no way of measuring money received for output, however you want to measure output?

Ms Lord—We would say it was very complex when we looked at things like if you—

CHAIR—That is a nice way of saying what I said more bluntly, is it not?

Ms Lord—You have counsellors who might be doing the feedback on the PREPARE-Enrich but an educator who administered it. There are issues like that where people who have a multi-level of skills are paid one salary. As Fran said, the allocation process was not—

CHAIR—But there is nothing it seems to me in the funding mechanism that enables that to be identified. In fact, if one tries to identify it, it becomes very difficult.

Ms Lord—It also raised issues of accounting procedures with LAFS funding, which we know is across all the services—how you account and how they keep records and the cost of such a system to what are under-funded.

CHAIR—You do not have to answer this. You can comment if you want to, but it is more of a policy decision, I suppose. There seems to be something wrong with the system where you can get such variations in funds per participant or per participant hour or per course or whatever.

Ms Lord—Yes, sometimes people incorrectly filled in the form as well, so there were other issues aside from just the funding issue. Or where they had experimented with the program that was providing the figures, there was a blow-out because we were doing a one-off and all our educators were in for that day. There were a lot of variations.

CHAIR—I understand that but we have taken survey figures over two years, so it is not just one year or your latest program or anything like that. Comparing them to the funds received, all it does is reinforce what you have observed as well.

Ms Haynes—I think we just make the clear structural observation that in order to determine cost effectiveness, data management and basic information are not standardised or uniformly collected.

CHAIR—Will FAMQIS overcome that problem?

Ms Haynes—There certainly appears to be an attempt to do that. Our concern about FAMQIS, in a sense, is that it was still very developmental at the time that we were writing this. My only concern about FAMQIS in relation to this particular program was, in a sense, not to put the cart before the horse. The final recommendation that we made was that there needed to be much more work. In a sense, there needed to be information and data management systems set up now but they would need to be reviewed as information came on. We would be concerned about setting performance indicators based only on current practice. We felt as though that current practice in itself needed to be reviewed. We were concerned that setting performance indicators based only on what is there now, in the context of the kind of recommendations that we are making, was kind of an end product. We saw the field needed much more development than that. My only question about FAMQIS, as it was presented, was why we added, in a sense, the notion of the special projects, so that there was a specific attempt to clarify realistic performance indicators as part of that and gear data management towards those performance indicators. It is really a stage of development, rather than—

Mr McCLELLAND—In your report you do not comment on the qualities or competence throughout this sector. Is that because there are not yet those performance indicators and quality standards? I can imagine by virtue of human nature, for instance, if you look at the teaching profession, there are going to be some very good ones and there are going to be some very poor ones.

It might be a case that, if so much public funding is being provided in this area, very poor counsellors or educators should be scrutinised. There does not seem to have been, at this stage, any diving into that area. Is that because there are not, as yet, performance indicators determined?

Ms Lord—I think there are two factors. Firstly, we need to set a framework here that the view of marriage education as a field was something we could see developmentally, as it related to counselling and mediation, in terms of its level of development. It is still in the stages of development where they had been probably counselling 10 years ago on these same issues. The funding issues were not clear; the databases

were not clear. It is in that stage of needing now to clarify those things and get them sorted out. There are the same issues around competence and standards of performance. They are now in process and being worked on to develop competency standards for adult educators. We were inclined to say that is a process in train. They are not ready yet for evaluation. There was not a lot of point in us going down that path really because it is in development.

Mr McCLELLAND—Sure. But it is something that needs to be done down the track.

Ms Haynes—We do make the point that LAFS needs to work with the field, and with whatever direction that needs to be, to push it along and ensure that happens. Our understanding of state of play, as it was presented to us at that time—and I recognise that the field may well have moved on since then—was that certainly there has been some work on developing core competencies for educators. When we started the consultancy, these were readily accepted by the field. However, when we got out into the field we discovered that was not the case. People expressed a range of general concerns about them and, while we might adhere to them, others are not going to.

I think they are just a natural process of development in the field. There are fears and anxieties about what we are going to have to do with these things called competencies. I think it is work in progress. That is how we saw it and that is how we left it.

CHAIR—I understand that competencies have been finalised and at least adopted at a formal level. Should we, for example, be encouraging the field to have all educators reach those competencies within a certain period of time? Is that unreasonable?

Ms Haynes—There could be a range of developmental strategies through that. We were proposing that LAFS and the field really need to get together and determine—not just let it go—a professional development strategy. One part of that is the issue of training and standards.

CHAIR—This picks up a bit on the funding issue. You said that LAFS ought to be getting together with the field to do a number of things. If you look at the history, and this goes back to your references about peak bodies between about 1987-88 and about 1983-84, it seems to me that LAFS did support a number of projects which were aimed at developing the field—the employment of a national trainer and the early work on the competencies. Even some advertising pilots were run and there was research from the University of South Australia. Since about 1994, that has all come to a halt. Whilst I understand this is a policy question, and one on which you may or may not be informed by the process of the evaluation, is it a fair observation to say that some of the things which you were pointing to ought to be funded by LAFS and have not been funded by LAFS?

Ms Haynes—We can comment on what could happen in the future.

CHAIR—I am happy to accept that comment.

Ms Haynes—I think it is fairly clear we are reiterating the point we made earlier that the field is at a nexus in terms of its development. There are new players coming into the field who are approaching the job

of marriage and relationship education quite differently, perhaps equally as validly as providers with a history in the field. They clearly—the ones we spoke to, anyway—are not allied to or do not see themselves as part of this other process and vice versa.

There was a lot of finger pointing by the current providers at all these new people 'who don't know what they're doing'. I thought, 'Maybe they're just bringing a new perspective.' They were new enough for us not to be able to comment on whether they were or were not doing a good job. But they were certainly bringing a new perspective and attempting to tackle areas that some of the other providers were not attempting to tackle. Some of those areas are, as we point out, quite complex so, yes, it is valid to question. Okay, if there is a new provider and they are targeting the harder social groups in the community, that may well be a harder task.

Mr McCLELLAND—That may be a benefit that is obtained from national forums, conferences and so forth where, even if they do not reach agreement, they see that there is an organisation doing this kind of work for this particular group of people. If someone comes to their door and that is not their focus, they can refer them to an organisation they think might be more attuned. Perhaps more than any area, this is going to be very much a situation of horses for courses: some programs are going to suit some couples and be completely foreign to others.

Ms Haynes—And, in a sense, to go beyond—in the sense of bringing people together to stimulate debate and ideas and the sharing of ideas—perhaps the field needed to be encouraged to go beyond simply marriage. Perhaps the field needed to be encouraged to go to non-English speaking background, special needs groups. Do not assume that the field holds all the knowledge about marriages and relationships or marriage and relationship education. There may well be other people quite outside the field who have a different perspective from many of the agencies.

It is when we start offering our programs to a non-English speaking background group that suddenly nothing we have done in the past is working any more; our cultural assumptions are thrown up in our face. This is where your question earlier about values comes into play. It is when some of the current providers, out of a genuine desire to be innovational and meet community needs, start to go out to these groups and feed back to us. We get out there and suddenly we do not know what we are doing. That is fine because then we have to develop new ways; we have to develop new ways of talking about our programs, promoting them. We might have to change the structure. Maybe a weekend is not going to work. We have always thought weekends worked.

Mr McCLELLAND—Or even perhaps to say, 'Look, that's not our cup of tea. But there is an organisation here that can do it.'

Ms Haynes—Yes. We felt that the field could really benefit. Rather than just trying to solve problems themselves, they can say, 'There's a non-English speaking group over there.' We have got to solve that problem and open the field up and bring those people in. It is at the point for that to happen at the moment because organisations—not all of them, but many of them—are looking outwards and are really keen to do that. We felt, certainly in terms of structure, LAFS could play a role as, we understand, it has with a number of other fields of mediation.

Ms Lord—There was a further factor in that, which was the cost factor of actually facilitating innovation and expansion. The major agencies we went to visit were very strapped for cash and did not have the option of sending educators who worked only three weekends a year to national conferences, and they could not afford to pay that for themselves because the return on the work is not that high. So there were those kinds of logistical issues which opened up the concept of some kind of regionalisation, even, rather than just a national level approach. Advertising and running costs were a major factor. Most of them were, to use the term, underfunded or underresourced in being able to actually reach out, so there is the need for some kind of national strategy that would assist with that.

Mr McCLELLAND—You recommended in that context a national journal sponsoring something like that?

Ms Lord—Yes. We also talked about the expansion of resources—which you picked up on earlier, on the private versus public—and we found that the majority of people we dealt with in the community sought private means of finding their education. They did go to bookshops and they did read magazines. So the things that would be available for them to access privately would have some value. And there is an enormous amount of resource in the educational organisations that we talked to. They are very skilful and knowledgeable.

Ms Haynes—I spoke to one particular key informant who I thought offered quite a good perspective. It was just by chance when I was ringing her about something else, and she was one of those very useful people. She was actually a community development project officer in one of the agencies, so she was not strictly employed to do marriage and relationship education under this particular subprogram, but she was working with educators to extend their programs to cover a wider range.

I asked her what was her experience of working with educators. I said, 'That is not their normal mode of working; the way you work is not an educator's normal mode of working.' She said, 'Yes, it is actually'—and this was fed back to us by many managers and coordinators who feel the need to get out and promote or develop their services in a different way—'a different skill area. My skill as a community development person is that I know where to go for extra funding.' They had actually got partnership funding for some of their programs. She said, 'I know where to go to talk to the migrant resource centre, and I also know the pros and cons of doing that, and that often nobody is going to turn up'—just the very practical things that at the end of the day really influence service delivery at that level.

Many of the managers, for lots of reasons—a lot of them are part time and in some cases they have voluntary administrative and support staff—simply do not necessarily have the time or the training. This development aspect is actually a skill area in itself. It is not something that traditionally they have ever had to do. Anybody in the helping professions would have forever heard—I think this would be a commonly expressed view—that funding according to things like bums on seats, occasions of service, numbers of groups and so on does not always reflect the cost of those tasks to an organisation.

CHAIR—But we do not fund that way in this program. What is the rationale for the funding? I do not know, except that it is historical—whatever that means.

With regard to the funding, quite a number of groups expressed concern, I suppose would be a way of putting it, in their submissions and at hearings about the geographic funding basis of the new programs, particularly in metropolitan areas rather than in rural and regional areas. They basically said, 'The geographic allocation of funding in places like Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide is really a nonsense because we cover the whole area. We put in a tender to get funding in the western suburbs, in the eastern suburbs or in the northern suburbs, but the reality is that we cover the whole area. We always did, we will be in the future and therefore it does not achieve any purpose.' Did you have any feedback on that?

Ms Haynes—Not specifically.

Ms Lord—Not specifically on that. We had a lot of griping about the funding—mostly the inadequacy of it to meet the need for what they were attempting to do.

Ms Haynes—We make the observation that people clearly at that point—again, I do not know if funding categories have been clarified for that—were unclear of the rationale.

CHAIR—That is putting it mildly, yes. Concerning civil celebrants, as a generalisation—and correct me if your observation is different—it seems to me that in talking about pre-marriage education, those couples who get married in a church are much more likely to attend some sort of program, and it depends on the church. If it is the Catholic Church, it has probably got the highest attendance, followed by the Anglicans and then a drop-off after that.

On the other hand, couples married by a civil celebrant—and this is a generalisation but it is pretty close to the mark—almost never attend any sort of pre-marriage program, even though there are programs run by secular agencies such as Relationships Australia. I am asking the question bluntly: what is wrong with what the civil celebrants are doing or not doing?

Ms Haynes—We spoke to four of the representatives of civil celebrant bodies. They were surprisingly candid, I have to say, in their views. They were not at all on the defensive about it. They put it fairly squarely on several key areas. The first was the lack of training of civil celebrants. They felt that most of their members would consider this none of their business, to make an active referral. That was at the non-involved end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum it was put to me that there is also a group of civil celebrants who go the other way, who take on the role of quasi-counsellor and do it themselves, although that was presented as being a minority.

Mr McCLELLAND—With or without proper training?

Ms Haynes—Indeed.

Mr McCLELLAND—They just have a go?

Ms Haynes—Yes, that is how they see themselves. Of the people I spoke to, and I have no way of testing this out, they said, 'Look, most of my members don't but I ask people to go to marriage education. I have the brochures there and I tell them about it.' There were only a couple of people I spoke to who did that

and of those, their feelings were that only about 10 per cent of the couples they spoke to followed up on that.

Unfortunately, the providers themselves do not provide much challenge to those, except for one, and because it was only one it was very clear—

CHAIR—Is this the one in Melbourne?

Ms Haynes—Yes. He is not connected to a church organisation and is clearly very committed to pre-marriage programs. He goes out and promotes them. I spoke to the civil celebrants in that area and they knew about the organisation. They had the brochures. They clearly do the legwork and go to the business meetings of those civil celebrants' organisations and actively promote. They clearly attracted more people to their programs.

Returning to the general point, of all the programs, without taking into account how an organisation promotes its programs and the referral network and so on, we felt as though one would not get an accurate picture of whether that program is attractive to the community or not.

Mr Schwartzkoff—A typical comment in the focus groups was for people to say, 'Relationship education at first blush sounds like a crazy idea. How can you teach that kind of thing?' Five minutes down the track they would say, 'Yes, the more I think about it, the more interesting and sensible and useful it sounds.' As they thought it through they said, time and again, 'Using civil celebrants is a very obvious way to promote this program. Why isn't that happening?'. As I say, there was a strong commonsense reaction that that is a whole avenue of promotion being largely neglected at this stage.

Ms Haynes—The civil celebrants that I spoke to did say, 'Yes, my constituents are resistant to it.'

CHAIR—I suspect most religious celebrants would say that too.

Ms Haynes—Indeed, that is what I was going to say. Having said that, they also said, 'And the organisations don't come near us. I have to go and approach the organisation to get the information.' So there is a two-way street through that. I say, 'What might make a difference?' They say, 'If the organisations came and spoke to us about what they do and work through our resistance.' Clearly, organisations are prepared to do that with priests and ministers. In fact, many of them said, 'We spend a lot of organisational time with our priests and ministers who make the wrong referrals and say the wrong things and so on.' So a lot of organisational time was actually spent on system maintenance of the referral system, but they are not putting the legwork into the civil thing.

Mr McCLELLAND—Perhaps that could be made a criteria for the registration of civil celebrants—that they have some experience or at least some education in the field and an affiliation?

Ms Haynes—Certainly, the people that I spoke to suggested that, if you want to do this, that would be a prime strategy.

CHAIR—But what you are saying, as I understand it, from the example of the Family Relationships

Institute in Victoria, is that they actively go out to obtain clientele from civil celebrants.

Ms Haynes—That is right.

CHAIR—When I look at the funding for the Family Relationships Institute in Victoria and, say, Relationships Australia in Victoria, they get the same amount of funding but the Family Relationships Institute obviously attracts a much greater clientele than does the other. I am not making a comment about them specifically but there you have two organisations of similar philosophy, I suppose, in that neither of them come from a church background which, you would think, would be trying to attract the same market.

Ms Haynes—Without referring to those particular organisations, I would say that some of these secular organisations also attempt to work with much more complex categories of clients as well and deal with more complex issues. So one could expect the need for higher professional standards in the sense that some of the secular organisations would have somewhat more specialised education programs as well, and that may reflect the different levels of funding.

CHAIR—I have to say that that is not reflected in the returns on their surveys.

Ms Haynes—In terms of some of the attempts to extend services to groups at the time that we were doing the survey, we make the observation that in relation to attempts to extend services to higher needs groups—more socially disadvantaged groups—if one incorporates more historical ways of approaching marriage and relationship education programs, for example, the programs may find themselves running into higher costs because of the need for higher expertise of staff and so on. That is a future concern that we raise. It was very new. But the assumption that you can just translate a weekend program with a basically high functioning group of people to another group of people who may have a whole host of different issues may not hold.

Mr McCLELLAND—You mentioned in your report somewhere that whether someone has or has not religious beliefs can itself be a factor indicating whether the marriage is likely to be successful or not. Is it the case that people who would most likely use one of the religious services because they had religious beliefs already had perhaps a greater commitment to the institution of a traditional marriage? Is that a fair comment? In that sense, in other words, I am probing your answer to the last question that it was sometimes more difficult for non-religious services to work in the area.

Ms Lord—Also those services tend to not provide as high a level of pre-marriage programs as they do post-marriage programs. They are doing more divorce-separation type work.

Mr McCLELLAND—The non-religious ones?

Ms Lord—Yes, the secular groups. Your point is valid in two ways. The research would indicate that couples that have a religious commitment are less likely to have a breakdown. They are probably not a high risk group, so they are not necessarily a target group. The question that raises is: are they the best target group for the funding? Although it does have impact on them for a period of years, are they the place for the funding to be located? That highlights the fact of secular organisations focusing in different areas and doing

outreach work into other aspects of the community in dealing with other issues which are more costly or require more skilled workers in areas like domestic violence or abuse or multicultural issues.

Ms Haynes—Even on the very commonsense notion, if you are providing programs to a different target group, you have to do extra program development and modify the program and get new resources and so on. There is a very commonsense reason as to why that may incur higher costs. You are just not readily picking up this program and running the same program. You may have to do a different program for each different group and design a different program for each different group.

CHAIR—In No. 3 of your recommendations, you say:

That in view of the current predominance of pre-marriage programs, there be a specific clarification of the objectives and reasonable outcomes of programs offered at this stage of relationship, compared with programs offered for participants in other stages of marriage or relationship.

Wouldn't we want a clarification of objectives and outcomes for programs at all stages of relationships?

Ms Haynes—Yes, and we do make that point. However, given the current state of play, and picking up the point we made earlier about the overstatement and to a certain extent corresponding understatement of reasonable performance objectives for that program, we felt it was important. Also we noticed when we first began this consultancy that there was a tendency to use the terms pre-marriage program and marriage and relationship education in general synonymously. It was quite a marked issue we had to deal with as consultants. We realised that many people were using the terms synonymously.

For some people in the field clearly their view of marriage and relationship education is quite limited to pre-marriage. We make the point that it is not surprising, given that 60 per cent of the participants receive pre-marriage services. It would be useful for specific assistance for organisations to clarify what are the performance indicators for pre-marriage programs, and having done that, what are they for different types of pre-marriage programs? That would be useful at this stage, but certainly not as an end product in itself.

CHAIR—Do you accept that that ought to be done for all programs, not just any one?

Ms Haynes—Yes, which was what the constant review of FAMQIS and setting strategic objectives for the whole range of other areas as well was for.

CHAIR—You comment on what you call an absence of critical debate. Can you suggest what you would propose in that regard?

Ms Lord—Aside from something terribly radical?

CHAIR—I am always reminded of Benjamin Disraeli's admonition to his fellow members of the House of Commons that it is easier to be critical than correct. What do you do?

Ms Haynes—We covered that earlier, in a sense, in the notion of the questions about opening up the

field and the role that LAFS could certainly play. If you are looking at stages of development, we felt that LAFS could certainly play a role, if it is feasible, in a national level conference, perhaps even encouraging the current structures to expand, promote and draw in educators who currently do not feel aligned with those particularly organisations. They might not normally come.

CHAIR—Which would be a reversal of policy, in that you are saying that LAFS should provide some funding as well as just rhetorical encouragement?

Ms Haynes—Yes. I think a period of development is warranted; also, encouragement of the fields. We can work at multiple levels here. We can set different standards at the grassroots level. Saying, 'You have to expand your services,' will create, 'I need more information in order to do that. Where do I go for that information? Is it within my field or do I need to go beyond my field?' We use as a particular example domestic violence.

As an aside on other areas, the feedback to us has been that, where organisations and educators grapple with the very complex issue of domestic violence because they have had to go out and stimulate their service delivery and think about what they do, it actually has great benefits for later professional development. That is just one issue that is immediately obvious. Certainly we can stimulate the field by setting performance examples, by pursuing the issue of professional standards and competencies and by encouraging pilot programs without concerns about, 'We're going to lose our funding if it fails.' That is a major inhibition against attempting new programs. People say, 'We won't get much funding if we attempt to experiment with this target group. If it doesn't work, we've just wasted $5,000 of our precious funds.' I just picked that figure out of the air.

CHAIR—Should there, for example, be a limited fund for pilot programs? Obviously government resources are limited, no matter who is in government, and you need to continue to fund that which is shown to be working. But is there some desirability for having some fund for pilot programs that says, 'You can have a small amount of money to help you try something out for a year or two'?

Ms Lord—I think that is a valid point in terms of what you were just saying and what I said earlier about the developmental stage of the industry or the sector: that there is clear evidence to us there were not enough resources for them to facilitate this stage of development for themselves. Their resources are stretched to the limit. Therefore, to move the sector to the next level there will have to be some kind of developmental strategy. That is quite a good suggestion that there be funding available for innovative and pilot programs that are then written up and shared.

Ms Haynes—I think the last point is, at the end of the day, the important part: that those pilot programs relate to the objectives in some way, and that they are written, documented and presented back to the field. We uncovered a number of educators who were clearly very shy—as I said, we covered a lot of development in the field. People were developing interesting things and squirreling them away, but did they want to share them with the rest of the field? No. It was not always because of proprietorial stuff. It was clearly that, as professionals, they were not used to opening their practice to outside scrutiny. That is just a professional development issue. Counsellors have to endure it, mediators have to endure it; educators may have to endure it and get used to it.

Mr McCLELLAND—I suppose the reverse side of the coin is that people who have funding for specific tasks such as conducting pre-marriage education might go through the motions for the sake of it. For instance, I recall that 15-odd years ago when we had ours the person who gave it to us was all but a ratbag. Within six weeks of being married, I found that having a broken leg was worth about two weeks of romance and then you are on your own! We had no advice, for instance, to contact the Tresillian Sisters when we had our first child, and things of that nature. It may be that the focus needs to look at resourcing as opposed to necessarily equipping.

Ms Lord—Yes. There seems to be a lot of room to move. I think, particularly as we have become more technology based, there is a lot of room to move in the development of resources for people to access that need not be high delivery cost in terms of books.

Mr McCLELLAND—Domestic violence might be a good example. It would be silly to spend an hour a session talking about how to overcome domestic violence for some people. But it may be very useful—for a female, most usually—to be told that if it arose as an issue in a relationship these are avenues which can be pursued. It may only take a two-minute reference to that sort of thing which could be of benefit later on.

Ms Haynes—If I could take the example you just raised of parenting and first parenting, clearly that is a particular topic that people are interested in. I can use that as an example of how the field can develop itself. My sense of the way many organisations go about developing programs for that type of group is that educators get together and talk about their own experience and modify an existing program based on their own experience, whereas an alternative way would be to toddle on down to the people with expertise in early childhood, go to Tresillian and incorporate what those providers have to say into the programs, rather than thinking we can only talk to ourselves. I know that sounds a bit critical but I think it reflects the state of development of the profession. And it just needs a little—

CHAIR—But there has been no attempt from what I can see, for example, to tag on to childbirth. Virtually everybody goes to childbirth education classes these days which teach you how to huff and puff, et cetera but nothing about the relationship. It seems to me, just looking, standing back from it, that that is an ideal opportunity to try to tag some relationship stuff on.

Ms Haynes—Some of the newer providers would come in with a very different world view and, because they are not locked in to marriage education, they would look at the issue somewhat more broadly. Perhaps, taking your point that they do not know about inventories—well, they do not know about inventories so they go about the task quite differently. That is a kind of backhanded advantage of not having pre-existing knowledge.

CHAIR—But is anybody tagging on? You say that is an approach. Is anybody doing that?

Ms Lord—Yes. We are talking about it but again resources are often an issue and there is one other issue that bears mentioning again—the historical aspect which is part of the nexus we talked about. There is a historical process about how we deliver these programs and how we design and develop them and they evolve and it does not involve much external input. The new providers are coming from slightly different

perspectives. This was reinforced very strongly in the Focus groups with young couples who were saying, 'The educators tend to look at us like we do not know much about relationships.' And, in fact, they were very highly informed and we were quite surprised at their level of education, albeit that they were reading material like Mars and Venus which was not terribly useful. They were at least accessing stuff. There was a clear indication to me that there has been a shift out there in young people. It is almost like a generational change and there is a need to address that, I think, because the couples that are coming in, some of the educators said, were far more informed than we were.

Mr McCLELLAND—Are they, without wanting to be elitist, from more affluent backgrounds? Are they from all levels of education or are they more likely to be from areas where the level of education is more sophisticated.

Ms Lord—At risk of cutting my throat now, the majority of the pre-marriage program catered to the middle to upper income range so they were the group that were predominantly being educated. They are the probably the least at-risk group, so that again is a development need.

Ms Haynes—Also, nobody had done that type of Focus group work. I understand that more work has been done since, but at the time we did it, it was really just a matter of our getting something on the board. But certainly, young people clearly said, 'We do communication skills at school now.' So at that level they had a self-perception. I guess what is interesting for us is the somewhat judgmental attitudes of educators saying that kids do not know. Young people were picking that up and saying, 'Actually we do know.' They look at the relationships of their generation and say, 'They have got to be kidding. What are those people going to tell us about communicating?'

We had examples of young people saying things like, 'I sit down with my boyfriend and give him a list.' There was actually this very active working through at whatever level and stage of relationship they were at. They were very offended by the notion that they did not take their relationships seriously. They were saying,'Maybe we are not married yet, but we do take it seriously and we work at it.' And what was interesting was that parents of young people in this age group also said, 'Yes. Our younger people are more informed on these issues than we were.'

Mr Schwartzkoff—In general in the Focus groups which had a very mixed range of people—different ages, different economic groups, and so on—it was striking, in a sense, the level of skill that people brought to the discussion. I mean they come to the Focus group having no idea what it was going to be about and they were faced with this topic. I found very interesting, as I say, the level of skill and sensitivity that were there—not always articulated very skilfully. There is real insight and feeling there that is quite striking.

Ms Lord—It is not surprising when you think about the fact that we have overhauled our education system and we have worked on community education for people through television, and all sorts of things. The result is now evident in some of that. There was a need for an attitudinal shift, I think, or a shift in the way some of the material was being presented.

CHAIR—I know that you thought three hours was a long time when we first scheduled it, but we could probably go on for longer. There is just one more thing I wanted to ask you about, even if only briefly.

Without going into it in a great deal of detail, in your section on domestic violence, there did not seem to be any suggestions of successful programs on domestic violence. I mean the research shows that things like inadequate communication skills and levels of aggression in relationships are predictors of dysfunction, marital distress, even domestic violence. There are some programs, such as the inventory sorts of programs, that would expose that and highlight some of those issues. At the level of domestic violence, if unacceptably high levels of aggression are exposed by way of whatever sort of program, in your experience is there something to actually deal with it? Again, it is easy to say that we can isolate it and identify it, but unless we can do something about it, then we are sort of wasting our time.

Ms Haynes—Indeed. I guess we made the point that at this stage the field itself has not grappled with the very complex service delivery and practice issues and, alarmingly, from our point of view, it has underestimated the complexity of the issues—not just in content of programs. That is certainly one issue. There were examples in the field of agencies which have attempted to grapple with the actual content of programs through that arm.

However, when we explored that further, many of those agencies, even where they had attempted to grapple very seriously with a complex issue, did not then have, for example, adequate safety procedures for what happens if you have a couple who have come in to do an inventory. They have not come in to disclose domestic violence; they have come in to do an inventory. We were particularly alarmed not that the change to prepare the inventory was happening—we think it is great that it is happening—but that, given the general lack of awareness of the complexity of the issue that we uncovered in the service providers, that was about to be implemented.

Our experience in previous research, and as a practitioner in the field for many years, is that the disclosure of domestic violence immediately places the woman at risk. It is particularly difficult. Any worker in the field would say that it will test the most skilled social worker, psychologist, counsellor—I do not care who you are. To suddenly uncover domestic violence while you are sitting there with a couple and then to know how to deal with that is a high-level skill. It is not a skill that a volunteer who has done a short training program will readily deal with. It can immediately place her at risk. Our research in other areas indicates that there are a whole host of practice issues.

A couple of the agencies have said that, since they themselves have done more work on domestic violence, they are suddenly sitting back and realising how much they have been missing. So once their awareness of domestic violence is raised, the awareness of incidents, we noted the general perception across many of the providers that the incidence among our population was going to be low and were merely pointing out that statistics in Australia indicated that that was not likely to be the case.

Furthermore, among those current providers who are dealing with this issue, what they are now starting to feed back is: 'Now that we have got social workers on board with previous experience in domestic violence, we are picking up more; now that we are specifically alert to the issue we are now picking up more. Not only are we picking up more but we are now beginning to develop some expertise in seeing how that dynamic is expressed specifically in the context of an education program—how we can notice that in a group program.' That is only just beginning in the field. But of particular concern is the general lack of awareness that once women disclose, they are unsafe, and that the worker may be at risk as well.

Mr McCLELLAND—There are two differences of philosophy there too, aren't there? One view would be that violence is unacceptable and that the victimised partner, usually the woman, be advised that it is a police matter and that she should get out of the relationship. The other school of thought would be that domestic violence can be cured or dealt with, hence it is worthwhile proceeding with an education program. I would imagine they are the two dilemmas that would confront a social worker in dealing with the problem.

Ms Haynes—I do not know that there would be many advocates for saying that domestic violence could be dealt with in an education program, particularly of the nature of the education programs currently provided. At the end of the day, what we are saying is that, yes, they are all relevant questions for the field, they are really substantial practice issues and the only way you can make decisions about those sorts of things, in relation to this particular field, is to get in and work on it and talk about what is going on in your practice. That is what is missing.

Mr McCLELLAND—Yes. But if it is not an education issue, then it becomes a police matter and a marriage breakdown issue?

Ms Haynes—Yes. Once the field gets comfortable with that, it goes probably through the process, 'Are we meant to deal with this? No, we are not.' That is the typical staff development process: I do not want to deal with this because it means that I am personally going to have to deal with it. It is a staff development issue, to skill people up who do not have the expertise in dealing with domestic violence that they are not to, to skill them up in how to talk about it, how to refer appropriately, how to give appropriate information and so on, and to decide, as an organisation, what the actual approach is. So some organisations may well have a whole range of domestic violence intervention programs that they can utilise, whereas other programs do not. A particular example is an organisation that is running anger management programs, conflict resolution programs, and has no screening for domestic violence. It is common wisdom in the domestic violence field that one of the prime ways men seek help when they are in trouble is to go to an anger management program.

Mr McCLELLAND—I suppose you have just got to look at the front benches of parliament really!

Ms Haynes—The alarming thing was that the particular coordinator I spoke to had virtually no knowledge of the issue of domestic violence.

CHAIR—Is that why we are on the back benches, Rob! There are educational programs that are directed at domestic violence. You do not go that far in discussing that in your evaluation.

Ms Haynes—We are suggesting tertiary level programs requiring a high level of skill. It is not that they cannot be done, but in the context of the current state of the subprogram—

CHAIR—They are not being done.

Ms Haynes—They are not done. We were concerned that agencies perhaps saw this as an area for funding, and agencies that were saying to us, 'No, we wouldn't do programs with more difficult people, because that could be therapy,' were sometimes also saying, 'We will go for funding for domestic violence

groups.' They clearly did not have expertise in the field, potentially leading to very tricky practice.

CHAIR—Isn't the logic of what you are saying that if domestic violence programs require well trained, specialised practitioners to be able to effectively deliver, then, in the broad term, an education or intervention program for domestic violence is at that tertiary level, and that what is more appropriate to the bulk of the field is more about awareness, identification and referral, not the doing of it itself?

Ms Haynes—Yes. Because of not having worked through the full complexity of the issue, we uncovered service providers who genuinely wanted to meet a need. They have a person in front of them who has a need for a service. An example was a person who said, 'I have a problem—my husband and I are fighting.' The agency did not ask more questions beyond that but said, 'Come along to the education program.' It was a very abusive relationship and he managed to use the whole content of that program to continue the abuse. That is just an example of the complexity of the issue and of the agency, clearly, in their own mind, offering the appropriate service. I am simply pointing out that that comes from a lack of recognition of the full complexity of the issue. The only way the field is going to do that is to open itself up to criticism, frankly, from domestic violence service deliverers, who will come in and say, 'What about this? What about that? You are not thinking of this; you are not thinking of that.' That may be quite confronting to the field.

Ms Wallace—In relation to a piece of research that I am currently doing for the federal Office of the Status of Women which is looking at couples who experience domestic violence but do not seek help, the whole idea is trying to look at possible early intervention strategies. I have now talked to 60, 70 or 80 women who have experienced DV. A key issue early on in the relationship is that they just do not recognise the early indicators of abuse. That is potentially a role that marriage and relationship education could play, to at least sensitise people to what DV is about. It is certainly not just about hitting people. There is a whole gambit of abuse that can occur—financial abuse, social abuse, verbal abuse—which many women experience. Even any education towards early warning signs that the relationship is turning abusive would then encourage people to take action more quickly to try to address the issue. That is an area where they could both come together.

Ms Haynes—They could provide both men and women with information about options.

Ms Wallace—That is right.

CHAIR—There is something you mentioned that I want to clarify. When you spoke about PREPARE and the new inventory, is that the PREPARE 2000 inventory?

Ms Haynes—Yes.

CHAIR—Your criticism is that whilst that picks up indicators of domestic violence—

Ms Haynes—We are concerned, based on the context of what we were hearing from current providers, that not only did educators not have training in it, but clearly organisations themselves had not taken into account the potentially quite complex service delivery implications of identifying domestic violence

of a couple.

CHAIR—We could continue, I suspect, for a few more hours and there are some areas which we have not got to, but we appreciate the time that you have made available to us for the discussion this morning. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 12.20 p.m. to 1.35 p.m.

JANSEN, Dr Thomas David, Director, Jansen Newman Institute, 565 Pacific Highway, St Leonards, New South Wales 2065

NEWMAN, Mrs Margaret Seymour, Managing Director, Jansen Newman Institute, 565 Pacific Highway, St Leonards, New South Wales 2065

CHAIR—Welcome. I have to advise you that, although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament.

I thank you for coming along this afternoon to discuss the issue with us. Our inquiry is into marriage and relationships and factors which lead to marriages breaking down and what strategies might be implemented by government to try and ameliorate that situation.

I was particularly interested in having the opportunity of talking to you because most of the people that we have spoken to have come from non-profit organisations which provide marriage and relationship education, whether funded through the government or not. As you are in a different position, in that you run essentially a business—if I can put it that way—in the helping field, I thought it would be useful to explore some of the issues from that point of view. Can you tell us something about the institute and the school of marriage? How long has it been going, what do you do and how many couples would you see in a year?

Mrs Newman—The Jansen Newman Institute was in existence before under the name of the Relationship Development Centre. It had its beginnings in 1979. There was a name change along the way. We are psychologists and counsellors and run a private clinical business. It is our business and we see couples and individuals as clients for counselling. It was around 1986 that David and I became very aware that we were more and more hearing couples, when they were there for marriage counselling or couple counselling, saying if only they had known things before.

We were alerted to the fact that an educational program could be very helpful as a preventative measure for marital breakdown. In the light of that, we commenced the School of Marriage in 1987. The School of Marriage to date has had thousands of people through it, although the format has changed. David and I have been the sole presenters of that program to date. Initially we would have had about 100 to 120 people: married, single, divorced, nuns from teaching orders et cetera. They ranged from blue-collar workers to professional people, and there were more women than men certainly. They came once a week for 16 weeks. It was treated as a school, so they had a folder and they had to do homework and they had handouts. There was a great degree of enthusiasm about that program. It was extremely successful and rolled on for several years.

However, over the years the format has changed. That really was more a factor of our inability to service it because of our exhaustion—the business of setting up a room for a hundred and something people, getting supper ready and so forth. We then changed it—

Dr Jansen—It was 16 weeks.

Mrs Newman—Doing that once a week for 16 weeks was very onerous for us and for our practice. I forget all the sequences, but we changed it, I think, to 12 weeks with a full day each end. Then we took it down so that now there are fewer hours. It was 36 hours initially, I think, and now it is an 18-hour course over two consecutive weekends, being a Friday night and a full day Saturday. It is true to say that we do not attract the large numbers we used to attract. I think that is a function of the availability of other programs, of the availability of books on relationships which were not available at the time and, of course, of the changing nature of society. So it is still operative, but there are not the same numbers.

CHAIR—How many would you have in a program?

Mrs Newman—We actually have deliberately taken it back to 40 maximum or thereabouts because we are now doing more one on one work and creating a different environment from that original environment. We both believe that this is more effective in that, over two weekends, we get to connect quite well with probably everybody in the room if there are 40 people. So not only are we there to perceive their difficulties in the here and now of that workshop but also they can connect with us and our institute. If they need ongoing help they can reach out for that. That is not so much—and I would like to say this—a function of us wanting to build our business as it is an altruistic function of us being there and them knowing that there is somewhere to go.

CHAIR—In the program as it now is, typically what would you cover, if I can put it that way?

Mrs Newman—We cover a range of what you might call psychological know-how, for example, the influence of the family of origin on each individual person in a relationship and all that comes from that into that relationship. We aim to give the students—and we refer to them as students—an understanding of the difficulties of acceptance and the blending, if you like, of those two packages that come together. That is based very much on the work of Murray Bowen, a very eminent psychologist or psychiatrist years ago. So they get quite a bit of in-depth psychological knowledge.

They are also very much introduced to communication skills and the dynamics in relationships: the danger, for example, of a third person coming in and taking sides and all that sort of interpersonal dynamic that happens in a relationship. They are introduced to the idea of their emotional overreactivity which, in common jargon, is their ‘twitch’ point when buttons are pressed; they are given an understanding of what that is about, where it comes from, what to do about it and how to work with it in a communicative way.

There are also the stages of a relationship. We introduce them to the notion that, certainly in simplistic terms—but there is some truth in the fact—a relationship goes through four stages. It is very helpful for them to understand that because, when a relationship gets into difficulty, it is in that third stage of conflict when each one is struggling to have needs met. Bearing in mind that that is a simplistic paradigm, it is nevertheless very useful because it is in that stage that people will bail out of a relationship; they will say, ‘It’s all wrong. I have to try again. We can’t make it work.’ We show them how that is, in fact, a normal and natural stage of a relationship; in fact, it is desirable because it is in going through that stage that they can reach a point of resolution if they have the skills. That is when the relationship can really become stable and workable.

Dr Jansen—We make sure we do this. We are able to teach them an intimacy model of conflict

resolution. Conflict is really an opportunity, and not just a challenge, for each getting to know the other better in more depth and to have an interest in each other, a respect for each other and a curiosity about each other as well. In the working through of any issue or problem, they are not simply solving their problem, but getting to know each other better. We teach the importance of thinking for yourself, respecting the other person's thinking and feelings. If you are going to talk about love, this is partly what love is all about. It is the nurturing parent part of the self saying, 'I respect you, I value you and I want to support you', and so forth.

We encourage the use of skills, but we do not believe skills can be taught and exist outside another framework of knowledge about the reactivity in relationships, because that is where most of them are breaking down. It is the emotional stuff—the anger and the frustration of not getting their own way or the living out of the family of the past. We acquaint them with that. We, effectively, try to make them work at looking at their families of origin and how conflict was handled there and the effects of that family of origin on them and how they are twitching and reacting in their present relationships.

In a sense, marriage is not just a working out of this relationship. It is a working out of your own personal self. We stress the development of the genuine real self as opposed to a pseudo self which is seeking approval. The real self is who you really are and who you are meant to be. We teach them a great deal about love and the difference between romantic love and mature love. In our book we have gone into depth a great deal about romantic love and the reasons for it and the power of it. Then we have a whole framework for teaching mature love by using a transactional analysis ego state.

For example, romantic love is simply a part of the free child. You have four more ego states according to the transactional analysis of understanding personality. That includes a nurturing parent, a critical parent, an adult and an adaptive child. But romantic love is only a little bit of marriage and only a little bit of yourself. We try to help them to get that in context and see that, of course, that is going to suffer along the way when the adult has to take over.

Mrs Newman—Firstly, our program is unique in that we are private providers and we have to fund it ourselves. We have to find the money to promote and to advertise. That is not easy, but we have done it. There have been a lot of word of mouth referrals certainly. We have students and people who know about it. It did initially have a lot of publicity in the media and that helped to kick-start it.

There are some features about our program which are unique. One is that it is for anybody, including people who have never been in a relationship because it is an education program about relationships. Of course, most people who come are married or in a long-term relationship. We get some pre-marriage people but not nearly enough. I would like to get many more.

This is anecdotal but makes the point. We gave the course to my nephew and his fiancee before they married at the end of last year. They did not know why we did it. Once they had done it, they said it was great and they now knew that marriage was something they had to work at. They did not know that before.

The other point I would make is that with my own four children there has been a certain degree of—and I know that a prophet is without honour in his or her own country—'But, mum, why would I want to do

it if I am so happy now? Why would I, before my marriage, want to go and hear about what could go wrong?' That is a very common attitude and that is why it is often hard to get the pre-marrieds. It is an educational program and we take the view that it does not matter who these people are—they have a brain; they are quite able to learn the content.

Our book, *Really relating: how to build an enduring relationship*, incidentally, came out of the school of marriage. That is why we refer to it. It was written and published two years after we began the school of marriage in response to requests from people: 'Would you please get that into a book?' So it is an educational program and our experience is that people respond to that. They respond to information. It is not so threatening. It is out there. It is about how it is. So there is not a sense of, 'I am being looked at and there is something wrong with me.'

The communication work is skills based. There is a big skills component and they do some homework and learn how to use the communication program—that is the key, really.

Dr Jansen—The key here is not just teaching skills. Why can't people use these? They learn them. It is not too difficult to learn a lot of these skills. Why do people either refuse to use them or use them badly? Are they contaminated so much by other things in the relationship that what they do learn they cannot use? That is why just giving them skills is never enough. They have to have a context of understanding about where these skills fit in to their marriage.

CHAIR—I am interested that you call your program the school of marriage because there is a contemporary thought that any talk about marriage is old hat and people will not attend programs that use the word 'marriage'—you have to talk about relationships; you have to talk about life stages; you have to talk about anything but marriage.

Mrs Newman—I would like to respond to that. I was at a very interesting meeting in Melbourne a few years ago. I was giving a segment to several hundred people at the marriage education conference. You may even know how many were there. By way of doing an on-site study I asked that conference—there were many hundreds of people in this big room—what was their thinking about the title the 'school of marriage' as opposed to the 'really relating workshop'? We did go through a stage where we thought, 'We are having a bit of trouble getting the numbers so why don't we take the name of our book and call it the "really relating workshop"?' Interestingly enough, the show of hands in that room at the marriage education conference was heavily in favour of calling it the 'really relating workshop'. So I came back to Sydney and for a period—this goes back a few years—we changed our brochures and referred to it as the 'really relating workshop'. We did not attract nearly the interest. In other words, it is the 'school of marriage' that seems to work for us. Many of the people who come are not married and it does not seem to bother them. So we are sticking with the 'school of marriage'. There are some people who will not like it but there are a lot who do.

CHAIR—Are those who are not married coming because they are thinking about marriage, being married or hope to be again? Is there any pattern?

Mrs Newman—I do not think there is any pattern. Many of them are in de facto relationships and have no intention of ever marrying but they acknowledge that they are in a married type relationship so they

come to get information.

Dr Jansen—We have a lot of people who come to it as their first entry into doing some work on the marriage. Counselling is too threatening. Certainly psychiatry would be far too threatening. So they find a way to get some help without being too threatened by it personally. Many of them get in there and by the end of the second weekend they want counselling.

Mr MUTCH—Do you take all comers?

Mrs Newman—We do not meet them until they turn up on the first night because they enrol on a registration form.

Mr MUTCH—I just wondered how a couple of homosexuals who turned up would fare?

Mrs Newman—Yes, we have had homosexuals, women and men, gay couples.

Mr MUTCH—With respect to funding, you say that you are self-funded. Have you applied for funding for any program from any state or federal government?

Mrs Newman—No, we have not. We are not very politically aware, as a couple, and we just have not done it. I suppose, to be honest, we have thought, 'What would be the point?'—meaning, we would not be successful.

Dr Jansen—We are not a non-profit organisation, we are a no profit organisation. We are no profit and we pay our people less than the non-profit organisations. We have been staunch believers in private enterprise, even though it is tough, it is difficult. That is, I suppose, more than anything our own personalities. There are a lot of us out there who are private providers in marriage counselling and some in the marriage education field. I started in this field in 1959 by teaching a marriage course in high school.

In 1968, Paul Popenoe, the founder of marriage counselling, hired me as his assistant. One of the challenges he gave me was to find out why marriage education does not work in America. The only way that it worked there was through requiring it in religious situations. In no other setting did it work, except with a few fundamentalist Christians who would run big marriage courses and they worked at that time. But, as a rule, in the secular world, no, it has never worked. Therefore, the whole issue for me becomes: how can we find ways to motivate people to seek this help? If we are not going to enter at the school level and teach the skills there, but we are dealing a lot with adults and acute help, how are we going to get people interested in this field? That, I think, is a major challenge for you and us.

Mr MUTCH—How do you know that your program is successful? I am not talking about numbers of people who attend. Do you have any way of measuring?

Mrs Newman—We have no formal way of measuring. We do not have the resources to do it. It would be a very big job. We know it is successful, I suppose, because of referrals—that is, people who send people back. We know it is successful for many people because they will send us a Christmas card or they

will ring us up or they will come in for counselling and say, 'Thank you.' Parents will sometimes give it to their children for an engagement present because it helped the parents. That is an interesting thing, we will get two generations coming—the parents will come and then they will send their children, or even the other way around. It is not successful for everybody, absolutely not.

There are some couples who come who are in difficulty and they have let it go far too long. There is no way that a 16-hour or 18-hour workshop is going to change that for them. However, it has at least brought them to a point where they can get some information, and they get to know what is available and that it is okay to be in a marriage that is having a struggle. We stand in front of the people every time we have a class and we say, 'We believe we have been 15 years very happily married. If you think that means we don't ever have arguments or even fights'—dare I say it—'you are wrong because we do.' We make that very clear.

Dr Jansen—We are sometimes happily married.

Mrs Newman—We say, 'We are sometimes happily married,' and we make it very realistic. We say, 'This is how it is and this is what a marriage is.' We do not present airy-fairy—

Dr Jansen—I suppose that brings us to the issue of who should teach marriage counselling or marriage education. In our situation, we depend a lot on the modelling. We are the role models of a marriage which is happy most of the time but sometimes it is not happy. We have arguments. We have fights. We have intimacy problems. We have all the normal problems of people.

I think that encourages a lot of people to think, 'Here are two experts, well-known people in the field'—and not just in this country; we are both published in America—'and they have difficulties.' That modelling part is very valuable for people, and it gives hope and encouragement. Then we can talk about what people can do when they have these breakdowns in communication and what they can do about it, what they can find out about their own emotionality through this, their over-activity. We talk about how we can find out even more about ourselves through this process of trying to heal a temporary breakdown. People really love that as a part of the course.

CHAIR—There has been a school of thought which has had some currency that says that you should not model a relationship because no relationships are the same and that would involve you imposing your values on other people. What is your response to that?

Mrs Newman—I would agree with that as a statement. We do not model how they should be; we model our way of dealing with our differences and we make that very clear. I too know of situations, particularly through churches, around the country where there are programs where 'happily married couples' enter a mentoring role for newlyweds or people having difficulties. I happen to know some of those couples personally, not professionally, and it scares the wits out of me. They have so-called happy marriages because they avoid conflict. I think that is very dangerous role modelling.

CHAIR—David, can I come back to your earlier point about how we attract people to programs? What are the sources of your referrals? Do civil celebrants—to take one group—refer people to you?

Dr Jansen—Maybe two or three out of a couple of thousand, very few, so it has not come from that. Partly, it has come from our clients. We went through a period where we would say to people, 'If you are going to counsel with me you have to do the school of marriage.' I think probably that was a good policy, since Margaret no longer counsels people and I only counsel minimally. I think there is a lot in favour of that.

The book has brought a lot of people to us from all over Australia, from way out in the boondocks, and also from New Zealand. This is a way of getting information out there but it also draws them in for more work. Families often send their people along; ministers, clergymen, doctors, quite a broad diversity. Probably satisfied customers are your best referral in the marriage counselling business and in marriage education. Once we went through a few schools of marriage we had so many people referring friends that there was no problem keeping up over 100 in each school of marriage.

Mr MUTCH—You said you do not impose a model, but surely you have certain parameters when you are there teaching people. It is a school so you must have certain standards or whatever. For instance, if someone comes in and they have three or four wives, would you accommodate them in your course, particularly if they brought all the wives?

Mrs Newman—I do not know that they would even tell us.

Dr Jansen—People like that probably do not have any problems. They shift them all from one partner to another. We have had only one couple of this sort in 11 or 12 years. We had one couple where he brought his girlfriend and his partner.

Mrs Newman—Yes, and they sat on either side of him. That was unusual.

Dr Jansen—I will not say who he was but you would probably even know him. It was very interesting.

CHAIR—I am curious. I will have to ask you off the record.

Dr Jansen—He was connected with an agency.

Mrs Newman—I think you had better stop there.

CHAIR—You are protected against defamation here, but I think we will stop that.

Mrs Newman—Stephen, in answer to your question, of course our values will emanate from us. Right now you would probably have some perception of what we might stand for. We stand for honesty and integrity and commitment, but we are open about that. We do not say we have the answer. I think that is critical. We have a book and we say this is how it can be and this is what we know, but we would never presume to say we have the answer. That is dangerous, I believe.

Dr Jansen—This is not a 'ten steps to a happy marriage' book. But one thing we teach them very

clearly is that every person is unique and every person comes from a different kind of family and, therefore, every couple has to form a brand new relationship which has never existed in the history of the world. How do you do that? You have to talk and talk and talk and communicate and get to know each other and get to know yourself. It is hard work because there has never been a relationship like this before. Ours is not the model. It is one model of two people trying to live that out.

CHAIR—I know you said that you have not applied for funding. Is there any reason why the funding system should not be broad or flexible enough so that those who are providing services privately, such as yourselves, provided they meet certain standards for approval, as do the non-profit agencies, should not be funded?

Dr Jansen—I think the non-profit agency cannot begin to cover the need. The non-profit agencies probably are not going to attract enough of those who are outside of, let us say, the religious community or the formally religious community. They have difficulty attracting those. That has been our strength. Our weakness might be somewhere else. If you look across the whole country, in the research we have been doing on marriage education, you have out in Woop Woop a person who could do marriage education. They cannot be a part of an agency, but they could do marriage education in Warren or in Goondiwindi or wherever.

Does that suggest that maybe another way of looking at it is that tax rebates would help? Anyone who wanted information about marriage would pay $200 for the course but there would be a tax rebate for that. Is that a possibility? It would be worth giving a double credit for them to go and get a good marriage education because it is going to reduce the divorce rate at least one per cent, perhaps five per cent. If we ever succeeded in doing that it would be a better world and it would be good economy for government. Just one per cent is good economy.

CHAIR—You touched on distance. I know you have been involved in the pilot distance education project for rural, regional and remote communities. Can you tell us briefly what is happening with that?

Mrs Newman—A marriage education program for people in rural and remote areas is now in its second year of development. We are one of a four-member consortium which is headed by The Human Development Consultancy and is working towards developing a program. The program has been well researched and now is in the stage of putting together the actual resources. The model that has been developed is one where mentors will be trained. They have a manual, so there will be uniform training for the mentors who will be positioned all around Australia in rural and remote areas.

There will be a videotape or two. These will be short videotapes demonstrating relationship conflict resolution and that sort of thing. There will probably be an audio tape. There will be a booklet which is currently being written by a well-known journalist in Australia called Bronwyn Donaghy. She is putting our materials and other materials into a book. We are involved in writing the manual. There is going to be a system set up of linkages between someone out on the farm who is in trouble who can ring someone in the town who can get the mentor. All that is being looked at. That has been very interesting and fascinating. We had a meeting the other day about that.

Something you said before, Kevin, made me think about our talking about the script for the videotape.

Essentially, a particular one was about a young town-country couple. He used to live on a farm, she was a town girl and they had a particular issue. At one point, the tape was supposed to demonstrate how they deal with this issue. They are invited to use a skill which we, in our parlance, call sharing a meaning. It really means that one person says back to the other what was said so as to be sure that there is mutual and accurate understanding. The script was written in such a way as to not demonstrate that to our satisfaction.

We said at this meeting, 'We are not happy with that. That is not the skill.' The response was, 'Yes, but you cannot really ask people to use it the proper way because they would be embarrassed and you really just have to do it this way.' We would not have a bar of that. There was an agreement in the meeting and it is going to be changed. That for me highlighted a very important point. Marriage education should not be frightened to teach people what they need to know. Here was this big program already. We did not write the script. It was written by someone else on the basis of our material. There was this attitude of: if it is uncomfortable for them, they will not do it. I said, 'That challenge is what we are on about. We are on about encouraging them and creating a package that they are going to use, otherwise you might as well forget the whole idea.'

Dr Jansen—To a certain extent, marriage education is countercultural. The culture says it is not appropriate. If you have the right match, then this marriage should work. People do not come to marriage education mostly because they think they have found the right person and, therefore, it is going to be all right. If that were the case, how come there is such a high divorce rate and how come all of us run into conflict? People do not know that. With this cultural emphasis on matching and romantic love, we come along and say, 'That is all fine, that is all good. Try to find the person with whom you find a lovely comfortable relationship, your soul mate or whatever, but you are going to run into difficulties like everybody else.' The culture does not teach that, so we are counterculture. The love songs are the culture and the myths of the culture are what we are trying to counter.

CHAIR—Margaret, have you read John Gottman's latest article in the *Journal of marriage and the family* about active listening and measuring it?

Mrs Newman—No.

CHAIR—It is worth reading. It is in the February issue.

Dr Jansen—I think that if the government could find incentives of some kind, people like us would thrive more and we would have more students to train.

CHAIR—Can I just explore something there with you. It seems to me that the funding system we have now is supply driven. We provide funds to agencies and say, 'You go out and see if you can find people to come to your programs.' What you seem to be suggesting by, for example, a tax deduction or a tax rebate is more of a demand driven system—that is, there is an incentive for you as an individual to do something because you are getting a financial advantage.

Dr Jansen—Yes.

CHAIR—I take it from what you are saying that you think a demand driven system would be more effective in terms of encouraging people to participate than the current supply driven system.

Dr Jansen—I think it is also a statement that this is important for every citizen of our country who is entering into a serious relationship; that it is so valuable for you to get it we are giving rebates—some sort of system—to say, 'We believe in marriage, but we also believe that you have to know what you are doing in marriage.' Right now—so what?

CHAIR—Yes. Thank you very much.

[2.18 p.m.]

EWINS, Ms Diana Jane, National Manager, Community Relations, NAPCAN—Good Beginnings, PO Box 2018, Bondi Junction, New South Wales 2022

WELLESLEY, Ms Barbara Ethel, National Project Director, NAPCAN—Good Beginnings, PO Box 2018, Bondi Junction, New South Wales, 2022

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament.

You no doubt have seen the terms of reference of this inquiry we are conducting. It is looking broadly at factors contributing to marriage and relationship breakdown and at programs which can ameliorate that. In doing that, because the reference is from the Attorney-General's Department, we have been looking specifically at programs such as marriage education and, of more relevance to your program, the family skills program funded through the Attorney-General's Department.

We became aware of the Good Beginnings program, which is also a parenting type of program, and thought it was useful to learn some more about what you are doing, even though you are funded through a different department—there may be some issues around that which could be explored—but we thought it would be useful at least to look at what is happening across the board, not just those programs specifically funded through the Attorney-General's Department. Would you like to provide us with some background to the program, what you are doing and where you are hoping to go?

Ms Ewins—The program commenced in about June last year, so it is quite a new project. It is based on two years of research that we did both in Australia and overseas. The aim of the research and then the creation of the project was that we believed that the stress, isolation and anxiety that a lot of parents of new children feel can lead to them not necessarily providing the best start for their children. In the context of why we are here today, not only will that not necessarily provide the best opportunities for children, but also the stresses and strains of husband and wife or partners not only influences the children but also obviously can end with marital breakdown. So we believe that there are some significant links to be had.

To come back to the project, it essentially works by linking parents who are experienced parents and have volunteered their time to visit the homes of parents of new children. Those children are often in the nought to six weeks category but they can go up to two or three years. It is very flexible from that point of view. If a parent has a need, unless it is outside of the scope of the volunteer to be able to support that parent, we will consider their need and provide support.

We have four pilot sites currently running and we are testing it for 18 months, with the anticipation that at the end of the 18 months those four sites will continue and expand. But we can use the concept of

Good Beginnings, which will have been evaluated, and expand that concept of home visiting throughout Australia. The four sites are: Moe in Victoria; Katherine in the Northern Territory; inner-west Sydney, which is in the area of Marrickville, Leichhardt and out to Ultimo; and Hobart. We have chosen four very different sites to be able to test whether people who live in different locations with different needs and experiences can still benefit from Good Beginnings.

We have a coordinator in each site who is a highly skilled professional, not necessarily a health professional or an educator but somebody who is able to work with volunteers and who understands how to network within a community. It is more important to have someone with an attitude of wanting to work with families and with existing infrastructures, rather than someone with necessarily a professional background. Our experience is that if one is going to work in the community, you have to get along with the community and not tell the community what to do. That is very important.

At the moment each location can support up to 120 families. We look at having up to 40 volunteers, who we call community parents, and each community parent can visit up to four families, so 160 is actually the number of families who can be helped in each location. Some time in the future we believe that that can actually be 480 families, because we will have a tiered structure whereby we have a coordinator who works with, say, four sub-coordinators and they work with volunteers themselves. That will come over time.

Basically, a volunteer community parent visits the home of a new parent—they can be mother and/or father; there is no stipulation there—about once a week or every two weeks for about one to two hours. The main aim is that they share knowledge and ideas, and provide a shoulder to cry on and an ear to listen, about the general everyday stuff of life of looking after children, including relationship issues.

There is the national secretariat—you are seeing it here—who created the program and who oversee the four different locations. I think that probably summarises it sufficiently.

CHAIR—How do you identify the parents that you are going to visit?

Ms Wellesley—Through the local services in the community. Because we have got four distinct communities that we are testing, the parents come from that community, the coordinator works in that community, so we have done a lot of community development in those areas. The coordinator has spoken to all the organisations—government, non-government and community organisations—and they refer. The majority of the referrals at this stage are from the child health nurses, the midwives—

CHAIR—Maternal and child—

Ms Wellesley—Yes, maternal and child health nurses—those nurses that see them up to five. They are our major referral source. General practices are also interested but they take a bit longer to get around to doing things—

Ms Ewins—For them knowing.

Ms Wellesley—We have actually worked with several of the divisions, because I believe general

practice is a huge potential for our referrals. We are finding that people are being referred for a multitude of reasons. We could never predict some of the families in crisis we are seeing. What we are doing when it is a really major crisis is working in collaboration with the professional service. Volunteers do not work with families where there is a major safety issue, where there is violence, where there is something that requires professional support. But we believe if that occurs we should work in partnership, so we never actually withdraw the Good Beginnings volunteer from the family.

Ms Ewins—I would add that, because the project is relatively new—six months is not a long time yet for it to get known in the community—we are going the route of hospitals, GPs, early childhood health nurses, et cetera. But we are also working at commercialising it, if you like, by working towards having stands and brochures available in shopping centres, pharmacies, et cetera—basically, wherever there are new parents or people that know of new families—and also by a media awareness campaign. We have community relations subcommittees being set up in each location, and their job is to get Good Beginnings as well known by the community as any other service in that location is. It is very important that we do not have any stigma that you only go to Good Beginnings if you are really failing. Good Beginnings is there for all parents.

CHAIR—Is it fair to characterise it as essentially a mentoring role?

Ms Ewins—Yes, correct.

CHAIR—What training do your volunteers get?

Ms Wellesley—We have written our own training package; we have been working with the Macquarie University Institute of Early Childhood Studies. We are hoping to have that accredited with VETAB so that we have an accredited training program. It is six sessions of about five hours per session, so that is about 30 hours worth. The training program does not educate, it again builds on the skills of the volunteers—because we believe that they, as parents, have got all the skills. If they are mentoring, we do not want to give them new information, we want to build on what they have got.

They do some work on child development and on the issues of abuse and domestic violence—about what to look for, how to notify and those sort of things—but basically it is in communication skills, attitudinal things, the importance of relationships, and also linking them back into their own community. They go and spend some time looking at all the resources in their community so they can then give that to their families. Part of my concern has always been that families do not actually know how to find the services that are already out there—if they can find them, they normally will use them—and so that is part of the role of Good Beginnings.

CHAIR—Is there any linking—well, there may not be the services—into things like couple communication programs or conflict resolution services?

Ms Wellesley—In our little pamphlet, *What is Good Beginnings?* we say that that actually lessens the strain in personal relationships and enables people to be referred to appropriate services, if they do need that done. If a mother or father discloses to a community parent that they are having problems—that the husband is never home, or whatever—that would become her or his job to refer it back to the coordinator, who would

find the appropriate professional service, if there is one—which may be a problem in rural Australia—or who would try and link them to someone who can give them professional advice. We see ourselves very much as that conduit between the family and the professional services, as well.

Ms Ewins—I did not say this in the summary of how Good Beginnings works, but what happens is that even before Good Beginnings starts in the locality, we visit—and the coordinator also does, once they are appointed—every service provider in that location, so that we have spoken to absolutely everyone who provides information and services for children and their parents. When the coordinator is appointed, that network is then solidified so that everyone knows about everyone else and you feed into the existing network. Therefore, you are a direct conduit between the parents and what is out there. Now, if it is not out there, that is a problem.

Ms Wellesley—But we can actually then identify that through our coordinators to the appropriate services. Certainly, in the area of marriage guidance there is not very much, other than through some of the churches, so it might be an opportunity to look at what is needed and how you provide that support.

CHAIR—In Perth we had evidence from the Western Australian child health survey people, Professor Zubrick and his colleagues. What they have done by way of research and then development of a program by the Perth health department, I think it was, seems similar to what you are doing.

Ms Wellesley—They are actually testing some programs. One is similar, called Community Mothers. There are about three that they are testing in whole populations, looking at supporting families in the very early days. So, yes, it is quite similar.

They use professionals in the support role, from my understanding. There is one program that uses volunteers, but most of them use professionals. We are using volunteers. When we looked at the figures of the resources available, it seemed a sensible way to go to look at volunteers, who actually do not create a dependency. Sometimes professionals do create some dependencies.

Ms Ewins—It is hard to be a mentor, if you are a professional.

Ms Wellesley—It is very hard.

Ms Ewins—That is because the power relationship is different. It is our belief, anyway—but we might be wrong—that, in order for a parent to say, 'Yes, I can do that too,' they need to be talking to someone who has already been there and done that and has gone through similar experiences or can at least share that; otherwise, the person is just being talked at, if the mentor does not have the same experience base.

The beauty of the project is that parents who might be going through their own stresses and strains, or their own insecurities, et cetera, can hear the volunteer saying, 'I can understand how you feel. I had a similar situation . . . ' and they can talk at a level where there is a connection. That is mentoring, and more. I am not saying that professionals do not have their place; they do. But, if you are trying to build a parent's confidence that they can be a good parent for their child, they need to experience others who have already been there and done that. That is where the beauty of it lies, we think.

CHAIR—Can I ask you about the funding? As I recall, you have been funded—

Ms Wellesley—For 18 months.

CHAIR—for a pilot through Health and Family Services.

Ms Wellesley—Yes; through Family Services, Warwick Smith's portfolio.

CHAIR—Obviously, at the national level, it covers those costs and presumably it pays for the coordinators as well.

Ms Wellesley—And the cost of establishing the sites.

CHAIR—Are the volunteers reimbursed at all for any out-of-pocket expenses?

Ms Wellesley—They can put in claims for fuel and phone. We are actually having trouble persuading them to do that. There have been very few claims. But there is the capacity to do that. In fact, we are looking at a tiered level of what we call coordinator support, and so there will be volunteers whom we will actually look at paying something, because they will be doing a more difficult role, I guess, than just going into families. That is the model that they are using in Dublin, and we looked at that when we were developing Good Beginnings, where they actually have some payment for their supervision. One of the sidekicks of this, I guess, is that that actually enables volunteers, and they very often are able to go out and get jobs. It empowers them, as well. So it is not just us taking; we are actually giving, and that is what they are identifying to us.

Ms Ewins—It is an interesting situation with the reimbursement of volunteers' expenses. Numerically, when you start looking at hundreds of volunteers being paid for 20 or 30 kilometres worth of petrol per week, it actually becomes quite expensive, if you are paying market rates for that. There is no stipulation that we could find to say that you should or should not pay volunteers allowances, et cetera. I am not saying we should legislate that there should be, but it is a difficult situation: you do not want to abuse volunteers' support but, at the same time, it can take away very needed financial resources from, say, paying coordinators. You can be paying $15,000 or $20,000 per site for petrol over a year. So it is a real question mark in the equation: as one gets more and more volunteers, and you want to do the right thing by paying them market rates for their use of their car, it is a real quandary.

CHAIR—I suspect there is also the point that people are happy to volunteer but, as times are more strained, it is not unreasonable for them to say, 'I'm happy to give up my time and put my effort into it, but I can't afford the petrol on top of that.'

Ms Wellesley—Yes, particularly in the rural areas, where they might be travelling quite a lot of kilometres. In Sydney, it is probably only five or six kilometres—which is, I guess, why we have not had many claims. It is on the way to shopping anyhow, or whatever; but once you get out—and certainly, when we are going out of Hobart, I suspect—there will be a need for us to reimburse volunteers.

Ms Ewins—We have that in our budgets.

Ms Wellesley—We might actually have to look at doing some deals with petrol companies.

Ms Ewins—That is seriously our aim: to get Shell Australia to support our project.

CHAIR—In terms of training the volunteers, do you screen them in some way? There must be some people for whom this would be—

Ms Wellesley—We have a police check, absolutely.

CHAIR—I was not even thinking about the safety issue, but there must be some people whose behaviour, if I can use the term in the broadest sense, would not make them ideal mentors.

Ms Wellesley—We have had that already. The coordinator interviews all the community parents individually and, if there is a problem at interview, then they talk about whether it would be appropriate to do this training. If they feel it is okay to do the training and during the training these things come up, these directions people want to take—it is much more about telling people things rather than listening, it is actually lack of listening—we have the capacity to do an extra session with individual volunteers on communication skills and they are told why. If at the end of that it is still apparent that they are not suitable to go into a home and do that support, there are plenty of other volunteering roles they can do. They can help in the offices. They can support the coordinator. There are a lot of other things we can give them to do. We never lose our volunteers, if we can help it, but we are very wary of those volunteers who go into homes. It is a duty of care we have to the families.

Ms Ewins—It is important to advise—I am sure it is in the information—that Good Beginnings is for men and women as well. We do not keep it to mothers; it is for mothers and fathers. We have a couple of male community parents and we also have a male coordinator. Our whole attitude is that it is important to engage men as much as it is women.

Ms Wellesley—We are having more difficulty working out about men going into homes because of all the issues around that. But again, there are some solutions such as men can facilitate men's groups and start the process of what is the role of a man as a father, those sort of things, which is very good use of their time.

CHAIR—Is there any way in which you see what you are doing being coordinated with the family skills program and other parenting programs?

Ms Wellesley—Certainly we should be collaborating and linking in. In Sydney, we got some money to look at a model in an area. We are looking at what a model would look like for children's services and for their families, and linking the professional home visitors, the volunteers and the community organisations like the ones you have talked about, and how we work together, and what is the process of referring and of understanding each other's roles. It is critical for us to start. That coordination of services is incredibly important. We do not do it at all at the moment.

Ms Ewins—The thing is—it seems obvious but I will say it anyway—in the first six months, a year or whatever of your first child, and all your other children, but certainly the first one, everything in a couple's life goes upside down. It is one of the crucial times for relationships to fail or succeed. They might not fail right then, but that can be the beginning of it because everyone's expectations, values and their childhood experiences in their own families start surfacing. If there is a volunteer going in and talking to the mum and/or dad, who understands that these are issues for the parents, then that is the time to link the parents into another service, right at the beginning, not waiting until it has festered.

Ms Wellesley—But we have to have those other services linking. Everyone is talking about inter-agencies working together, but it has not happened yet. I have not seen any examples really of it happening in daily practice. That is what we need.

CHAIR—What about programs? I do not know how widespread these are, but things like STEP and PET and the other. I know in Melbourne, for example, Professor Morris Baulson at Monash runs parenting programs. There is a variety of them around. Are there links with them?

Ms Wellesley—Many of those are not linked at all. Their funding is ad hoc. There is no coordination with mainstream services. Again, it is the same issue. If we do not start working together, if we as the Good Beginnings program believe that families are confident enough to go and do some parenting education—to have parenting education you have to feel pretty confident; it is pretty scary going out there and being told by somebody how to be a parent—and if parents want to do that, then we certainly would be referring to established parenting programs. Maternal and Child Health run many of them, often STEP or PET.

We are working collaboratively with some of the other programs like Parents as Teachers which is an educational program run in New South Wales. I do not know whether you have heard of Parents as Teachers. It is an American program where they look at the educational levels of children. But again, families are not ready for that until they feel confident about being parents. We sometimes provide many resources, professional services, that people are not able to take up because they do not have the confidence.

Good Beginnings, we hope, will give them confidence. It really is about reinforcing, telling them how well they are doing and just building on that. We do understand that during the process of the visit there will be what we call 'teachable moments' where we can actually give proper information about nutrition, immunisation, child safety, all those major issues that people need to know about but we are not going in to tell.

Ms Ewins—One of the interesting things in our travels to the four locations where we have our sites is the differing levels of understanding of the services actually in that area, of their understanding of other services and other programs. It is incredibly ad hoc and it really depends on—

Ms Wellesley—The individual.

Ms Ewins—It does, yes. There is no general agreement that it would be a great idea for everyone to know what everyone else is doing and to have a list of what all the services are and what all the programs are out there. When we went to Victoria—

Ms Wellesley—We are actually facilitating that. We are actually facilitating groups getting together that have never spoken to one another. We did it in Canberra the other day with the bureaucracy at the Department of Health and Family Services. They had never sat around the table together, some of these people, although they have the same agendas. An important role that we have is to bring that about. We say, 'How do we all work together? Let's all get together and talk about where we fit into what you are doing.' That certainly was managed with relationship counselling and with the churches. I believe there is a huge role linking in with a lot of the church organisations, but at the moment it is all separate out there.

CHAIR—Is there any role in tagging some of this to antenatal classes?

Ms Wellesley—Absolutely.

CHAIR—It seems to me that people talk about transitional stages in the life cycle, and having the first child is the one that follows marriage, usually, although it is sometimes the other way around. That is one stage that is always tagged as being a key stage. One can say that, generally, most parents would attend some form of antenatal class, particularly for the first child, but that is all about huffing and puffing—

Ms Wellesley—Giving birth.

CHAIR—and nothing about the relationship.

Ms Wellesley—But we do that. In fact, I have run those classes for many years, and I have always had three sessions on what it was going to be like to be a parent. It is interesting that at the follow-up, which is about six weeks after the baby is born, every mother says, 'Why didn't you tell me what it was going to be like?', and I would remind them that I did that. They are just not able to absorb, in that last month or two, things about being a parent, they focus only on successfully delivering a baby. That is all they focus on.

The time to get to them about what parenting is about, and there is overwhelming research on it, is at the six months pregnant stage. At that stage they have named the baby, they are building a nursery, and they are actually mothering and fathering. That is when we need to give them information.

I do not have the solution as to how we do that. Maybe the workplace provides an opportunity to talk about what it is going to be like in three or four months when they have the baby. We can then ask them things like, 'How are you going to manage work? What about your finances? What about caring for the child?' All those issues you can deal with in that middle trimester of the pregnancy, when the baby is moving and it is real.

CHAIR—Just as in marriage education we try to develop pre- and post-wedding components, should we do the same with families? The same thing is said about marriage. That is, before you get married everything is seen through rose-coloured glasses, but about six months later some of the reality of life hits. That is precisely what you were saying about having a child, that somehow we could look to link pre- and post-family components.

Ms Wellesley—We should make people aware that if they are planning to have a family, they really

should be considering these issues because just as marriage is very difficult, so is having a child. It will change totally their relationship that they have worked on in their marriage because there will be a third or fourth person, and they need to know what that means. I do not think we do that at all. We do a bit in schools in years 11 and 12 but really nothing properly about how important it is to understand these transitions. It is amazing, we have to have a licence to drive a car but we have these babies that are so important without any real understanding of what it means.

Most of the people I used to see in practice would come because they actually did not know how to cope with that transition. They were anxious about the baby, they were anxious about pleasing their partner, the house was never clean, their mother-in-law was complaining—a huge number of issues were hitting them all at once—and they were hormonal.

Ms Ewins—And that is only the mums.

Ms Wellesley—The dads are going through the same: 'I have lost my wife; she has become this cranky, neurotic, crying person; I have this child who screams all day; my mother-in-law is telling me all the time that I am not being a good enough husband; and my mother is telling me I should let her get on with it as she did.' All these issues come upon these young families, and nobody says to them, 'This is what happens to all of us and these are some of the strategies that make it better.'

Ms Ewins—We are also involved in a thing called 'Fathering the future', which talks about men's issues on parenting and relationships. If you have not already, I hope that you will be talking to an organisation called MENDS. They have programs for separated or separating fathers, and they have put a proposal to the Attorney-General's Department for some funding. They are already operating, but they are seeking funding to help people who do not have sufficient money to attend the course. As an aside, it is certainly worth while following through on that.

There is this whole issue of men in the pre- and post-baby time. Women, at least, are prepared to ask for help—not always but often—but men do not, yet. There is a whole different agenda when you are looking at the male side of a couple because, without being able to express their feelings or without even perhaps experiencing their questions, it is even more difficult. That is a whole other side because, until such time as men feel that they can actually do that, you are only ever bringing half the partnership to whatever it is.

Ms Wellesley—And men are out there trying to earn a living and to do the right thing by that child anyhow, so I think it must be very difficult to look at that blended role.

Mr MUTCH—I am not sure how I would cover the question about the training of volunteers. I am a little concerned about the training of volunteers. There is a lot of goodwill involved here, but I wonder about it. It seems like a tea and sympathy program.

Ms Wellesley—No, it is not. I hear what you are saying, and I agree with you. Our major concern is the duty of care to those families we are seeing, and that involves how we support our volunteers—and monitor them, I guess. They do the training program, and they are then supervised on a very regular basis.

Mr MUTCH—What is the training program?

Ms Wellesley—It is a six-week training process; they do 30 hours of training. They look at things like their right, their role, what they should be doing and what they should not be doing, so a lot of energy is put into how a volunteer behaves in the home—not to go in and do inappropriate activities with that family. After six weeks of being with these volunteers, the coordinator gets to know them pretty well, and the ones who may cause a few concerns are dealt with separately or are not referred to families. We do not put volunteers into families if there is any concern that they are not ready to go and work with that family.

Once the family has been matched to a volunteer, at any time the family can ask to have another volunteer. It is always their choice. The coordinator does regular individual and group supervision with all the volunteers. For the very reason you have mentioned, we have great concern about that duty of care and things like the do-gooder.

Mr MUTCH—A comment in your submission states:

It is recognised that regular recruitment and training will occur as it is anticipated that as some community parents become more confident, they will go onto other ventures including other volunteer work, paid employment or further education.

I hope this is not just a scheme for unemployed people to train.

Ms Wellesley—No, but research shows that, because this program reinforces the skills of the volunteers, they actually get the confidence to go and do TAFE courses, to further their own education and to get jobs themselves.

Mr MUTCH—What sort of background would they have to have before they do a few weeks training course? Surely they should have some sort of important criteria to be able to go into people's homes and to advise them about how they should rear their children.

Ms Ewins—It is an interesting feeling that you are bringing into that question, because they are not professionals; they are not going in there to do a 'tell to' job. You said 'tea and sympathy', and you are not far from the mark. It is probably tea and empathy, because it is not really a matter of being a quasi childhood nurse or a quasi psychologist. It is none of those things. It is more tea and empathy than anything else.

Mr MUTCH—Why is the federal government funding that sort of program? Why isn't that being done by local church groups and so forth, which is what they do at present?

Ms Ewins—Because the experience that we have had by being in the communities is such that—and it is a bit of a shocking thing to say—there is a lack of trust for people to actually knock on each other's doors and there is discomfort in just being there for another parent. This has broken down so much that it has needed to have a coordinated approach to actually get parents linking together again and to bring back the social fabric that is actually missing.

Mr MUTCH—One question I would like to ask is whether you have access to police records so you can do a criminal check of these people?

Ms Wellesley—Yes, everyone has a police check.

Mr MUTCH—A basic police check.

Ms Wellesley—Yes, which costs us $25 per head, which I think is appalling and that is another issue. I think it is ridiculous that when we are trying to maintain a high standard that we actually have to pay for something that in fact is about duty of care. It should be automatically given for all of them.

Ms Ewins—Your question about churches and whether they should be doing that, absolutely. In the olden days that is exactly what they did, but it is not happening through those channels. If it was, there would not be a need for Good Beginnings. In the pilot period of time we are testing something and we hope that the result of the 18 months of testing will prove that this can work. Maybe then the churches, the Lions Club, Rotary or CWA will say that this project is worth adopting and they will get this concept started up back in their local community. It might be the churches getting together to actually effect it in their local community. That is, quite frankly, what we would like to happen in the future.

Ms Wellesley—We are looking a bit like the model of Legacy, because Legacy was the first volunteer home visiting program. Those men had no experience except that they came back from the war and supported the children of other soldiers who had been killed. They had no training, but they had a commitment. When we talk to the community volunteers in our program, every one of them says, 'We would have liked this when we had a young child. We want to give something to somebody that we did not have.' The understanding of that initial support is absolutely amazing. We have been amazed by that.

Mr MUTCH—I have a young child and there are many groups you can go along to. There is breastfeeding mothers and everything else.

Ms Wellesley—But your wife is probably confident and middle-class people tend to be more knowledgeable about these things. A lot of the families we are seeing are families who do not actually know anything about their community.

Mr MUTCH—What worries me is that they sound like problem families, in which case you need professional intervention.

Ms Wellesley—No, not necessarily. The problem might be that they just do not know their community. With defence force families, for instance, there is a huge problem because they are dislocated.

Mr MUTCH—Surely the Defence Department itself is addressing this issue?

Ms Wellesley—No. They are using us in Tindal as the model.

Mr MUTCH—I gave a cheque to a local Defence Department support group in my own area, so I

would presume they have them in every area.

Ms Wellesley—They do not. They have a DSO who goes in and gives a package of things to new families. If you are in Tindal in the Northern Territory, you have no other family, you are a young woman with two children, your husband is flying around Australia and you are 12 kilometres out of Katherine, that is pretty difficult. If you have somebody who can actually help you link back into that community, then it is much easier and things go much better. There is a huge post-natal depression rate in defence force families. We know that.

Mr MUTCH—I am aware of the problem and I am also aware that there are a lot of resources going into addressing those problems within the department.

Ms Wellesley—There are very few home visiting programs.

Ms Ewins—Like everything else, there are pockets of everything everywhere, but there is no consistency and it is the luck of the draw. If you happen to be somewhere that has a very active church group or you might go somewhere where they have a very active Rotary group doing this stuff or doing something like it, then that is great. It is so hit and miss and it is often so short lived. You get a group of six people who get together and they are out there doing it. But then they leave or get bored with it and it does not continue.

Ms Wellesley—It often requires a person who is interested and, if that person goes, then nothing happens. Whereas, we are wanting to set up a process where everybody has the opportunity to have somebody to talk with and support them. It is huge.

Mr MUTCH—That is ambitious.

Ms Wellesley—Absolutely. If somebody said to me, 'What you are looking to do is to provide an extended family', we would say that we no longer have the model we used to have 30 or 40 years ago, where every family had extended families. There was always an aunt, a grandma or somebody who was there. Now as young women are going back to work, there is not even the same role modelling with their own families. They are having no opportunities.

CHAIR—I have just a couple of things. Are you able to supply us with a copy of your training manual for your volunteers? It would be useful to provide some background for us.

Ms Wellesley—Yes. It is still in the developmental phase. This is a pilot, so we are evaluating each step. I can give you the second mark version, if that is okay. We will send you that.

CHAIR—Yes. That is okay. Can you leave us a contact before you go for MENDS?

Ms Ewins—Yes, if I have got it here. I might have to contact you.

CHAIR—That is all right. You can phone us; that is fine. As an observation of mine: are you aware

of the work that Professor Ed Bader has been doing in Toronto linking marriage education with parenting education?

Ms Ewins—No. I have not heard of that one.

CHAIR—It might be useful. It is in a medical setting, too. Ed Bader works in the Flemingdon health clinic in Toronto, a community health centre.

Ms Ewins—I do have a phone number of one of the gentlemen who is with MENDS, if someone would like to take it. It is 9894 8206, and the gentleman who will respond to that is Daryl Sturgess.

CHAIR—That is in Sydney?

Ms Ewins—Yes.

CHAIR—I thank you for coming along this afternoon and discussing it with us. It has been most informative.

Ms Wellesley—Thank you.

Ms Ewins—You have the overview; we sent it to you.

CHAIR—Yes.

[3.00 p.m.]

LONERGAN, Mrs Josephine, Chairperson, Seasons for Growth Advisory Committee, Seasons for Growth National Office, PO Box 1023, 9 Mount Street, North Sydney, New South Wales 2060

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and warrants the same respect as proceedings of the House itself; and the giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament.

The theme of this inquiry is the factors contributing to marriage and relationship breakdown and what strategies are available to deal with them. We are interested in Seasons for Growth, because, as I understand it, it is a grief recovery program aimed at children post-separation, divorce and death. Our context here is more separation and divorce, because marriage breakdown does affect children. Also a lot of people who are involved in marital breakdown then go on to form new relationships. Against that background, could you just provide us with an outline of Seasons for Growth, how it was developed, what is involved in it, et cetera?

Mrs Lonergan—I have a short statement here that I might read into the record, which might just set the scene a bit. We wish to present you with a program directly connected with the terms of reference of the hearing. Seasons for Growth is a grief and loss education program which provides a positive approach to learning how to manage the loss and grief experienced as a result of death or divorce or family breakdown. The program is available for people aged 6 to 18 years and the emphasis is on a sound and creative education strategy. Through a small group peer support process with a trained adult, participants learn coping skills to empower them to deal with their personal situation.

Seasons for Growth fits into the World Health Organisation agenda in promoting psycho-social competence. This includes such life skills as decision making and problem solving, critical and creative thinking, communication and interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness and empathy, skills for coping with emotions and stressors. The World Health Organisation research indicates that 20 to 30 per cent of students require assistance in developing these skills. Seasons for Growth is considered highly effective as an intervention model to address the above issues.

Seasons for Growth is currently operating in over 800 schools and community agencies and is in every state in Australia. The demand for the program far exceeds the resources available. Seasons for Growth is based on the belief that every individual has the right to support in times of pain and loss and therefore consider that this responsibility would best be served by the resources of the Commonwealth government. The investment that is made in the Seasons for Growth program contributes significantly to the current and future wellbeing and health of our citizens.

This is a quote from Dr Louise Rowling of Sydney University:

Internationally it is a world leader in its approach to combining education and experiential learning for young people and linking that to families and the wider community.

I have here a folder which sets out some of the information about the program itself, and also has a number of statements from people like Pierre Baume, Dr Harry McGurk, Don Edgar and a number of other people who have reviewed the program and found it to be a good way to go.

Summing it all up, it is a program that is run in schools by a person called a companion, who is a volunteer or a teacher. It just depends on who is going to take up the program within the schools. It runs for six to eight sessions, with the consent of the parents, amongst a group of children identified by the school as being in need of support because of loss and grief, family breakdown or divorce or any of the other many ways that people can suffer grief and loss.

The folder also contains the list of schools where the program is already running. The program was devised by a lady called Anne Graham in Lismore. There was a program called Rainbows, which was running on a similar basis but was an American program. This program links the stages of loss and grief with the seasons of the year and provides that ongoing hope that the change of seasons always brings with it.

There are three lots of the program itself: one for primary school, one for junior secondary school and one for senior secondary. That looks like a formidable set of books, but it is the whole series of programs. It has the coordinator's and companion's resource book there, and—from Mr Mutch's question earlier—that information is there in this set of books. It also includes the work books that the young people do when they are moving through this program.

It is really more a process than a program, because it explains the processes of grief and loss that young people can experience. As I say, it is introduced first of all to the parents of the children who are going to undertake the program and it is explained to the parent in detail. The companions are ordinarily teachers and at the moment all of the companions are being trained by Clare Koch and Pat Sutherland. They are down in Melbourne today training people, and usually they are people with some previous skills in teaching young people.

CHAIR—This was developed by the MacKillop Foundation?

Mrs Lonergan—Yes. It is not a program which has any denominational base. It is a program designed for everybody and a great many of the 800 schools that are using it are government schools, so it is in both government and non-government sectors across Australia.

CHAIR—Has it received any Commonwealth or state funding?

Mrs Lonergan—It received $30,000 from DEETYA as a project of national significance some years ago to develop the initial concept of the program, and that went into the researching of the loss and grief concept. But that is the only funding it has received. What has happened is that the resources of the MacKillop Sisters have been used in developing the project to the stage it is at now. They have been responsible for all the printing and setting up of these documents.

The cost to each school for the running of the project would be first of all the cost of the books. For 30 children in a class the set of books is about $250 or $300. The other cost to the school would be the

release of the teacher for the training. I think the training is a day or two days, so that is somewhere around $500 or $600. Probably the cost to a school of instigating the program is about $1,000 a school.

Of course, the beauty of instigating projects that come within the organisation of schools is that, if the program works well, then it has a permanent place within the school. If the coordinator takes that up and runs with it, it is something that is delivered annually. The interesting thing about delivering programs these days is that schools to some extent have become the centres of community because that is where you find the parents and where you find the children. Churches have abdicated that role to some extent.

CHAIR—In effect these 800 schools across the nation have funded the program by providing the training for the teacher or the local person.

Mrs Lonergan—And hopefully paying for the books. Yes, that is right. In a sense, it is self-funding. I suppose what the MacKillop Sisters would hope to do is to try to get sufficient funding to have a coordinator who can coordinate the development of the program around the states and fund some other people to do the training; two people doing the training all over Australia is an almost impossible task. I know that Clare and Pat Sutherland were over at Karratha last week. They did a week's training up in Karratha in WA and they are down in Melbourne today and tomorrow, I think.

They need somebody who could coordinate the training and some funding that could help provide people who could do the training—and there are heaps of them there. One of the problems—and I think the ladies who were speaking before brought this up—is that people really need some funding to be able to give up their time in these days.

CHAIR—Are the state coordinators paid at all?

Mrs Lonergan—There are not any state coordinators. What is happening is it is just being coordinated—

CHAIR—Nationally?

Mrs Lonergan—Yes, coordinated nationally by two ladies who are running themselves very ragged. There are no actual state coordinators at all for them but that would be a good way to go.

CHAIR—How are the outcomes of the program measured?

Mrs Lonergan—That was the other thing, I think, that they were keen to do: get some funding to do an actual structured measurement of the outcomes. The only thing I can provide you with at this stage is some reports on what people are saying and some letters from people who have looked at the program. Although they have not looked at it working, they have looked at the actual documentation.

CHAIR—Designs.

Mrs Lonergan—They include Professor Ravenscroft, a director of palliative care; Dr John Yu, who

was previously the head of the Children's Hospital at Westmead and who is also the patron of the program; Ronald Wilson, former Chancellor of Murdoch University; Michael Bollen, Australian College of General Practitioners; Harry McGurk, as I said; Dr Sheila Clarke, senior lecturer at the University of Adelaide; and Dr Rowling. So there are a few people who considered that the program achieved its aims.

As far as a structured evaluation is concerned, what we have got is the anecdotal evidence of the people who have run the program in the schools and what some of the kids have been saying when they have gone through the program.

CHAIR—I suppose one test is that the schools continue to run it.

Mrs Lonergan—It is.

CHAIR—Then it is perceived to have some benefit.

Mrs Lonergan—Yes. My evidence is only anecdotal too but all the people I have spoken to in schools who have actually attended the training have been very excited about being able to run it in their schools, and think it is of great assistance. One fellow I spoke to, who is a very elderly priest, said to me just recently that it is an excellent program because you cannot teach anything to kids who are emotionally upset. You have got to get rid of that baggage before you can teach them.

CHAIR—What is the length of the training program?

Mrs Lonergan—There are eight sessions and they run them progressively. I am just not quite sure of the intervals. They run it through one term, and in the next term they have a follow-up on the outcomes for the children.

Mr MUTCH—Are these kids across a range of classes in different age groups?

Mrs Lonergan—Yes.

Mr MUTCH—You are only targeting those that have a particular problem?

Mrs Lonergan—Yes. I think it is the school that identifying them.

Mr MUTCH—When do they meet? Do they meet at lunchtime or after school?

Mrs Lonergan—I think it is conducted as part of the school curriculum program, so it becomes part of the organisation at the school and is conducted whenever.

Mr MUTCH—If it is targeted the whole school is not doing its—

Mrs Lonergan—It is conducted on a withdrawal basis for those children who are in need of the program.

Mr MUTCH—What does withdrawal mean?

Mrs Lonergan—They withdraw them from the ordinary class.

Mr MUTCH—Instead of attending a class, they come to do this.

Mrs Lonergan—They sometimes do it in off times. I am not certain about quite when they conduct it. All I know is that it is part of the organisation of the school itself and there are three levels of programs. I do not know when they conduct the 11 and 12 programs. I do not think they conduct them during ordinary school time, but they are certainly part of the programs that the school is doing. It is suitable for places other than schools but, up to this point in time, it is the schools that have been operating and using it. I suppose that is the obvious place where it is easy to find people who are in need of this sort of help.

Mr MUTCH—Don't they seek to bring the parents in or anything like that?

Mrs Lonergan—They do. The very first part of the program is to talk to the parents about what their children will be doing to explain the concept of the program.

Mr MUTCH—But not bring them into the classes or training at all.

Mrs Lonergan—No. Because the parents have been very interested in this, they are hoping to write a short program for the parents so that they can follow what the children are doing in a different way. I think some of the schools have run the year 11 and 12 programs for the parents when that has been requested, but they seemed to think they need a smaller, more digestible package for parents to fit in with the time that they have available for these things.

CHAIR—I thank you for coming in this afternoon. We will accept that material as exhibits.

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

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 3.17 p.m.