COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

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MELBOURNE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Thursday, 30 November 2000

Members: Dr Nelson *(Chair)*, Mr Barresi, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Elson, Mr Emerson, Ms Gambaro, Ms Gillard, Mrs May, Mr Sawford and Mr Wilkie

Members in attendance: Mr Bartlett, Mrs Elson, Mrs May, Dr Nelson and Mr Sawford.

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling; and
- the strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.06 a.m.

NYLAND, Ms Berenice, Lecturer, Department of School and Early Childhood Education, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University

CHAIR—I declare open the second day of public hearings in Melbourne for the inquiry into the education of boys and welcome our witnesses and our many observers. The purpose of this inquiry is to examine the social, cultural and educational factors which affect the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling. We also aim to identify successful educational strategies and ways to promote their wider adoption in schools. Particular concerns which have emerged from the submissions received include but are not confined to the gender and state-by-state divergences in early literacy attainment identified by testing against nationally agreed benchmarks; the gender and state-by-state variations in school retention rates, and the tendency for some boys to adopt negative attitudes towards school and to disengage from learning.

I understand that Professor Gregory Heath will be arriving shortly. I now call Ms Berenice Nyland of RMIT University. I remind you that the proceedings here today are proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but if any stage there is something that you wish to say which you do not wish to have recorded on the public record, please indicate that that is your wish and we will consider that.

Ms Nyland—I am a lecturer in early childhood at RMIT. Gregory Heath is the head of department at RMIT. I actually prepared the submission that my department sent in. My background is in early language development and I have a strong interest in how that connects to formal literacy in later years learning—four, five, and six. That was where I was coming from when I prepared this.

Two other colleagues assisted with the paper—one of whom has just completed a PhD on assessment and therefore was interested in issues of assessment which emerged as very much one of the critical issues in terms of the strategies that are being adopted in looking at literacy in children in schools. The other person is very much into accelerated learning techniques and therefore is into individual learning styles. So he was interested in issues like the new interest in phonetics in schools and so on.

Then when I went through the literature I found a lot of the language being used about boys in schools showed the same sort of attitude used right through entire articles—girls were always used in a passive voice; boys were always in an active voice—about boy consciousness and the consciousness of girls, even in the titles of them, for example, ‘masculinities go to school’ as opposed to ‘boys go to school’. I did not find any ‘femininities’ going to school. So there was a lot of baggage in that. I was not saying that any of the strategies to do with positive discrimination for girls were unfortunate—I was just looking at the boy issue—but it kept intruding. Is that enough expansion of that?

CHAIR—Would you like to give us a bit of the submission?

Ms Nyland—In the submission I went through the literature, went through newspapers and looked at some of the radio reports and so on, so it is a mix of academic literature and also the public debate that is going on. It seemed to emerge from the literature that differences between the boys' and girls' potential—I am not sure I like the word 'potential', because it is not terribly concrete—are small or negligible. There are certainly developmental differences, and I was well aware of that when I started, in early childhood and early childhood language. On most measures of language, boys were a little bit behind girls. There are a couple of gestural things in the early months—at about 16 months or so—where they are about the same. So on most measures boys were a bit behind girls in language right through the early childhood years, but that does seem to disappear at about five.

In terms of difference, though, the physical differences in brain structures and things like that do not make any difference to actual performance. So what one person will do one way another person will do another way, it would appear. So there are not really disadvantages. There is a slight sort of spatial relationship, the sort of building with blocks type of thing that we talk about with boys, but that does not seem to hold up. There is not a difference that should affect educational outcomes at all. Our special education classes are full of boys, as we know, as are the reading recovery classes and the bridge classes and things like that. It is mainly boys who are in those classes. I have queried the classes to a certain extent. One of the underlying things is that a lot of practices in schools seem to be based on assumptions more than evidence, and although we have got all the national literacy figures—the figures on the success of the intervention classes are often collected within schools—the strategies used are quite different: some are whole language, some are based on other sorts of strategies. An individual boy gets to a certain level and goes back into the class is the sort of data we have. We do not have any measures about whether that actually keeps going, what happens in future years or what would have happened if they had stayed in the class and things like that. It is data on those intervention programs that is really problematic in terms of saying that they are actually successful.

Also, there was some data from the States that suggested that teachers tend to diagnose people as having difficulties because of behaviours and, therefore, that boys are a lot more likely to be diagnosed as having reading difficulties. One study in the States actually looked at boys and girls who had similar types of reading problems. The boys were four times more likely to end up in intervention programs than the girls were. They were overlooked and stayed in the classes and actually did better in the national testing in literacy and in things like that. It was only one study of 200 or 400 children, but that suggested that that is something that needs to be looked at. We need some proper data on the intervention strategies that are being used.

As to the differences in terms of biological and cultural differences, whether boys are disadvantaged or not, there I said that we need maybe to look at early childhood experiences and also at some of the transition to school literature. There is a lot of early childhood research suggesting what we call 'push down' curricula or more formal literacy strategies in preschools can actually be detrimental to children, yet a lot of the enrichment programs in preschools continue to do this. It is almost like, 'Okay, these children can't do this at this age; we'll give it to them at this age,' which is almost the opposite of possibly what should be happening. Although that literature exists, especially in the States where they have had 2,000-odd families go through 27 years of study—the Weikert study and things like that—we are still not particularly taking any notice of the sorts of programs that are showing up to lift cognitive

performance in earlier years of school. They have now followed children through to adulthood as well.

The other problem is also the transition to school for boys and girls. There are maturity differences and behaviour differences that come through very clearly. With the transition to school, the research has done the same stuff over and over and suggested the same strategies over and over for about 25 years. One of the things identified there is that it is often the classroom looked at—that is, how can we make the classroom more friendly for the child coming? Maybe the research needs to look at where the child is before they go into the classroom and try to link those two contexts a little more as well. In the early childhood literature and the language literature especially, the role of context in education has become something that is very popular for people to look at. So I would say that that transition to school stuff needs to be more sophisticated and needs to look at the two contexts and the links between them.

Boys are more likely to be labelled as having problems. There was a lot of stuff about why and why boys especially are diagnosed as having ADD and ADHD. That is a really complex area. There are a lot of boys on stimulants, drugs, for ADHD. There is also evidence that suggests that children with passive ADD just pass through the system and do not get noticed. There is also a suggestion that it became a very popular thing and there has been a lot of overdiagnosis and overuse of drugs. There is actually a class action in America at the moment by parents against drug companies and the American Psychiatric Association, I think. I heard that on Norman Swan but I did not actually get the details. Certainly, patterns of drug taking and diagnosis seem to be class based to a certain extent. I would be more likely to find a lot of children in a working class suburb on Ritalin and drugs like that than if I moved across town.

One of the things queried right at the end was the use of suspensions. A punitive type thing for disaffection does not seem to work. The English experience is that the juvenile crime rate has actually gone up during the day because you have these disaffected youths on suspension wandering around with no money and nothing to do, feeling fairly hostile anyway. So that is pushing people even further away from a system that is going to help them if they get locked into stealing videos and things like that, which I gather from one report I read is becoming a significant risk in the London area. To use punitive things like suspension, I think, is something that seriously should be looked at, especially for children that age to have those sorts of things on their records.

In terms of retention rates and participation, the narrowing of the curriculum seemed to be identified as a problem within the literature as well. That has come about with testing. Having gone through those sorts of points, I then took a paper that a colleague had done last year at an international literacy conference on assessment. She looked at assessment in primary schools, assessment in preschools, what some people call authentic or collaborative assessment and the more formalised tests that are used and how teachers could use those within their teaching. I would say that she had a communitarian approach because she is very much into community, parents, teachers, children and assessment that helps the child in the classroom. I understand also the need to gather greater figures across state and federal systems about how the system is actually working. I would say that assessment really needs to be looked at because it seems to me at the moment that the national benchmarks are actually driving curriculum as opposed to being a measure of what is being taught. So there is a ‘teaching to the test’ type thing which the

private schools have found does not work because, when the children move away from those tests, there are all sorts of issues of conceptual development, subject knowledge and things like that that have to be dealt with. I think the role of assessment, types of assessment, relationship of assessment to curriculum and maybe looking at two different types of assessment need to be looked at. That was the new research that we dropped into the middle of the paper.

The other thing is that my colleague, who is into the accelerated learning stuff, is a psychologist, and he said that the self-esteem research is very iffy. There is this assumption about esteem affecting people's performance at school. He said the self-esteem research is terribly hard to measure and it is not terribly sophisticated so we need to actually do a better job with that. The letter that called this committee together had some statements about self-esteem and mentioned suicide and all sorts of things like that. If those links are really there we need to test that and do something about it. He said that if you look at research literature we cannot. There are lots of things we think we know, lots of assumptions and lots of things that seem like commonsense but are very hard to actually research. That is a quick run-down on what we looked at.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. You seem to suggest that the new achievement improvement monitor is more monitoring, which is not something that we would be opposed to, but that the system itself is not going to change whatever is causing the problems that boys may be having. You suggest that that, in itself, will not change it. What sorts of changes in boys' education in substance and/or style do you think would see an improvement?

Ms Nyland—Yes, I certainly think we are doing more of the same. I actually think that schools almost need to be looked at on an institutional level. There is a suggestion that the patterns have existed for a long time. We have seen lots of different educational phases come and go. When I talk about the idea of the community as opposed to the larger stuff, I am aware of some one-off type programs where people are addressing particular needs and where the government has actually given funding for particular needs of communities to be addressed. One child-care centre that I actually know the director of—she is a Waalbiri woman—is in a remote area of the Northern Territory. They have been funded and they are outside of the quality improvement system. Their hours of operation and all sorts of things are quite different. The parents have set up this centre to teach the children how to go to school. It is fairly early days, but it seems to me that those sorts of projects may be worth looking at on a more one-off basis. At one stage here in Victoria we had the failing schools type of thing. If a school is identified as having problems, it actually needs not to be a failing school but resourced: what does this school actually need?

Mr SAWFORD—When you were preparing the submission, did you have any opportunity to do any comparisons between, say, pre-1980 and what is happening now in terms of measured assessments of what boys and girls were doing?

Ms Nyland—No, I didn't. I looked at pages that did that and I was interested in some of the claims being made because what was being measured was very different in lots of cases. If you look at a chart that says, 'This has happened across these years,' you think, 'You were not exactly comparing apples with apples.' Yes, that is a problem in looking at some of these trends.

Mr SAWFORD—We had evidence presented at this committee that referred to New South Wales—although some of these figures refer to Victoria and I am sure they refer to other states as well—showing that the differentials between boys and girls were, as you say, fairly negligible prior to 1980. Sometimes the measurements now show a difference of up to 20. Something significant has gone on in the last 20 years to create those sorts of results which were certainly not in evidence prior to 1980. You have said in your section on present strategies that an argument could be put forward that there needs to be significant change to the system rather than testing. Would you like to expand upon that? What changes would you consider, or think ought to be considered?

Ms Nyland—Within the system?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Ms Nyland—I think we should look once more at curriculum and what is being taught, especially in the high school areas. I think the biggest differential in the figures you referred to was in Victoria—the retention rates at school were the largest and went right back—yet we know that retention rates in schools only peaked in the early 1990s. Before that, people had all sorts of pathways, so I guess it is again about curriculums and pathways and broadening them out—that there is not that assumption that people finish year 12 and then go into some type of training. I am amazed at the level that the concept has been taken up within the population, but it does close down all sorts of opportunities for some people and some families. In the early years, certainly the literacy and numeracy push was an enormous problem for some children, so having that block of time and that particular curriculum material goes against the idea of having more child-centred approaches such as what this child can do and what this child's interest is.

An example is from a woman who is just finishing a masters degree in teaching a second language to middle primary school children. The children have to evaluate what they have learned each day, and she told them they could use whatever means of evaluation they wanted. Two-thirds of the boys have opted not to use a written form of evaluation—they have done it on tape, or they have used things such as photos to show what they feel they have learnt for the day. She said they have done very good work that is of very high quality—they are doing as well as the girls in the language learning—but their preference is not to use a written report form. The girls, on the other hand, have used a written report form. A lot of our curriculum and our testing are very much based on what I call behavioural measures of language, which are expressive and receptive reading and writing.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you suggesting that perhaps teachers value the written report more than a more lateral way of presenting information? Is that what you are suggesting?

Ms Nyland—I am not necessarily suggesting that teachers value it, but I am suggesting teachers are pushed into asking children to do that.

Mr SAWFORD—I would have thought a good teacher would have responded to a variety of ways in which information is presented and would have rewarded and praised kids for having the initiative to do something a little different.

Ms Nyland—Obviously that is what will be taught in a teacher training course. If you look at the curriculum frameworks around the country and things like that, there often is not the space for teachers to do it.

CHAIR—I think the point you are trying to make is that the girls naturally are more inclined to want to write the stuff, whereas the boys have got other ways they want to express themselves.

Mr SAWFORD—I understand that, but there is a value attached to that. That is the part that worries me. There is often an unset attitude that comes across—that presenting information in this way is the okay way, but presenting it in another way is the non-okay way.

Ms Nyland—And that is the relationship between the testing and curriculum that I am querying—that one is valued more than another in the testing. It pushes teachers to say, 'Look, you're going to have to do it like this so that I can test you and tick you off.'

CHAIR—Is the idea of the students evaluating what they have learned—and in the process, of course, evaluating the teaching—a useful way of drawing information out of kids, both boys and girls?

Ms Nyland—I think if you did it fairly systematically you would get some very good information about learning. It is actually a nice looking masters. And I did not supervise it!

CHAIR—I should have said that Kerry and Rod are former teachers themselves.

Mr BARTLETT—Don't hold that against us. I am sorry, I missed some of your comments on literacy, and you may have covered this already. In those early encounters with literacy, the view has been presented to us that the whole-of-language approach disadvantages boys whereas the older phonetics approach was not such a disadvantage to them. Would you like to comment on that?

Ms Nyland—Only a little because I am not a classroom teacher; I am an early childhood teacher. But I did do my masters in a whole language classroom, in which I followed a boy through for a whole semester as an 'emergent literate', I think the title was then. I really do not know. I think that it is probably a case of 50 per cent of this and 50 per cent of that—that there does not really seem to be a boys' style of learning and a girls' style of learning.

Mr BARTLETT—So you are not aware of any strong evidence in the literature of any research that has been done on this that would indicate that one system favours the girls and the other one favours boys?

Ms Nyland—There is certainly literature that does both.

Mr BARTLETT—It does both, so it is contradictory.

Ms Nyland—Yes, there is contradictory research. There are lots of people who did a lot of good work in the whole language stuff—for example, the Goodmans. For the early childhood

people a lot of it came out of the Ashton-Warner stuff in New Zealand and then through the antibias curriculum, et cetera, which was very much whole language. At a literacy conference in New Zealand last year there was a big push of 'Look what is happening to boys; we need to get back to phonics.' That came through very strongly. But that could be because whole language was not a panacea. It takes us about 10 years to work out that not everybody is successful at some things so then we turn around and look at an alternative. We tend to think like that. I would not want to make any definitive statements about one advantaging.

Mr BARTLETT—What about the starting age for kindergarten? Given the slight developmental differences between girls and boys, is there any strong evidence in the research or in the literature that would indicate that there is a significant difference in success in literacy and numeracy, say, for boys starting kindergarten at 5½ years rather than 4 years and 9 months? They seem to be the age ranges.

Ms Nyland—There is actually some evidence that boys and girls benefit from starting formal schooling a bit later.

Mr BARTLETT—That they benefit starting later?

Ms Nyland—Both of them, and that is quite strong. There is also a big international study being done at the moment. Australia is not part of it: I think we said we could not afford to or something. The last time I went to a paper on it the Polish children at age eight were scoring at a much higher level than children in other education systems. What was interesting about that was that they were the children who had actually started formal schooling a year later.

Mr BARTLETT—Were they aged around the 5½ to 6 years mark?

Ms Nyland—They were six or seven. I cannot remember the details now.

Mr BARTLETT—Is that relative advantage greater for boys than it is for girls?

Ms Nyland—At that stage I did not look at the gender stuff; I just looked at the age stuff. There was a Senate committee way back such as this on early years of school—and my memory is a bit vague—which I think recommended that five years or six years was a more suitable age to start formal schooling. I also thought that they said that a more early childhood-type strategy should be used in the first year of schooling as opposed to moving straight into formal lessons.

Mr BARTLETT—I have just one other question on this: for those who are disadvantaged by starting earlier, does the evidence suggest that that disadvantage is overcome, say, in three or four years time and that the differences are narrowed, or do they remain? All other things being equal, what would the effect be?

Ms Nyland—It depends on the effects of the disadvantage. If they seriously miss out on some conceptual ideas, then they might not be performing. There is a bit of a pattern even with children who are reading very well in the first lot of tests who fall behind in year 1 to year 3 that the child who is top of the class in year 1 can actually be looking at reading recovery by year 3. There are those sorts of patterns that happen in classes, too. So you think perhaps that child would have been better off to start later.

Mr BARTLETT—In conclusion, then, do you think there is a case for investigating further a delay in starting age, particularly for children who may exhibit signs of ADD or ADHD?

Ms Nyland—Yes, and the ADD children seem to be the really crucial because they are the quiet children who do not get noticed in the group. I am not anti children learning to read and write before they go to school, and I have run reading programs for children who obviously really wanted to do it. But the idea of sitting a child down with a whole group of children for hours and hours does lead to all sorts of problems. We see children who just are not ready to be in that sort of very formalised grouping. They are very young. By pushing people and hot-housing them there is damage done. That does not mean that children who want to do it cannot.

Ms GILLARD—I am interested in your comments about reading recovery. You referred to a study that says that boys are more likely to be selected for reading recovery, probably in part because of behavioural issues rather than actual literacy issues. I think you said that there was a study that suggested the outcomes of that kind of remedial work were not significantly better than remaining in the classroom. Could you just take us through that?

Ms Nyland—It actually said the opposite. I cannot remember the name of the study but I think I referenced it. What they said in that study, I think, was that boys were four times more likely to be selected. It does seem to be the case in this country—from other reports—that teachers will select boys on behaviour, so that is an issue in itself. But then the girls that were not selected who at the beginning of the study had the same sorts of reading levels and skills as the boys but stayed in the class and did not get the intervention actually tended to do better.

Ms GILLARD—That is a pretty disturbing finding, isn't it?

Ms Nyland—It is only one study, but yes. I do not know what sorts of intervention strategies were used. It was an American study. When I look at the data we have got on our reading recovery here, it is really school-to-school and things like that. We have not actually got benchmarks like the national literacy benchmarks; we have not got any good data to give a pattern so that we can look at which strategies are better than others or which types of interventions are better than others or whether maybe initially we should have them all within the whole class setting or whatever. That is really an issue that we just do not know enough about.

Mr EMERSON—On reading recovery in Queensland, the children are selected out of the year 2 diagnostic net, not by a teacher working out who is quiet or who is noisy or who has behavioural problems; it is identified quite objectively, and there is a lot of data on the impact of the reading recovery programs. I do not know if that is available but certainly it is assembled in the Queensland Education Department. Are you aware of that work?

Ms Nyland—I have some friends in Queensland and they sent me some of the curriculum material. I looked more at the new preschool curriculum from Queensland because it was of more interest. But even with diagnosis, you can take them off your main tests but children actually get sent off for diagnosis too. Why do you choose one person to be diagnosed as opposed to another? That is an issue too. And what about the children who do not do tests well? That might be a pattern as well.

Mr EMERSON—All of that seems to say to me that there is no evidence that anything works and the best news out of that would be for researchers because they can keep researching to see what works. That is the tone I got out of the paper. Tell me if that is not the right conclusion. To me, your submission seemed a bit despairing when you said, 'We've looked at these things and we've got to challenge all these assumptions that various programs work because there is not sufficient objective data to prove that they do, so maybe we've got to improve the quality of education.' I think everyone would agree with that, but what does that mean and what do we do in the meantime while we wait for 20-year odd longitudinal studies?

Ms Nyland—I am not particularly suggesting that, although I guess in one way I am. We need to be setting up good longitudinal studies, and I am not suggesting that I would design them. I am not particularly into the statistics stuff. I came to this having a decade or more of involvement in the children's rights movement. When I look at our education system I see that one strategy after another has not changed the situation of the children that I have been interested in. So when you say 'despairing', I am just saying, 'We've done this; we've done this; we've done this, and these children are still disadvantaged in this sort of way and are still suffering these sorts of life chances.' I was not attacking strategies or what people have done, but I am saying, 'I am interested in this group of children. I've studied these groups and know quite a bit about them historically, but I do not see that anything has been terribly useful for them.'

Mr EMERSON—Based on your research and your experience, what would you suggest does work in a practical way, beyond just saying that we need to improve the quality of education, which we all agree with?

Ms Nyland—Apart from one-off projects, I would not know. When I did the submission I could highlight things that have been tried as strategies that we did not know enough about.

Mr EMERSON—That is what I think makes for despair, because your answer is that we do not know what to do.

Ms Nyland—But there are problems with the system and, as a whole system, no.

CHAIR—We need to finish. There is one thing I will ask you. I do not have a background in education, but it seems to me that where you have got enthusiastic, committed, intelligent teachers with a sense of wisdom as much as knowledge kids do well; at least, they do as well as they are able to do. Is the problem we are going round and round in due in no small way to the fact that the standard of people going into teaching is less than it was when Mr Sawford went into it? If teaching was as hard to get into and was as well paid as medicine, law, dentistry or engineering, would we be having this inquiry?

Ms Nyland—If teachers were rewarded, if pay was better and things like that, if classes were smaller—teachers have put down pretty well what would make life better for them—fairly clearly the TRs would go up for the courses. You would then have to look at the content of the courses and you would also have to look at the schooling system that those enthusiastic teachers go out into. I think teachers themselves will tell you that some jobs are just very hard and you can only achieve so much. Maybe teachers should have more control over curriculum and

things like that rather than having things handed down to them from boards of study. I see those sorts of things as being a top-down system.

CHAIR—That one is on our list. It is a sweeping generalisation, but do you agree with the proposition that the quality of people going into teaching is much lower than it was in an earlier time, which must inevitably have a consequence in terms of what these people finally do in their careers? That is not to denigrate people who go into teaching. I admire them. We had the principal of Scotch College tell us yesterday that not one kid in his school would seriously consider a career in teaching, which you have to worry about.

Ms Nyland—I have been teaching university and TAFE for a lot of years, and some years we have very high TRs and some years we have quite low ones. Yes, the quality of the student has changed, and it is easier and more pleasant for me to teach the brighter students. You get some who are just absolutely fabulous.

CHAIR—We also appreciate that the TR is not the measure of a successful life or otherwise but is one indicator. We could probably go round and round on that. Thank you very much. It is very good of you to appear. And thank you for having the courage, if you like, to stand up amongst your colleagues and to prepare the paper and come along and speak to us. Please convey to Professor Heath our sympathies and understanding on the traffic environment.

Ms Nyland—Thank you for the opportunity.

[9.54 a.m.]

ROWE, Dr Katherine Sylvia, Senior Consultant Physician, Department of General Paediatrics, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

ROWE, Dr Kenneth John, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research

CHAIR—Welcome. Please proceed with opening comments.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—I want to summarise some of the key points in our submission. The bottom line is that while there are major gender differences in a number of key areas, as we have indicated, all of those pale into insignificance compared to the research which we have gathered over the last 25 years in which we have been personally involved. All of those effects pale into insignificance compared to class-teacher effects on student outcomes. This has arisen partly because of new technologies as far as multilevel modelling is concerned to enable us to identify in quantitative models as well as qualitative follow-up where the major sources of variation lie. This is based on international research as well as local research. Anything up to 60 per cent of the variance of how well students perform at school, even when you adjust for intake characteristics like social background, ethnicity, language and so on, has to do with teacher effects. The implications of this means that, regardless of student gender or indeed teacher gender, the major positive or negative impact on students' experiences of schooling is due to teacher effects. That means that we need to invest a great deal in the quality of people we draw into the profession and, when we maintain them, ensure that we have consistent quality of professional development for them. We know that longitudinal research is also indicating that about 0.4 of a standard deviation affect size; namely, the effect of teacher professional development on student outcomes is about 0.4 of a standard deviation. That is quite a massive effect.

Just briefly, it is worth listening to some of the 'voices' of students themselves: problems in the schooling experience and outcomes of boys compared with outcomes of girls; a little on facing the evidence; the reasons for the differences; the literacy and behaviour challenge; meeting that challenge; and where the real differences lie, namely, with teachers. The following is a response from a rather articulate year 8 boy illustrating the dilemma faced by many boys and their teachers:

My English teacher wants me to write about my *feelings*, my History teacher wants me to give my *opinions*, and my Science teacher wants me to write on my *views* about the environment! I don't know what my *feelings*, *opinions* and *views* are, and I can't write about them. Anyway, they're none of their bloody business! I hate school!! I only wish I could write about the things I'm interested in like sport and military aircraft.

The following is a response from a 15-year-old boy:

This is girl stuff! This school is **run** by girls **for** girls. I can't wait to get out!

A girl in a year 10 all-girls maths class said:

It's **great** not being with the boys. We can talk with each other about what we're doing and ask questions of the teacher without being put down by the boys.

Mind you, that works in both directions, let me assure you. The following is a response from a year 11 boy about his geography class and teacher:

There are just bits of it that sink in but most of it doesn't really register. You just kind of half listen and half not listen. He raves on and you switch on only sometimes just in case he asks you a question, but his voice is always there.

That is what we have come to refer to as what is known as teacher blah. John Edwards refers to this as kids bobbing up and down in a sea of blah, blah, blah, gulping for air. We are finding from detailed research on recall of what happens in classes that if students retain 20 per cent of it they are doing extraordinarily well. We are in the 21st century operating on a 16th century model of schooling. It is quite extraordinary. If we look at the original classroom in Eton, built by Henry VII, we see that it is no different from a modern classroom here in Victoria or anywhere in Australia or anywhere in the Western world for that matter, except of course that we do not have scored black oak benches anymore—maybe.

You all know that over the last decade the evidence indicating that boys on average are achieving at lower levels than girls in all areas of the assessed cognitive curriculum throughout their primary and secondary schooling is not in dispute. Indeed, the gap is widening and that is universal here in Australia as well as many countries throughout the world.

A quick comment from the Barry McGaw's review in New South Wales—and I can assure you that a very similar thing is occurring here—is that once upon a time boys were overrepresented in the top end of the tertiary entrance rank distribution; it is now the reverse. Females are now overrepresented in all high tertiary entrance rank ranges and males are even more overrepresented at the bottom. Here is the gap. It is from Bob MacCann's work in New South Wales. That gap is actually widening and has been doing so particularly since the early 1990s. Everybody is wondering why. Having worked as a visiting fellow at the University of London, working on national results for key stages 1 through 4 as well as on 'A' levels in the United Kingdom, let me assure you that a very similar phenomenon has occurred there.

Here in Victoria, analysing the data for the Board of Studies which I have been involved with since 1994 through to last year, I can say this is a slightly different story in the sense that we are now dealing with VCE studies and a scale from zero to 50 with a mean of 30 and a standard deviation of seven. Across 53 studies for 270,000 students there are females that are operating on average significantly higher than their male counterparts. There is no point in putting confidence intervals on each of these because they are so small because of the large numbers.

That translates into another disturbing thing, something which has been mentioned in the research literature too. Here in Victoria from 1994 we have a picture, on average, of girls in all girl classes or schools—certainly in single sex settings—girls in co-ed settings, boys in single sex settings and boys in co-ed settings. Over five or six VCE subjects that translates into a difference of something like 22 percentile ranks. In New South Wales it is approximately 25 percentile TERs. Put very quickly, when compared with girls, findings from the evidence based research indicate that boys on average are significantly more disadvantaged with schooling and are more likely to be at risk of academic underachievement, especially in literacy. This is just a very quick illustration. It has been well published. This is following kids through from prep,

something like 13,700 in government, Catholic and independent schools, right through to year 11. These are just simple box and whiskers plots where the box represents the middle 50 per cent of the distribution, bounded by the 75th and the 25th percentiles, and the whiskers are the 90th and 10th percentiles respectively. You can see the kids are far more homogenous, as you would expect, in the early years of schooling. Following them through, by the time the student is in year 9 and teachers are faced with an enormous range of abilities, it is somewhat daunting. You will notice also a flattening out of the growth trajectories. In fact, when I first showed this to Kathy as a developmental paediatrician at the time, she said, 'There's nothing new about that.'

Dr Katherine Rowe—It was the growth curve for children.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Yes, that is right. They almost parallel—

Dr Katherine Rowe—It is when they hit adolescence that you are running into trouble.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—You get the same thing with the British ability scales and with a lot of the other state testing as well. You get a flattening out during that pre-puberty period. We come to the reasons for the differences. The key reason for the differences is the increasing demand for higher and more sophisticated levels of literacy and verbal reasoning and communication skills, which is also reflected in curriculum design as well as in its assessment. When was the last time you picked up the basic skills test in New South Wales for numeracy? In grade 3 you actually need a grade 5 level of literacy to do it. As for specialist maths or four-unit mathematics at year 12, a content analysis has demonstrated that on average the level of the nomenclature and sophisticated verbal reasoning skills that are required—to even understand what the problem is—is on average four times greater than what is required in Australian history and English literature. So not only does the student have to understand what is being asked, they must translate it then into a mathematical algorithm and justify or explicate the solution.

This is not to suggest for one moment that we ought to dumb down the curriculum or its assessment. In fact, these are skills that are required in the society in which we live. Why are the girls doing better? It is partly that they have distinct maturation and socialisation advantages. Put very quickly, in terms of interpersonal communication, girls are spending a lot more quality time talking to each other and reading, on average, four times more than what boys are reading. When it comes to a school curriculum design that does demand higher levels of verbal reasoning and written communication skills, they are excelling. That is true right around the world. A similar phenomenon is occurring in Holland.

So it demands that we have that competence and there is this widening gap that I have just mentioned to you. It also overlaps with inattentive behaviours and our joint work, as well as our work on systems, has certainly demonstrated that is a major problem. In fact, there has been a major shift from the education sector to the health sector because of the lack of support structures that have previously been available in education. Students are being referred to tertiary referral hospitals, like the Royal Children's Hospital here in Melbourne, and similar paediatric referral centres in other major capital cities. In fact, 60 per cent of all referrals to paediatricians are to do with behaviour. We will have a look at that in a moment.

The gap between males and females particularly in terms of inattentiveness is quite considerable. It does improve slightly as girls get older and so on—that illustration tells us the story. Sixty per cent of paediatric consultations are to do with behavioural concerns, 20 per cent with learning difficulties—mostly boys—17 per cent with poor progress and literacy, and nine per cent to 12 per cent with concurrent behaviour and literacy problems. Also, boys report a significantly less positive experience of schooling in terms of enjoyment, perceived curriculum usefulness and teacher responsiveness. Again, all of these can be superimposed over each other and the experience—right from kindergarten through to year 11—is one of a major fall away, particularly by boys in each of those three major domains.

What is worse is that in the early years of schooling boys constitute 75 to 85 per cent of those children—usually in grade 1—identified at risk of poor achievement/progress in literacy and are selected for a Reading Recovery program. You are familiar with the fact that at least 30 per cent fail or that at least 20 per cent of school age have literacy skills below the minimum standard and another 15 per cent have overlapping problems with externalising behaviours. Our argument is that, since prevention is better than cure and certainly more cost effective, we stand condemned for our neglect if we merely provide ambulance services at the bottom of a cliff when we should have first built a fence at the top. What do we mean by that? The evidence is suggesting also that boys have a higher prevalence of auditory processing problems. Do you want to quickly mention that, Kathy?

Dr Katherine Rowe—We have done some recent work in Victoria and have identified that boys, even in prep, have problems with processing auditory information. Teachers are really unaware of the normal developmental range of children. Teachers talk too much to children, so that they do not actually take in the information. Boys fall off very quickly, even by the end of prep. We have just completed an intervention study with reference schools and have found that, just with teachers identifying children who are having difficulty and being given some strategies for the classroom—it took an hour at the beginning of the year to do that—there was a significant difference in outcome at the end of the year compared with reference schools. This is showing in the first segment—reference schools with testing at the beginning and at the end of the year. Even by the end of prep, boys are dropping off and becoming more inattentive and their literacy levels are poorer, yet in the trial schools they were progressing and paralleling the girls. That was for even a very small intervention of teacher professional development, of making teachers aware of the range of abilities within their class and of normal child development. That was the difference that it made.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—So much so that the Victorian department is actually implementing this as a PD package for teachers.

Dr Katherine Rowe—It is going to be implemented next year.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Where do the real effects lie? We are actually finding that the differences between schools when you adjust for intake characteristics are pretty negligible. In fact SES accounts for a maximum of nine per cent of the variance. In fact the best correlation you can get between achievement and background SES regardless of how you measure it is 0.3 correlation. That translates into nine per cent of the variance. The best predictor of how well students go right throughout their education is actually the mothers' education. In fact the more highly educated fathers are the less qualitative time they spend with their children.

Most of the effects even when you adjust for that is actually at the class-teacher level. Some of you were teachers and would have had the experience of working with members of staff that you would bend over backwards to have your own children exposed to. The sad thing—especially if you are a principal, as I have been—is where you get not only parents but also members of the staff with students at the school knock on your door and say, 'Listen. I do not want my child going with that teacher next year.' Often this is not teacher bashing; this has often come about because there are many teachers in our system who are tired, burnt out, unenergised, have not been involved in professional development or have had very limited access to it. There are major problems there.

This is a local one based on again 13,700 kids. This is also the international study. This is the second international maths and science study. This is really hard-nosed testing let me assure you. When you account for intake characteristics again the differences between schools drop away to nothing and most of that variance is at the class-teacher level. Over the last nine years here in Victoria we have been looking at residual variations, so we have adjusted for gender; ability, which is measured by the general achievement test in Victoria; and also sector. There is only about 5.5 per cent of the variance in students' VCE scores across 53 studies that is due to differences between schools. That is about 35 per cent at the student level. But how well students go at VCE depends on the quality of the teachers or class-teacher effects.

Here is an example from the VCE Data Project that I undertook for the board of studies. It will give you some idea of the five-year trend. These are point estimates bounded by 95 per cent confidence levels by the way for 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 through to 1999. Here is chemistry, further maths, maths methods, specialist maths and physics. One of the reasons for showing the maths and sciences is that a lot of students are doing the same subjects and yet here they are in different subjects performing extraordinarily differently. It has nothing to do with their underlying ability. In fact when you go back to the participating schools they comment on things like in the case of chemistry, which is the first one there, 'That teacher in 1995 went on long service leave. The PE teacher who had a little bit of background in chemistry came in. The kids' performance went down. A new teacher was recruited the following year and did much better than the population mean and also significantly better than the previous year because there is no overlap in the confidence intervals, but unfortunately that teacher was recruited to another school.' So staff stability is also an issue here.

The real message from all of this is that we have also collected a great deal of information about teachers' perceptions of their work environment. There are things like morale and so forth, but let me assure you that they pale into insignificance when compared to teacher PD. The direct effect of teacher professional development on student achievement outcomes is massive. Part of the VCE data project was actually seeing schools come from a very low base—and some of them were so-called prestigious schools that were very concerned about their relative performance on the public league tables. As a result of getting feedback of this kind we were able to introduce intervention strategies that improved teacher and student performance enormously and also improved morale of the staff in the process.

I suppose the bottom line is, after 25 years of dealing with this kind of stuff both locally and internationally, that teachers make a difference. Our concern of course is, as you have probably already been exposed to, that the teaching profession currently is an ageing population and the estimate is that within the next six to 10 years something like 60 per cent of the current teaching

work force will be retired or very close to retiring. The likelihood of getting new people into the profession is pretty remote because teaching is not an attractive profession. And while this is an inquiry into the education of boys, I can assure you that those issues in many ways pale into absolute insignificance compared to these major effects of having quality teaching and learning provision in the classroom and the professional development to support that. I have given you a hard time and I am sorry to take you through that but I think it is an important message.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. I wish that the person from the Secondary School Principals' Association had been here to hear it. We have about 20 or 25 minutes to go through questions. There are two things I would like to put to you quickly. I said to the lady from RMIT before she left that if teaching required the same sort of TER to get into as does engineering, dentistry, medicine and law and had similar career expectations, would we be having this inquiry at all. In other words, is the quality of those who are being recruited into teaching a fundamental part of the problem? It is not the only part of it, but is that a key to it?

Dr Katherine Rowe—It is the quality of the person coming into it but it is also what they are dished up at university as well. I have friends of our kids who have started in teacher training who have lasted a year and said, 'If this is the sort of trash that we are given what am I in this profession for'—and they have swapped out of it. Some of those are very bright kids and they were doing it because they had an altruistic view about what teaching was about, but they had it killed off when they got to university before they even got out into the schools. So I think there are some system problems before they even get into classrooms. I am on the receiving end, really, at the hospital because we see so many kids with learning and behavioural problems and we are constantly in touch with schools. I recognise that there has been a change in attitude and sense of professionalism within the schools, certainly in Victoria in the last little while, and that they have had fairly intensive professional development, particularly with their early literacy program, and that that has translated from maybe five years ago when we would ring up the schools and they would say, 'What are you seeing that kid for? He is not the worst in the class' to 'What can we do about this child? We have this program and that program and I have learned that we could try this and how about that,' so that they are feeling much more empowered and understand what is going on. I think there have been positive benefits, even among the teachers who, five years ago, were pretty disillusioned and tired.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—In response to your question, Brendan, I might say that Scandinavia, for instance, does take education very seriously because they realise that their entire economic future depends on the quality of education, so it is actually harder to get into teaching in Scandinavia than it is into law or medicine. Mind you, they also pay their teachers. But they select them, and teaching is regarded very highly as an honourable profession. In the United Kingdom, here, Canada, the United States and in several other Western countries that is not the case, and partly it is due to the kinds of things that Kathy has referred to but more especially it is due to the fact that universities themselves do not value education. In fact there is one university here in Victoria, for example, where the education faculty is referred to as the 'department of residual studies'.

CHAIR—Thanks very much. We had the principal of Scotch College tell us yesterday—and with that school population if the boys are not ambitious I am sure the parents make up for it—that not one boy in that school would want to be a teacher. And that must be of concern to everybody.

Dr Katherine Rowe—Maybe PE would come into that, perhaps.

CHAIR—The other question I want to ask you, Kathy, which we did not touch on, regards kids presenting with ADHD, or at least diagnosed as such, disproportionately being represented in lower SES areas. I recently got some figures out on dexamphetamine prescribing. My electorate is high income, high education, and I notice in lower socioeconomic areas the prescribing rates are up to six times higher. What is the reason for that?

Dr Katherine Rowe—Dexamphetamine is a bit of a problem if you are just using those prescriptions because it is cheaper and low income people may choose to use that first because Ritalin costs a lot. So that is one issue. I think it does go across the board, but I do think that there are other issues within low socioeconomic areas that increase a child's inattentiveness. One is the literacy aspect—schooling and specific learning difficulties—and others are the social stresses that these children are under, so if they have a tendency to inattentiveness it will be exacerbated by both those problems.

Mr SAWFORD—The astute 13-year-old who made the particular statement about feelings, opinions and views I think has probably described in a very fair way what happens in many schools. I think before 1980 the focus would have been more on identification of concepts, solve the following problem, list the following processes, predict what will happen, what follows next, et cetera, when maybe boys would have done far better. So there have been significant changes over the last 20 years in the way measures are made of education. You used an example, Ken, in mathematics, which you see over and over again. As someone who actually majored in mathematics, I would be pulling my hair out regarding the verbal skills required to solve a quadratic equation. It is not written that way; it is written in a language way, so it is almost solving a language problem. When we talk about the wide span in terms of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, and you have mentioned that we need to be careful about dumbing down the curriculum, I would say that the curriculum has already been dumbed down regarding many of those skills that Bloom identified in terms of prediction, translation and interpretation. Where is the analysis in schools; where is the analysis in the media? It is non-existent. People do not even know what the word means any more. We have a newspaper correspondent in this country who writes under the word 'analysis'. All it is is pure description; it has nothing to do with analysis, so we have actually changed the meanings of words.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Precisely.

Mr SAWFORD—That has happened. You have described that happening.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is right. That is a well-known and worldwide phenomenon as well.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, it is. George Orwell and his *Politics and the English language* got a few things right in 1948. But how do you change that? I do not subscribe to the conspiracy theory that this has been all to disadvantage boys; I think these things have happened and, as a consequence, boys have been disadvantaged in the current schooling system.

Dr Katherine Rowe—I think there are developmental reasons why boys find it more difficult. I think they eventually catch up towards university, but I think girls certainly are a couple of years ahead.

Mr SAWFORD—But if you are angry and you have turned off school when you have got a lot of ability—

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is right, it is disastrous.

Mr SAWFORD—and when you are being diagnosed for behavioural problems when, in actual fact, you are just peed off—

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is right, and you are on socially dependent drugs.

Mr SAWFORD—and when you are given drugs by paediatricians, doctors and goodness knows what else, when basically all you are saying is, 'I want to have a fair go,' there is no behaviour problem involved at all. Some states have this huge problem of ADD; other states do not have any. We should ask: 'Hang on a minute, what is going on in this country?' Certain areas where certain doctors are have huge numbers of so-called ADD; other areas in similar sort of constructs have none. There is something horribly wrong. They are exaggerated generalisations, of course. I thank you for your presentation, but what do you think the system ought to do?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Okay; what do I think the system ought to do. In response to Brendan's question, too, let me say that if we think it is bad—as with similar drugs here in Australia—it pales into insignificance compared with what it is in North America.

Going back to where we were before, there are several things that we need to do. In relation to the gender gap, firstly I think it is a reality that we have got higher demands for verbal reasoning and written communication skills—that is a given. What is more, it is going to increase. This is becoming obvious as students are using the Internet, for example, and synthesising a great deal of information, including verbal information. Girls are doing that much more effectively, even though boys at this stage might be using the computer equipment a little more competently. In terms of synthesising information, girls are going to continue to do well, to do better than boys—that is always going to be the case because of development. We must intervene as early as possible, and that is clear from longitudinal research we have done on the effects of programs like Reading Recovery, for example, which put kids who are at risk back on to a growth trajectory which is sustained. That is very important.

There is a range of techniques which teachers can use in the classroom—that is in some of the reference material that is in the back of our submission. These techniques are really lighting the fire in kids' bellies as far as getting switched on to literacy is concerned. They are improving their verbal and written communication skills enormously. But there are three things which are absolutely vital. One is a focus on support for literacy across the curriculum and the right to PD for teachers. Having done the state-wide evaluation of ELIC—the Early Literacy Inservice Course—for CDC in Canberra in the late 1980s, I noticed that the wonderful thing about the Basic Learning in Primary Schools program, funded by the Commonwealth government, was that it brought together teachers and gave them focused professional development in which they had a shared nomenclature. There were very experienced teachers who used to say, 'I have not learned a great deal that is new,' particularly those teachers that were trained in the infant teacher's certificate—some of you would remember that. They would say, 'I have not learned

anything new but it has recharged my batteries. I feel a lot more confident and confident as a professional in the classroom.'

That Commonwealth funding has moved away from professional development of teachers and now it has become more state oriented. But, even so, whenever budgets are cut, they are always cut in the area of teacher professional development. We also know that there is a direct link between teacher professional development and teacher absenteeism and Workcare applications. Absenteeism and Workcare applications are money down a big black hole. When you provide PD for teachers, it reduces significantly their perceptions of work demands. In other words, they work even harder. What is more, it reduces quite dramatically teacher absenteeism and Workcare applications. Because of the cost benefit and given the fact that you consistently get something like 0.4 of a standard deviation effect size as a direct effect from teacher PD on student outcomes, let us invest in the people we already have. That is vital, as we cannot suddenly say, 'Let us raise the TERs to 90 to get into teaching.' You would not get anybody, because the way the profession is currently perceived by the general community and students—not only at Scotch College, let me assure you—there are very few students that are even contemplating going into teaching unless their TERs are so low that the only way they can get into a university is by applying to do teaching. Those people are actually teaching your children and mine—that concerns me a great deal for the future of this country.

Mr BARTLETT—Thanks for a really valuable presentation. I have a couple of quick questions, which you have already partly covered. Do you think the growing gap between TES performance of boys and girls over the last two decades is largely because of in-school factors or community, out-of-school, environmental and family factors, or a combination of both?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—It is partly because of the demand on the curriculum content as well as its assessment. In fact, that is a direct reflection of it.

Dr Katherine Rowe—Verbal reasoning skills are required.

Mr BARTLETT—For boys more than girls.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Verbal reasoning and written communication skills, yes, if you look at similar research in Canada, the United States and certainly all the key stages from 1 through to 4 and 'A' levels in the United Kingdom, but there are also very similar results from Holland and West Germany.

Mr BARTLETT—And addressing those through some of these sorts of activities will help to close the gap?

Dr Katherine Rowe—Yes. There is no doubt. From an anecdotal point of view with children in the hospital who come in with behavioural problems, as soon as their literacy gets sorted out they will come in and suddenly they are okay, they are not a problem in school. They will slap their reader on the desk and say, 'Look what I can do now.' They are really keen about things. So they go from a beginning of being miserable and fed up—hate school, can't stand it, won't go, in trouble and in the principal's office all the time—to being keen about it. Literacy makes a huge difference.

Mr BARTLETT—So you would disagree strongly with the assertion of the representative of state school principals who said the best way to tackle disadvantage for boys is simply to raise educational procedures generally rather than to focus on pedagogic techniques that disadvantage boys?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Yes. If you specifically focus on pedagogical techniques that are peculiar to any one interest group, you inevitably alienate some and please some. Those gender effects are there, let me assure you. That is the case; the evidence is there. But they are insignificant compared with the quality of teaching and learning provision, regardless of either teacher gender or student gender.

Mr BARTLETT—But by addressing those techniques generally are you saying that the gap would close or that the gap would continue to grow but that both would benefit?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Close in the sense that being part of a professional development package for teachers, where they are aware of some of these particular needs; yes, it does close the gap. We have already seen those intervention effects in our research—large-scale research, too.

Mr EMERSON—I am greatly encouraged in that you seem to be saying there is a very substantial body of research that points us in a particular direction for remedies for the problems. I felt with the previous submission that they were saying there is not much research, that it is all very inconclusive and so we do not know what works. Where does that take us? If SES is a poor predictor of educational attainment, and I am talking about boys and girls here, yet high school retention rates are lower in low SES areas—and this is what I take you to be saying—it is not because those kids are in some way inherently disadvantaged but that if we had better teaching in those schools they could achieve the same sorts of outcomes?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Anything to do with biological and social determinism is a cop-out. In fact, we have been working with Bob Slavin at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in Philadelphia, in the backblocks there. If you think kids are from disadvantaged schools here, they pale into insignificance compared with the ghettos they are operating there. An intervention program focuses on two things: firstly, 'This school is a high reliability organisation.' That means that, like air traffic controllers, nothing less than 100 per cent success is good enough. What do we need to get 100 per cent success? Taking Bloom's notion of time on task and engaged learning time, by developing a teacher professional development package, these kids who were below the bottom decile in terms of national testing moved from there to beyond the 75th percentile in the space of 18 months. We have done a very similar thing with our early literacy research project in Victoria—again, this is from disadvantaged schools—by intervention via a teacher professional development program, regardless of kids' background. Sure, they come with a lower intellectual and social capital that schools can work with but that background is not going to stay with them for the rest of their lives.

One of the problems of invoking SES is, again using Bloom's term, 'unalterable variables'. In fact, all of the educational and economic research shows that if simply you throw money at schools—as Hanushek referred to, for example—and programs, which are often the preconditions for learning, the net gain on shareholder capital is almost zero. However, if you invest in where the rubber hits the road, in teacher professional development—like we saw with

the BLIPS program, the early years program here in Victoria, 'first steps' in Western Australia and so many other programs—it has a major impact because it actually penetrates the classroom door, unlike most political and bureaucratic feats. We very rarely penetrate the classroom door. What penetrates the classroom door is teacher professional development.

Mr EMERSON—I have two quick follow-up questions. Are you aware of whether there are any policies anywhere in Australia of putting our best teachers into disadvantaged areas, or are we doing nothing in that regard?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—An attempt was made to do that several years ago. Bob Connell from Macquarie University with Ken Johnson and Liz White did a project on DSP teachers. How do we get good quality teachers into disadvantaged schools? With great difficulty, I can assure you. There were some dedicated people who deliberately chose to be there because they had the altruism associated with making a contribution to society, and they were outstanding teachers. But what is happening is that many good quality teachers are going to where—

Mr EMERSON—Where it is easy.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—They want to teach. But I want to teach kids who want to learn. Western Australia has tried with the Rural Education Project, and, as you are probably aware, to try to get doctors in the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to go to rural areas, they are paid a premium to do so to increase services out there. In the selection process, they have managed to get some good teachers to go to some of those outlying schools, and we have already seen the effects of that. If you look at the Rural Education Project in Western Australia, the evidence is pretty conclusive.

Mr EMERSON—So I take it that that would be a recommendation that you would make to this committee?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—In the previous parliament this committee conducted an inquiry into youth employment, and we went to regional Western Australia and spoke to teachers. One of the comments that was made consistently was that the teachers they were getting in those places were basically first year out of university and therefore there was not that quality of teaching, that dedication. So the experienced teachers were not going into outback and rural and remote locations.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is true—it was the inexperienced ones, but it was the good quality ones. There are many teachers who have been teaching for 25 years, but have repeated one year's experience 25 times. Just because there is a lack of experience does not mean that there is not good quality teaching and learning provision in the classroom. They were measured on a number of criteria. They were carefully selected in some cases.

Mr BARRESI—This was criticism from the schools themselves.

Mr EMERSON—I have one final question. I thought I heard you say that the Reading Recovery Program approach is effective. Is that right?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Yes. In fact, that research has well and truly been published. It is very cost intensive because it is one-on-one, but it is not so much the impact on the one-on-one as the impact it has when those trained reading and recovery teachers—who preach the gospel of Reading Recovery according to Saint Marie Clay and carry around the bible, *Becoming Literate*, and the observation survey and so forth—return to the classroom. So it is the professional development—

Mr EMERSON—Inherent in the process.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Marie Clay invited me just last year to speak in Auckland, and I showed them the data on the impact that the program has had. It has been very clear that kids have moved from a no-growth trajectory to a positive one. When those trained teachers go back to the normal classroom it makes an enormous difference because they are much better observers of kids learning behaviours and they know when and where to intervene. I am probably demonstrating my passion about this.

Mr EMERSON—Chair, could there be a short follow-up submission to this inquiry from Dr Kenneth Rowe and Dr Katherine Rowe with respect to those two things? They seem to me to have enormous implications for this inquiry. You are basically saying that there should be professional development of teachers, that the best teachers should be put in disadvantaged areas and that the Reading Recovery program should be practised.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—You need more teachers in disadvantaged areas. We really need good teachers. You probably remember your own experience—we have all been students. If you are lucky, you can nominate one or two teachers that lit the fire in your belly. What was special about them? Kids will tell you exactly. They have a consistent story: 'That teacher cared about me.' They really loved and were enthusiastic about what they did. I will ask you: what would kids say makes a good teacher?

Mr SAWFORD—They gave me success and gave me confidence.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Exactly. That is the universal story, right from prep through to the end of university.

Dr Katherine Rowe—You can ask any child that and they will tell you.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—What do we do? We do not invest in the best people and, when we get them, we don't invest in them, which is very sad. But when we do, it makes an enormous difference to student outcomes, as well as to their own outcomes.

Mr BARRESI—My question is very similar to what Craig just asked about the SES. I noticed that you listed that as one of the barriers to reform. And yet, Ken, in recent weeks there was a study, I believe, which was released in Victoria, about the schools that had very low retention rates being those in the western northern suburbs, as well as those in the bayside suburbs around Frankston.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is correct.

Mr BARRESI—There has to be some place to address issues of school disadvantage as well as the PD of teachers in response to this need.

Dr Katherine Rowe—School disadvantage is actually the PD of teachers.

Mr BARRESI—Yesterday, we had someone from West tell us that they have four students per computer and that it is moving rapidly to 10 per computer at this stage. So there is a resourcing issue as well as disadvantage, compared to some of the other schools.

Dr Katherine Rowe—I have patients from those areas. Parents will come in and tell you, 'I really want to get my child into this school.' It might be half a kilometre away, but they have terrific programs in that school, they care about kids and parents are marching with their feet. So it is not necessarily the area but what is going on in the schools that is an issue.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—It is not just resources either. In fact, I will give you an illustration. In the south of London, for example, this particular school had been operating since 1894—a secondary modern school. In its entire history, the teachers at that school had the not-so-proud boast that not one of its students ever went to a polytechnic, college of advanced education or university, and yet—with a team from the Assessment Performance Unit of the University of London—there were 14 kids who would have romped through the Oxbridge exams. That experience has been repeated quite a number of times. The teacher expectations in giving kids mickey mouse curriculum is more likely to occur in low socioeconomic areas with very low status schools. I was involved with a joint project with Neil Baumgart when he was general manager of the school programs division with the Macquarie team that I referred to earlier. One of the things that we were amazed by was the attitude of teachers in disadvantaged schools. It is imprinted on their cerebral cortex that, somehow or another, it is predetermined because the kids come from low socioeconomic or disadvantaged backgrounds—that it is always going to be the case.

What is offered at the school is very much consistent with that expectation, except that every now and again you get this person who denies all of that and says, 'Okay, these kids do come with lower social capital. Who cares? Let's actually work with that and get them on to a growth trajectory.' What does it mean and what does it take to do that? It takes quite a particular skill and a particular focus of teachers. That is well documented—for example, look at Bob Slavin's book *Education for all*, our own published work, and Peter Hill and Carmel Crevola's work with the Early Literacy Research Project. SES does have an effect, but it does not determine what happens.

Dr Katherine Rowe—Resources do not necessarily make it happen.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Unless you actually allow it to happen.

Mr BARRESI—Of course, as politicians we tend to respond to those gaps because we assume that that is what the parents want us to do.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—It is what we refer to as preconditions for learning. That does not actually affect what happens.

CHAIR—It determines where you start and not where you finish.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Correct.

Mr BARRESI—You also mention that one of the strategies for improvement is highly structured instructions and lessons. There was a time, and it may still be occurring, in the education sector where the approach was very much into experiential learning, kids learning at their own pace, et cetera. Are you saying that that is no longer relevant?

Dr Katherine Rowe—That is a controlled means of teaching. With teaching there are lots of different fashions, and if you go completely down one way it will not suit 20 per cent of kids. If you change it you will not suit another 20 per cent. You need to have a mix of everything.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is right. A number of students in year 7, for example, said, 'For heaven's sake, not group work again. I did that in grade 3.' These are boys that are often saying that whereas girls are a lot more happy about talking, communicating and sharing.

Dr Katherine Rowe—Universities are now going to experiential learning with problem based learning and throwing out any means of providing students with a framework of how to study a subject. It is just cycles.

Mr BARRESI—My last question—and it may come across as political and I am sorry if it does—refers to what you were saying about the quality of teachers and that teachers are of paramount importance here. How can we get to a situation where the teachers are themselves motivated, or there are enough incentives in the teaching profession to undertake professional development and look at other techniques for teaching? Is tenure an issue here? Is it all to do with pay? Is it a performance based approach?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—No.

Mr BARRESI—I say that because under the last state government there was a move towards fixed term contracts as a way of perhaps getting teachers to prove themselves. What do we do at a policy management level?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—It is a pity that I could not have actually taken you around during the time when I was doing the state-wide evaluation for ELIC, the early literacy in-service course, to see the impact it actually had on teachers. They were not interested in more salary.

Dr Katherine Rowe—It helps, but it is not it.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—It helps, but basically they really wanted to be competent professionals in the classroom. There is a program that is operating currently called 'Making a difference': the acronym is MAD. In fact, at ACER we have just analysed the data for that, and it is about the only package that really does have quite significant effects on student outcomes. The teachers who are involved in that suddenly get the fire lit in their own bellies with enthusiasm for what they are doing and the intrinsic value of just seeing people grow.

Dr Katherine Rowe—We find that with our research when you are into schools. They can see a difference. They are on the phone saying, 'When are you doing the follow-up? When are you going to do the next lot? How soon can we get these materials?' They are really keen to do a good job if they are given those skills. The other stuff helps, and it is recognition that they are doing a good job. You need a bit more than that, and it is not just pay.

Ms GILLARD—Firstly, looking at the propensity of boys to drop out at the end of the compulsory schooling period, it has been suggested to us in the course of this inquiry that, in terms of retaining those boys in education, the vocational education track is a good one with some lamenting about loss of technical schools, but that kind of view of it. I am wondering how that squares with aspirations for educational excellence in the way that you gave the example of the South London school where you can get really good outcomes with appropriate resourcing and appropriate teaching, and how we should weigh those two things together. I can understand obviously that people need different pathways—

Dr Kenneth Rowe—I am sure they do.

Ms GILLARD—but to some extent you wonder whether a little bit of the vocational education stuff can be copping out.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Putting this in the political arena, if you think of Jean Blackburn's report in 1985, it was really a product of the times. She was concerned about social justice for all. In that process, the multi-tiered system we had for secondary education in quite a number of states had sort of collapsed. If you went to high school, for example, and did matriculation or subsequently HSC and went on to university, that was regarded very highly. But there is a whole host of kids, if you spend time with them, who say, 'I want to do something that is useful'—boys especially—because they cannot see that what they are actually doing as part of an overall curriculum will have any usefulness other than as something at the end of it to get into a TAFE course or a university course or so forth. Still it is not clear what they are actually doing prepares them for those subsequent things. It is interesting, because their parents have said, 'When I went to school we had technical schools where you were able to do this or this.' They say, 'Wouldn't that be fantastic.' This is not just one or two isolated cases; this is lots of kids over the years. It is fascinating to have seen a small graph of the Kirby report, for example. In his review he is almost suggesting the possibility that we go back to that kind of approach to meet the needs of kids and to prevent this problem of drop-out, particularly of boys. It is like East Gippsland here in Victoria where the dropout rate is just staggering. Why? Because the VCE is verbal reasoning and written communication skills; it does not matter whether they do mathematics, physics or literature.

Dr Katherine Rowe—I think the literacy issue really needs to be addressed from early on, but there will still be a group which will have trouble. Even if you have literacy input at later stages, I do believe that it is not too late at secondary school. A number of kids that you see get extra literacy assistance at that level just cope then at school and decide that they will stay on to do the VCE, that it is attainable. The others that really cannot or do not have access to it just say, 'I'd really rather be doing a technical course,' and TAFE has been the saviour for them. Rather than going out on the streets, they have an alternative. But I think we really need to look at ongoing support for kids who have difficulty with literacy as well as get in early so they do not run into trouble really early on.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—And also for teachers, too. One of the problems with secondary teachers, and I am also speaking from a secondary teacher point of view, is that we teach curriculum and use kids as a victim of it whereas primary teachers teach children and use curriculum as a vehicle for doing so. The fundamental difference is that secondary teachers often see themselves as belonging to the science faculty, the maths faculty or the humanities department. They are in the English department, they teach English, they teach science, but they do not realise they are actually teaching students. There needs to be a fundamental change in philosophy. The trouble is, when it comes to professional development, they are often saying, 'Listen, I'm not a teacher of literacy,' but they do not realise that literacy is the foundation of all curriculum. Then they are struggling to even provide student support.

Dr Katherine Rowe—They do not know how to do it.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—That is right.

Dr Katherine Rowe—They just assume it comes by osmosis.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—This is where PD packages will make a difference. They do make an enormous difference . One guy with an honours science degree in mathematics said, 'I didn't think I needed professional development.' I said, 'Big deal; you do.' And he said, 'Yes, I do realise this.' By being involved in this program, it made an enormous difference to his confidence and also to the impact on student achievement.

Mr SAWFORD—Just on professional development, I would be interested in your views on a range of structural changes that have happened over the last 25 or 30 years. Let us use the example of technical schools. Many technical schools attracted principals and teachers who were very vigorous in the 1960s and 1970s and had alternative views and were prepared to try them. They were also, after a while, very successful in the sense that they not only did provided vocational education highly successfully but also competed in the public examinations board right across Australia. We have plenty of examples in the 1960s where kids from technical schools—horror, horror—were winning all the mathematics, physics and chemistry prizes. High schools reacted to this in an interesting set of ways, because the funding for technical schools in those days was 25 per cent higher than the per capita rate in a high school. So then we had Karmel, amalgamations, and then single comprehensive high schools, a system which seems to have failed public secondary education in this country. But professional development is not an isolated thing; it comes from leadership within education departments and even sometimes—rarely—from politics. I say that because there are examples in this country of where politicians have in fact driven the agendas, but it has been very rarely.

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Consider the case when the structures of Australian schools were different and they had their own little sectors. For example, there was an early childhood section and if a teacher wanted to try some initiative they could actually go to the person there and get approval to do it. You could do it in the technical school system, you could do it in the primary school system and you could do it in the secondary one. The professional development that was often created via the various sectors created a diversity in Australian education particularly in some states. South Australia was one that was regarded as a world leader in the sixties and seventies in education in all fields—secondary, technical, junior primary and primary.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Some of the area schools, the P-12 schools, are like that still.

Mr SAWFORD—A lot of structural changes have happened. You now have none of those separate departments anymore; there has been an amalgamation into a single department. You have some other significant changes in the sense that often excellent classroom teachers had access to the bureaucracy on a telephone basis, but that does not exist anywhere in Australia anymore. The director-general of a state bureaucracy would drop in on a school and know teachers on a first name basis, even in New South Wales; that does not even exist anymore. You have significant changes in the gender of teachers in particular sectors of schools. That has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. In terms of those structural changes, would you like to make some comments about the education of boys and professional development?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—As I indicated before, the evidence suggests that most of those structural changes have very rarely penetrated the classroom door, except for two things. One is that, when you took away the range of options which we had so we had a universal comprehensive education system, that changed things dramatically. That did enter the classroom door. That has certainly affected what kids are actually exposed to in terms of curriculum offerings. The second thing is professional development. Again, the only time that those bureaucratic fiats or political agendas have ever penetrated the classroom door has been via teacher professional development.

In fact, there is one particular region here in Victoria, for example, that has seen several successions of governments, all espousing different kinds of rhetoric. Those in that region take the attitude: so what? They are going to do their own thing anyway, and of course that has been a regional director's nightmare and a nightmare of successive regional directors regardless of political orientation. What I am saying is that those changes that have occurred, the political and bureaucratic ones, apart from the provision of teacher professional development and taking away the options—not increasing them but actually taking them away—have penetrated the classroom door and have had a major impact on student outcomes. During the early eighties, with the white and green paper of Lacey and company here in Victoria—a lovely sort of rhetoric—again, that had absolutely no impact on what actually happened in schools. I think you know what I am referring to, Rod.

Dr Katherine Rowe—Take Victoria with the early and middle years group. That is actually getting into classrooms. I have been to speak to a lot of teachers there. There is quite a good network going. There are early years coordinators and they know all of the people and the people in the head office know all of those early years coordinators, so it is not quite as distant.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—But that has come directly through teacher professional development.

Dr Katherine Rowe—That is the vehicle for it to happen.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Finally, I would like to ask you two quick things, Kathy. The first might seem like an unusual question. Are boys getting enough sleep? That sounds like an odd thing to ask but these days kids often seem to be less supervised and disciplined by parents and up they stay up late into the night. Has any work been done on something as simple as that, for example?

Dr Katherine Rowe—I know with ADD kids that we have to sort out their sleep as part of the overall management. They are having trouble coping the next day but it is more because of what it does to their family and the family dynamics and the family humour and everything else. But once that is sorted out, often the family situation settles down, and school too.

CHAIR—But you are not aware of any work that has been done in this sort of area?

Dr Katherine Rowe—No.

CHAIR—Secondly, I do not have an education background, but what is the role of the teachers' unions? We talked a lot about professional development, for example. I often find, as an outsider looking at it, that what the unions are saying and what the teachers actually tell me are different things. Is there an issue there?

Dr Kenneth Rowe—There is nothing new about that, is there?

CHAIR—I suppose not.

Mr BARRESI—In terms of who is driving the agenda?

CHAIR—No. We have focused a lot on professional development. Are the teachers' unions generally urging governments on in this area, or is that not the case?

Dr Katherine Rowe—It is coming more from the teachers rather than the unions.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—The unions have been very strong in the traditional areas like pay and conditions. It depends very much on which state or territory and how strong the union is as to how much they are really pushing for teacher professional development. Some are. But in my view, and having been a member of a teacher union for more years than I care to remember—I am no longer, just out of interest—when they concentrate on the pay and conditions thing all the time they actually miss a good deal of what their membership is really interested in, and that is being confident, competent professionals in the classroom. I cannot emphasise it any more strongly, but that comes about through professional development. Some unions realise that one way of assisting notions about goal congruence, peer support, professional development, morale and so on is via the provision of professional development .

CHAIR—Thank you. As we draw towards the end of this inquiry we might ask you to come and speak to us again. I apologise for the fact that we did not allocate more time for you today, but we will invite you back again. And if you have any further information, ideas, suggestions,

or critiques to make of other submissions that are put to us, can you please send them on to us? Thank you very much.

Dr Kenneth Rowe—Thanks for your time.

Proceedings suspended from 11.04 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.

BARRON, Mr Alan James, Geelong Convenor, Endeavour Forum

FRANCIS, Mrs Babette Avita, National and Overseas Coordinator, Endeavour Forum

CHAIR—Welcome. Please give the committee a brief precis of your submission and then we will discuss that.

Mrs Francis—This is a summary of the verbal submission. The first point is it should be recognised that girls and boys are different and may need different types of teaching interactions and activities. Attachment 1 lists the scientific basis for mental and psychological differences between men and women. The educational department, under the influence of feminism, has treated the sexes as if they were identical and interchangeable, and that is not scientifically valid. The male disadvantage at all stages of life should be acknowledged. If you look at the overheads I am showing you will see that, in absolutely every area of life, it is males who are doing worse than females—life expectancy, infant mortality, crime and road accidents. About the only area in which women do worse is accidental falls. That occurs in the last few years of life and, by that time, the men are already dead. Women have falls, they fracture their hips and they die of pneumonia six to 18 months later, but the men have died seven years before the women are falling.

It is essential that there should be adequate remedial teaching for any deficiencies in basic literacy and numeracy in primary school. Boys need remediation on a ratio of about 4:1 compared with girls. When I was on the Victorian committee on equal opportunity in schools—and I have one copy left of this report but you can probably get it from the Victorian education department—our subcommittee made a recommendation that there should be remediation for basic literacy and numeracy skills in primary school, before boys leave primary school. That was rejected by the main committee because the data supporting this recommendation showed that it was boys who were disadvantaged, not girls, and this was unacceptable to the feminist members. They proceed on the theory that it is females who are disadvantaged, so they deleted that. But the result is that we do not have adequate remediation in primary school, and a lot of children—a few girls but far more boys—are coming out of primary school unable to read or write to an adequate level to enable them to cope with further education or life skills.

Boys need relationships with their fathers. The family law court should ensure that, when parents are divorced, the fathers are not cheated out of access to their children. Author Steve Biddolph is a valuable resource person in this area. Fathers react with children differently to mothers, and children need both types of interaction. I am showing an overhead of how men play with their children and it is totally different to the way women play, and boys need this kind of interaction. Women never do this sort of stuff. This next overhead shows how a woman interacts with her children, and children need both. I cannot emphasise the importance of a father in the life of a boy. This is another overhead—a father with his three sons. That is tremendously important because boys are tremendously disadvantaged emotionally, psychologically and educationally if they do not have a relationship with their father.

Single sex education may be more appropriate for boys at certain stages. In the independent schools there is a lot of single sex education and the boys there do very well. The ideal may be

single sex classes on a co-ed campus. This is also important in primary school, where people do not normally think about having single sex classes, because boys biologically lag behind girls in chronological age. A boy is about six months behind a girl of the same age at the primary level. They are having difficulty with a lot of things, including tying their shoelaces and stuff like that, and the girls make fun of them, and boys react with resistance to education. So there should be something looking at single sex classes, or at least ensuring adequate remediation for boys who fall through the cracks in primary school.

There should be incentives so that more men are attracted to teaching, with possible affirmative action for male teachers with some kind of incentive so that you get a greater percentage of male teachers. Boys need these teachers as a role models because female teachers do not play with the boys in quite the same way, the kind of higher level of activity that a boy needs. I have eight children myself, four girls and four boys, so I know that they are very different. When we had birthday parties, our girls were wearing party dresses and twirling around with long white socks and they would cry if they got mud on their socks. We had three girls first. When we had our first boy's birthday party, they were throwing jelly at each other and running around pretending to be aeroplanes and trucks, and it was so obvious that they play differently, that they need a higher level of activity. They just cannot sit still the way girls sit still and settle down to do tasks. I am talking here in averages, of course. You will get the occasional boy who is very quiet and sedate and is willing to sit down for hours and do work, but mostly they need to run around a lot more, let off steam a lot more and make a lot more noise than girls. That is why I think you need some male teachers, who perhaps understand how they are feeling.

There should be a ban on feminist inspired hostility towards the male sex. Constant statements that a patriarchal society is an oppressive society are very damaging to boys. I have got an attachment here from *The Liberator* in America which shows some of the statements that I think are very demoralising to boys. If you are constantly treated as the enemy, that you are the one who is oppressing society, you are creating this patriarchal society that oppresses women, then this percolates down to the school level. To give you some examples, this comes from educational material. This is not in the feminist adult world; this is from a booklet called *If I Was a Lady*. It shows a bride behind bars, woman as a wife. A copy of that was sent to every secondary school in Australia at the taxpayer's expense. There is another one here which is from the same booklet— 'Women's progress: a collective male foot oppressing women'. What do you think that does to the morale of boys? They are treated like an enemy, like someone you are at war with in a gender war, and that is not very good for a boy's psychological development or his educational achievement.

CHAIR—When was that document circulated to the schools? Is that a recent thing?

Mrs Francis—Between 1975 and 1977. But the ideology is still there. I deal with this all the time with the Office of the Status of Women, at the UN and so on. The philosophy focusing is that men are the enemy.

CHAIR—It was circulated about the time I was finishing school. It seems like yesterday but it was a long time ago. What was the title of the document?

Mrs Francis—I have got it here: *If I Was a Lady*.

CHAIR—If you could leave that with us, that would be great.

Mrs Francis—I cannot leave it with you because it is my only copy.

CHAIR—It cannot be in that wide a circulation, then, at the moment.

Mr SAWFORD—Who published it?

Mrs Francis—The National YCA, whoever—

CHAIR—I will ask Mr Rees if he can arrange to have that photocopied.

Mrs Francis—Before I leave, please. I cannot afford to lose this because it is my only copy.

CHAIR—It would be hard to distribute it if you lose it.

Mr SAWFORD—Sorry, who published it?

Mrs Francis—Maybe I can give it to you and you can have a look.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you.

Mrs Francis—A copy was given to every secondary school child in Australia. Some principals were so disgusted they pulped the lot. Others distributed it but did not know what it was.

There should be praise, not denigration, of male virtues of honour and courage: defending the country, for example, The impression created by the feminist movement, which is extremely powerful both in government and in the media and politically correct society, is that women are having a terrible time and life for men is a ball of fun.

This is a picture from our newspapers. It shows what happened to men in the war. That is an Australian soldier about to be executed by the Japanese. While they were protecting women at home, this is what was happening to men. I know there were a lot of women prisoners of war as well, but this is the reality of life for a lot of our soldiers. The depiction that we live in a patriarchal, oppressive society and that all men are having a wonderful time while women are being oppressed is not correct. History is being distorted; boys are being given the wrong impression of what the reality of life is. They know the ideology that is promoted is not correct. Their perceptions tell them that it is not correct so they are confused and they do not know what their role in life is. If their role of protecting and defending their families is not valued, what value are they? This is responsible for a lot of unhappiness and confusion amongst men.

If you referred to any ethnic group or to Aboriginals in the derogatory terms that men are referred to by feminists—and this ideology is important in the teacher unions—you would be up before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for insulting or whatever. But men seem to be fair game and it just has to stop. We have to create far more harmony and goodwill between the sexes. I will finish there.

Mr Barron—I have something of an anecdotal nature to add.

CHAIR—Unlike Mrs Francis.

Mr Barron—I have an adult son and an adult daughter who have both recently completed VCE. I could not help but notice the difference in the way they approached their studies. Elisabeth was quite bright, she was very prepared to study, you did not have to tell her, she was motivated and did very well—she got 95, which was an excellent TER. I did not have to motivate her. But I had to be at my eldest son, who was a year younger, all the time to get him to study. It was a constant battle because he was into cricket, Star Wars, car racing and all those sorts of things. In the end he just got through. He got 12, I think. Anyway he got through the VCE. I could not help but look at the school. The school they both went to is a good school, but I could not help noticing in the material that came home that there was always things like 'girls in mathematics', 'girls doing non-traditional careers', 'girls in science'. All these sorts of things were geared for girls. I wondered whether, with all this emphasis on girls, the boys felt uncomfortable about applying themselves. As I say, this is purely anecdotal. It is also my impression, and I noticed this with his friends too, that the boys have this philosophy that education is something that you endured until you were 18 and could go out and get a job, play cricket and all those sorts of things. They were not really relishing their education whereas Elisabeth was. She saw that as what she should be doing.

That started me thinking about the process of education. I could not help but reflect on a comment that was made by Rob Lucas from South Australia. He was a former education minister. He made the statement in 1994 that the 'education system is dominated by women for women'. Basically, he is correct. A lot of legislators and policymakers today do not realise that an awful lot of water has flowed under the bridge since the 1960s. Yes, corrections needed to be made to education. They have been made but I feel that, in the process, boys have become very much the second rate citizens in education. This is reflected in the fact that—again this is anecdotal—in the high school my children went to, of the 17 top performers in VCE four were boys. Why is this? Are boys less intelligent than girls? I do not think so. Again, I looked at the curriculum and I noticed that emphasis was placed on special classes for girls. All this special treatment for girls must have a psychological impact on boys, indicating that girls are the favoured ones in education. I am not going to say anything further about that; all I am concerned about is that boys seem to be lacking self-confidence and self-esteem because of the structures that seem to be in place. I think Rob Lucas was correct in saying that a lot of the policies implemented in the 1960s are still in place. My contention is that they have gone past their use-by date.

Every time I raise this at the local school level or send submissions off to the state education ministers there seems to be a reluctance by men to tackle this issue. If they start going into bat for boys they are accused of wanting to turn back the clock, of being anti-women and all these sorts of things. It has nothing to do with that. We are trying to improve the education performance of boys and we should not be subject to what I see as this emotional blackmail. Phyllis Schlafly, the American, says it is a bit like the she bear syndrome. A male bear, which is about twice the size of a female bear, will not attack the female bear when she has cubs because he knows that the female bear gets very angry. Rather than face an angry female he backs right down. While men will go off and fight wars, climb the highest mountains and swim the widest

oceans, they will not confront angry women. If you have a vast army of women out there, which there is—

CHAIR—I can give you a bit of experience, if you like, by asking Julie Gillard to speak to you first.

Mr Barron—Present company excluded, I am sorry.

Mrs Francis—You have to imitate the male bear, Alan—the way he shambles away when the female bear arrives.

Mr Barron—Generally speaking, because a lot of men do not want to be labelled 'anti-women', they will not tackle it. But men have to tackle it. They have to make some hard decisions here. They have to say, 'Look, you have got what you wanted, by and large. Girls are doing fine. In all fairness we have to look at boys.' That in no way detracts from what is going on with girls.

One other quick point: the trouble stems from the top. The Office of the Status of Women has gone past its use-by date. It flows from the top down, and representation in parliament for half the population but not the other half places men at a disadvantage all the way down the line. It is not just at the top. It filters through. Men's concerns and needs are not taken seriously. They are not even deemed worthy to be of concern—after all, they are the patriarchy, they are the oppressors. That is oversimplifying it, but that is what comes through when I talk to a lot of women working in this area. We have to address that and start making some hard decisions, like employing more male teachers so that boys do have interaction with other males and so they are not subject to discriminatory policies which exclude them, like special measures for girls to improve their performance. Why can't we have special measures to improve boys performance, and so on?

CHAIR—What is the Endeavour Forum? Who joins it? How is it funded?

Mrs Francis—It is a pro-life, pro-family lobby. It is a women's lobby. We were founded 21 years ago, in 1979, basically to convince the government that not all women were feminists or wanted to be feminists. It is a pro-family lobby as opposed to feminism. At the time we were founded we called ourselves 'Women who Want to be Women' because there was a royal commission on human relationships and it came out with a recommendation that the pronouns 'he' and 'she' and 'him' and 'her' should no longer be used in Australia and that we should just use 'id' for both sexes, for example, 'Id went out shopping.' We thought that was an idiotic recommendation so we formed this organisation of women who want to be women.

We presented a petition to parliament saying that the National Women's Advisory Council should be abolished. That was read out in parliament and we got a lot of publicity—a lot of people joined us. We are funded through membership subscriptions and donations. We are Australia wide. We have branches in all the states and we have special status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations—we are an NGO that is recognised by ECOSOC.

CHAIR—I have some sympathy for some of your concerns about the more extreme elements of the feminist movement, to do with many things. Three years after that document was

circulated, I made an observation to an orthopaedic surgeon who was teaching me at the time that there did not seem to be many women in orthopaedic surgery. He very proudly said, 'We don't have any. We had one who got in in Western Australia but we managed to get her out.'

Mr BARRESI—Mrs Francis, I share some of the comments you make about the plight of the modern male. Certainly, modern males need to redefine their roles and purpose. Some males are able to do that and some are not, but I do not see that as a bad thing. It is one of those evolutionary things which is a fact of life and creates a far stronger and more resilient male. Given that, and all the information you have there about males, I still find it hard to understand how you can now extrapolate that information to the plight of boys in school because the redefinition of males in our society, in how they are having to look at their basic purpose in life, is happening at an adult level. How is this manifesting itself in the retention rate of boys at school and education levels of boys in grade 1 through to year 10? I find it difficult to understand how you are making the correlation between one and the other.

Mrs Francis—I will answer that.

Mr BARRESI—I do not want you to talk about the crimes and statistics. That has always been the case since the year dot.

Mrs Francis—No, I will answer it specifically. I am glad you mentioned evolution because really males are an endangered species. It goes far beyond the life data that I showed up there. With IVF for single mothers and lesbians, males are going to be completely out of the picture. Theoretically, if females use the laws of Australia, they could eliminate you altogether as a species.

Mr BARRESI—It is all right: the IVF clause will not go through.

Mrs Francis—I am glad you mentioned evolution, so watch out for that one. The reason boys fall through the cracks is that they do not achieve literacy and numeracy and they are outnumbered, those requiring remedial education in primary school. There are far more boys at the lower level of achievement just naturally, boys who have defects, and there are more geniuses also.

Mr BARRESI—I understand that. A lot of witnesses have given us evidence of that. I find it hard to make the connection between what you have told us is happening to the adult male and to the young junior.

Mr Barron—Concerning retention rates at the final year of high school, back about six years ago the female retention rate at the end of year 12 was 77 per cent and for boys was 66 per cent. That is quite significantly lower. I am not sure whether the demographics have gone up or down since then, but it would be fairly true to say that more girls than boys would graduate at the end of year 12, despite boys being in greater numbers.

Mr BARRESI—Yes, but you are still only reciting figures that we are aware of—we know that. I find it hard to understand the logic that you are using about the plight of the male and how it is affecting young boys.

Mr Barron—The male suicide rate is five times higher than the female rate and a lot of that is youth suicide. Admittedly, it is in rural areas, but even so, it is impacting on the negative image that boys have all over the place. We see this not just in suicide but in alcoholism and drop-out rates.

Mrs Francis—Specifically on education, I do not know what the latest data is, but has anything been done about remedial education? There are four to one boys who need remediation: they cannot read or write. If they cannot read or write adequately at primary level, you are not going to have a good retention rate. That is the urgent thing. I thought it was absolutely horrible and iniquitous that this very worthwhile recommendation that there should be remediation was just deleted by the majority on the committee because the data showed that it was boys who were disadvantaged, not girls. That is what you have to look at. Boys are falling through the cracks in primary school. If they cannot read or write, they are not going to go on.

The other big disadvantage boys have is that they are not as articulate as girls, right from infancy. Therefore, they have more trouble with English and communication. Men do not communicate as easily as women. Girls use longer sentences, have a bigger vocabulary and speak earlier. Boys need help with English. English is a compulsory subject in the VCE. You have to pass English to be able to get through your VCE, and boys are failing in that. So they need help in that area.

Mr BARRESI—I do not dispute any of that. That is evidence that has been given to us by every witness so far. My point was more about the logic about your overall pictures and graphs and so on. But let me go on from that. I know Ms Gillard will ask this question anyway, but how can it be the case that education has been taken over by the feminist movement when males have dominated policy setting at a political level right across this country—

Mr Barron—I disagree. That is—

Mr BARRESI—in terms of education ministers? Are we all simply meek little grizzly bears that cannot cope with those female bears out there who are running the teaching?

Mrs Francis—No, you are coming up against genuine biology then. The vast majority of women are not feminists. They are not going to struggle to reach the top, because in the end they would rather take five or 10 years off to have their children and look after their children while their children are young. So men have that kind of advantage if you are just looking at career. So he is going to get to the top, and he wants to be at the top. A lot of women do not want to be at the top. A lot of men will enjoy battling around a board table. They will ruin their health and they will take extra time off from their families and leisure to get to the top. Women are more sensible. After a while they will stop haggling and say, 'I want to go off and be with my kids or do my hair,' or something. You should read the book *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* by Steven Goldberg. I would recommend that as a resource. That shows why men get to the top.

Mr BARRESI—But what you are saying to me, though, is that the male dominated policy administrators, such as the ministers of education and the regional area managers, have all been browbeaten by the women below them in terms of which way curricula and education should go.

Mrs Francis—Not below them: teacher unions. This ideology permeates the teacher unions. The feminist ideology is the teacher unions. I am not sure about every individual woman under every male bureaucrat, but—

Mr Barron—Can I just take that up? You might say that is a bit simplistic.

Mr BARRESI—No, I am just investigating. I just want you to put things on record, that is all.

Mr Barron—It seems to be true. You look at parliaments as being male dominated—no-one disputes that—but look at the policies they have passed. What policies have they passed for us guys? The only time that parliament passed a legislation saying 'men' was to send guys like me to Vietnam. That is the only time we got a positive mention in legislation, if you can call that positive. Since then there has virtually been an entire women's—I think 'feminist' is more accurate than 'women', because I do not think it represents women anyway—agenda implemented. I will not go into all the policies, but they have got that through. And that includes education. I think the reason we are seeing the underperformance of boys is because of this emphasis on women. As I said to you before, we are not living in the sixties.

I think the example quoted by Dr Nelson is okay. I can give you other examples that would say the opposite. Women do have a lobby. They have an unfair advantage over men today because, by our estimate, there are something like 17,000 bureaucrats running around out there, whether full time or part time, who are equal opportunity officers who are pushing the equal opportunity, affirmative action policies. There is not one group that I know of that is funded by parliament that actually is putting a men's point of view. There isn't one. Male decision makers are therefore implementing policies that are being given to them by their advisers which are pushing a women's point of view. They are not thinking in male terms; they are only thinking in terms of policy.

Mr BARRESI—Could I move on, because my colleagues want to ask questions. You have here in your recommendations that we need to employ more male teachers—that that has been a universal comment by other witnesses—and that you believe that discontinuing the affirmative action policy may achieve this. I cannot see how the affirmative action policy is actually preventing more male teachers. I would not have thought it was the affirmative action policy itself which is stopping men from going into the teaching profession.

Mrs Francis—In my submission, I think I said that affirmative action as it is at the moment gives preference to women for promotion and employment. That is how it works at the moment, so that is obviously going to disadvantage men. I am thinking of doing the reverse—giving some sorts of incentives to male teachers, ensuring that, by distribution, there are a certain number of male teachers in every school.

Going back to your thing about why, when you discriminate against an adult, it percolates through to the children. If you look at the Aborigine population—and I recognise that we have discriminated against Aborigines—if you discriminate against adult Aborigines, their children are going to be disadvantaged. So if you focus on hatred of men, it is obviously going to come through to boys; it has to. You just have to look at the analogy with race. I am very conscious of this because I am of a different race to most white Australians. When you treat the adults in a

race badly, it is going to go through to the children. If you treat men badly and regard them as the enemy, it has to come through to the boys just in terms of their self-esteem. They see their fathers demoralised because they cannot get jobs, they see women who have got not as good qualifications as their fathers getting all the jobs, the publicity and the promotion and they just wonder, 'What is there for me?'

Mr Barron—Can I just take up one point there: it is interesting that back at the turn of the century all the secretaries were male, but as soon as women started moving in, the men moved out. Again, we do not understand men properly, I think. We understand women's psychology, but I do not think we understand male psychology and that is the whole weakness in the debate. As soon as women dominate things, men tend to move out. So if a man looks at the primary teachers and sees that 70 per cent of them are female, he thinks, 'Uh, oh. This is really not for me.' This is a subtle process that goes on, so I think we ought to be conscious of those processes.

Mr BARRESI—I am disappointed that a blue-blooded male would think it is a disadvantage going to an environment where there are 70 per cent females.

Mr Barron—When you are young, you are probably right.

Ms GILLARD—In this inquiry, we are trying to deal with the facts rather than the emotions that surround it, so can I ask in terms of the facts. You have used a statistic that males make up 44 per cent of university enrolments. Where is that from? That is not right.

Mr Barron—That is Bob Birrell. He was quoting something that was written in 1998. I do not have the booklet in front of me. It was produced by the Monash centre for population. I could get it for you, but I do not have it with me.

Ms GILLARD—I can give it to you. I think if you look at undergraduate enrolments, you will find that men make up 49 per cent of them and women make up 51 per cent of them, which is the distribution you would expect given the percentage of men and women in our population. So if you accept the contention—which I do—that merit and academic ability are equally distributed between the sexes, then you would predict that outcome. So there is nothing wrong with that outcome, is there?

Mr Barron—It depends on whether that includes honours or not.

Ms GILLARD—I am talking about undergraduates with those statistics. The statistics for higher degrees are that 66 per cent of people studying higher degrees are men. So, once again, if you accept the proposition that merit and academic abilities are equally distributed between the sexes, that should be the statistic that alarms you.

Mr Barron—Yes and no. If the academic environment also caters for the male psychology and the way of thinking, I do not believe it does; I believe it caters for the female psychology and way of thinking, which means that women would tend to be more favoured by it and therefore do better in that system than men.

Ms GILLARD—But what I am putting to you is you have started with the higher education sector, you have produced some statistics, and they are not right.

Mr Barron—Sorry, I believe they are correct.

Ms GILLARD—When you look at the real statistics, it is impossible to contend on the basis of the real statistics that women are unfairly advantaged in our higher education system. It is simply impossible to contend that way. It cannot be done by a rational person.

Mr Barron—If I granted that that was correct, the demographic is the arrow going up for women and down for men.

Ms GILLARD—Do you accept the contention that academic ability is equally distributed between the sexes? Is that a right contention or a wrong contention?

Mr Barron—I think it depends on what you mean. As I said, the overall system would favour female psychology, and therefore they should do better, but I think boys are naturally better at some subjects and girls at others.

Ms GILLARD—I accept that.

Mr Barron—I think you have to look at the bigger picture and ask: what is the point of getting an education? What we are trying to do is equip students for the real life, what happens when they leave school. As Margaret Mead said—not that I agree a lot with what Margaret Mead says—finding roles for girls is not the problem, finding ones for men is.

Ms GILLARD—I would like to focus on the facts. I have given you the facts about higher education and—

Mr Barron—But you cannot extrapolate from that to a big picture, can you?

Ms GILLARD—Please listen. I have given you the facts about higher education, and they prove beyond argument that it is untrue to say that females are unfairly advantaged in our higher education system. You said before that the schooling system is a system designed by women for women. Can I put to you the fact that, predominantly, principals of secondary schools and primary schools are men. That is a non-arguable proposition; that is right.

Mr Barron—My answer to that is: so what?

Ms GILLARD—Is it right or not right that most principals are men?

Mr Barron—Of course, but who are they making policies for? That is my question—that is the pertinent question, not what gender they are. Who are they making policies for? They are certainly not making policies for boys.

Ms GILLARD—I am just trying to get the facts on the record. So it is a fact that principals are disproportionately men?

Mr Barron—That is right.

Mrs Francis—The principals are men because men are prepared to work those longer hours and take the extra responsibility. Many women do not want that extra responsibility. I have spoken to many women teachers. They want to work 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. so that they can be home for their children. That is their choice; they are not being brainwashed into it. Also, the men are in administrative duties as principals. The ones who are interacting with the children are the female teachers.

Ms GILLARD—I accept the statistics show that there are more women teaching in our primary schools than men.

Mrs Francis—That is right.

Ms GILLARD—I would like to deal with the facts rather than the contentions. Your explanation as to why we end up with more male principals is a possible explanation. It is an explanation with which I do not agree, and it is an explanation which you would be unable to prove as a matter of objective testing. It is your view and the committee will weigh that. Just moving on so that we can get the facts on the record, isn't it unarguably true that most heads of Public Service departments are men? Is that right?

Mr Barron—Again, the gender of the decision maker is irrelevant. If you want to press that issue because you are that way inclined, then fine. All I am saying is: what sorts of policies are they implementing?

Ms GILLARD—Yes, I would agree with that, but let us just get the facts on the record. That proposition is unarguably true. Isn't it also unarguably true that our parliaments are dominated by men? Isn't that unarguably true as a proposition?

Mrs Francis—Ms Gillard, I do not think you are allowing for the timelag from when women started to look at these things as a lifestyle choice—for example, the full time career. It took 20 years—

Ms GILLARD—It is like saying, 'Are the lights on, or aren't the lights on'; it is a yes or no proposition. Isn't it true that most of our parliaments are dominated by men? All Australian parliaments are dominated by men—that is true.

Mr Barron—So?

Ms GILLARD—We are just getting those things on the record. We have the situation where political decision making has been historically dominated by men and that continues; where the Public Service at its most elite levels has been disproportionately male dominated and that continues; where the most elite position in our schooling system—that is, the principal's job—is disproportionately held by men. It seems to me that it cannot be contended in those circumstances that all of those men are somehow on automatic pilot implementing a radical feminist agenda with which they have been brainwashed. That just seems to me to be *The X-Files* meets politics—it is just nonsense.

Mr Barron—Not exactly. Let us put it another way: in terms of male public servants, the percentage has dropped from 77 per cent to 55 per cent. The graph is going down, so I would be a bit worried about that if I were a male in the Public Service.

Ms GILLARD—Name a female head of a Commonwealth department. Name one.

Mrs Francis—Rosemary Calder—

Mr Barron—The thing is: did men get this way because of an old boy's network? You have to prove your assumption that they got that position unfairly.

Ms GILLARD—No, that is not my assumption at all.

Mr Barron—If they got that position fairly, then what is the beef?

Ms GILLARD—Exactly. There is no beef if people get their positions fairly.

Mr Barron—I would contend they did get them fairly.

Ms GILLARD—You are the one who has the contention to prove, and your contention is that, despite all of the facts that I have just put before you about the way in which men are represented in our decision making systems, somehow all of those men spend their days implementing an agenda that deliberately discriminates against boys. It is your contention to prove, not mine.

Mrs Francis—It is not the men; it is the women.

Mr Barron—It is their advisers whom they appoint. Men aren't in there to bat for boys and men—they do not, they never have. As I was saying before, look at what has been implemented. What have male decision makers done for us guys? Zilch. Nothing. They sent us to Vietnam. That is the only time they ever said 'boys' in legislation.

Mrs Francis—Look at health. Men are dying seven years younger than women and yet we have these constant complaints and funding for women's health.

Ms GILLARD—Are you aware, Mrs Francis, that the Steve Bracks Labor government went into government with a men's health policy and a women's health policy?

Mrs Francis—That is wonderful.

Ms GILLARD—Yes, it pays to catch up with the facts.

Mrs Francis—And also for heads of departments. Rosemary Calder is the head of the Office of Status of Women, a department devoted exclusively to women.

Ms GILLARD—It is not a department. We are trying to deal with some serious issues here in this inquiry, some serious issues about boys education, and in my view dealing with those

issues is in no way advanced by not dealing with the facts and by wild conspiracy theories. They are not accepted by me and I actually do not think that they are very useful for the debate.

Mr Barron—They are not conspiracy theories; they are based upon our practical dealings we have had in a department. I think you have to look at the big picture and not just education. You have got to ask, 'Why are we training boys? Why are we training girls to be educated? What are we training them for? Are we going to treat family life as normative or not?' Our contention is that the education system should treat marriage as normative and not as just another lifestyle choice.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to add one other thing. Of 2,000 applications for IVF in Canberra, one applicant did not have a male partner.

CHAIR—Thanks, Rod. Thank you very much. I do appreciate you taking an effort to come along to see us. It is important that we do live in a society where people are promoting pluralistic views. I think what Julia said about facts is a very important thing for us all to remember. I would also say that over the years I have had experience with the sorts of people to whom you are referring in departments. I am also reminded of what Mr Graham Richardson once said to me. He said, 'Mate, it's a democratic country and everybody has got a right to be wrong.' Also, I think one of the more astute observations made by Pru Goward when she was heading the Office of the Status of Women was that behind every successful man stands a surprised woman. Apart from people on waiting lists for sex changes, I have not met many men that say, 'I wish I'd been born a woman.' Anyway, thank you very much. I appreciate the earnest way in which you have presented your views to us. We have got a photocopy so we can return the document to you.

Mrs Francis—Chair, I have copies of the transparencies I have shown, the summary of my submission here and the two attachments. In regard to your orthopaedic surgeon, a lot of women do not like orthopaedic surgery because it involves very heavy work. Sawing through bones is not easy and they do not like standing on their feet for hours at a time. I have a daughter who is a doctor.

CHAIR—You had better not start me, Mrs Francis. Now you have told me you have a daughter who is a doctor, could I respectfully suggest that you get a different bag to carry your materials around in. Thank you very much, at least I will be able to put some names to the newsletter when it comes through.

[12.00 p.m.]

LAMING, Mr Chris, Coordinator, Self-Help Ending Domestics Project

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Laming, and thank you for coming along today and speaking to us, particularly as you are an oppressed minority. Could you please give us an overview of the submission and then we will tease it out with some questions.

Mr Laming—Thank you for this invitation, although I am not sure whether I can follow the last two acts. I am a social worker by background. I also taught for a number of years. Approximately eight years ago I did a masters degree with a feminist senior lecturer here at Melbourne University.

Ms GILLARD—And lived to tell the tale!

Mr Laming—Yes, and lived to tell the tale. One of the reasons why I did that masters degree was that I had been working around St Kilda with mainly young homeless people, derelict alcoholics and women in prostitution. I was finding that government policy was very much reflecting what I would have seen as a reactive approach to family dislocation, family dysfunction. Therefore, I was led to doing some research around how to work with men in a way that had some veracity. I looked at overseas programs during the masters degree and ended up basically developing a pro-feminist framework—so I am fessing up here—for working with men.

I was working full time but with the part-time study I ended up having to take a break. I was given an opportunity to start a men's program on five hours a week in Gippsland. One of the things about the policies—and I think this is policy at the federal, state and local levels—is that there is a dearth, for one reason or another, of funding to enable men to change abusive and violent behaviour, and funding to address things like men who have been sexually abused in childhood. Last year we piloted, through some money from the state Department of Justice, a program for enabling men who have been sexually abused in childhood to deal with that sexual abuse and deal with whatever ramifications that it had had in their lives. There is very little funding for that. Presently I am involved with a Commonwealth initiative coming out of the Department of Family and Community Services. It is called the Mens Separation Program. It is a nationwide pilot that is currently happening. Tonight in Traralgon in Gippsland I will be running a group where there will be about eight men trying to address separation issues.

What has this got to do with boys and schools? We started the SHED project in 1994. In 1995 in one of the groups on a Thursday night—and that group is still running—the men asked, 'What is there around to prevent our own kids from ending up here in this room in 10 years time for their violent or abusive behaviour?'

In terms of those groups, about 20 per cent are what you would call mandated through the courts. The other 80 per cent come as a result of referrals from doctors, from schools, from child protection workers, from social workers and psychologists, or as a result of what some people

would call ‘wife mandated’; in other words, they are coerced or pressured by their wives to come along.

Those men were saying, ‘Listen, what is there for our own kids?’ As a result of that—and this is what I mentioned in my submission—something called the COOL project started. Again, this reflected the dearth of what I would see as opportunities—certainly in rural areas—to provide resources for practical programs that actually do something. I know there is Partnerships Against Violence at the moment, but the reality is that our funding has gone backwards over the five years, despite all sorts of things. As a result of the men basically asking this question, the local alcohol and drug service, the education department and the local community health service divided up my time to design, pilot and run it in a local high school. It was evaluated and the education department took it on. After two or three years, it was running in about 25 secondary colleges. I have made a two-page submission which is fairly insignificant compared to the other submissions that I have seen. It seems to me that the COOL project was working, and yet that is something that is no longer going.

Kenneth Rowe talked about the fire in the belly of teachers. Whilst I was not employed in this capacity, I was asked each time there was an in-service around rural Gippsland, and people would go to Leongatha, Sale or Traralgon—30 or 40 teachers, social workers or welfare workers at a time—to do a one day workshop and learn how to run this program in their own schools. Again and again, I saw them getting that fire in the belly, if you like—that enthusiasm to actually go back to their kids, whether it was in an English, history, maths class or whatever. It was their choice. They could do that in a peace studies class. It seemed to me that that was working. At the same time, juvenile justice workers were also taking part in that program and were running that as part of what they call a MAPS program. I think these things can really happen, but I think they need resources. I do not see the resourcing happening and I certainly do not think it is reflected in terms of the day to day reality.

I have an anecdote—this is fact, actually. Travelling up on the train today, I did not have a reserved ticket. Anyway, I got in and there was this bloke—I do not know whether you travel on country trains at all but there are often people in the carriages when you get in—who I later found out had come down from Sale. He was actually from Tasmania. His appearance and mien, if you like—the vibes—were such that people did not sit down near him or next to him—they moved on. I noticed, as the journey went on, before I fell asleep, that he had a long case below his seat—he sat on the three-seater opposite me—containing a rifle. He turned out to be a bloke from Tassie. He was heading back to Tassie after four days deer hunting up at Dargo.

The reason I am bringing this up is because I work with men in the SHED project—No. 525 came through the door yesterday—who have been assessed, as often as possible with their partners, de factos or whatever, and their kids sometimes take part in that process. As part of the COOL stuff and also because of what I do, I am asked to give talks in schools and I work as an alcohol and drug worker. It seems to me that this man who was sitting opposite me is the sort of man that most of the boys that I talk to in groups in schools would identify with. I do not agree with Kenneth. I know men do not want to be a part of groups. How many men are going to talk about the real stuff? It is very difficult. But most of the boys would identify with this joker who sat opposite me—very much so—and probably a lot more so than they would identify with most of us sitting in this room, because that is the culture. I do not know about where you live, but I

know that down in the valley it has been bloody awful for a long time, and yet the valley is the place where most of the jobs have traditionally been in Gippsland.

A number of thoughts were going through my head during the last presentation. One of them was mentioned on the local news this morning. They were reporting Anne Summers giving a talk in Maffra last night. I do not know whether you know where Maffra is, but it is up the back from Sale. One of the things that the ABC journalist was noting was that back in 1935 when Sale ABC started—I am not sure whether it was Anne Summers who brought it up but somebody brought it up—it was stipulated that a woman being recruited to the ABC, who was already a graduate, should be paid less than the rawest male recruit coming out of school. Those sorts of things are very striking to me. I know there is a need for the SHED project in isolated rural areas. I have rabbited on. Would you like to ask some questions?

CHAIR—Thanks very much. That is important, very relevant and very useful. Can you talk a little about the COOL project? How do the kids get referred into it? How are they identified?

Mr Laming—COOL stands for Control of One's Life. They get referred into it basically by choice. They can say, 'I want to be part of this.' Often, in my experience, it was a particular teacher saying, 'Come along to this.' These things go by word of mouth. It would depend also on teachers. Perhaps a teacher had an agenda and would say, 'Now there is this new program, let's get this problem kid, this problem boy or girl'—and more and more there are problem girls too. The problematic stuff around this inquiry to some extent, from my perspective, which is limited, is that it is focused on boys, yet a lot of the issues are around the girls too. I think it is about the messages they get from wider society, by the way.

Regarding COOL, basically the kids would come in of their own volition. In my experience with the COOL groups there was what I would call emotional illiteracy. We have heard a lot about literacy, but for me the key point around boys and their capacity to grow into men who have meaningful relationships and actually survive and reach their potential, if you like, is that they become emotionally literate. It is just basic for me.

I had men in the group last night who, once again, like most of the men who have come through, just do not have the simple words to describe the feelings, and that is not unusual. Again and again, that is reflected in the boys—boys growing up in environments where they do not have a role model. They are not able to practise that because it is not being a real man: a real man does not have feelings; a real man stands on his own two feet, et cetera. And that is a load of bullshit, as we all know.

Mr SAWFORD—I would like to ask a question about feelings. To me, confident men, and confident boys for that matter, have skills to reconcile differences that they might have with their peers, parents, adults or teachers. Violent kids and violent men have a great inability—not so much in expressing feelings; I think that is the wrong argument—in that they do not have the basic skills to resolve quite trivial arguments, which results in huge blow-ups basically over nothing. I am a little suspicious of feelings. I think boys and girls happen to solve problems in different ways and they have different strengths in the way they do that.

Mr Laming—I agree.

Mr SAWFORD—The feeling stuff really leaves me a bit cold. I have seen it operate in schools, but I have seen other people operate more practical skills. When differences occur you give boys and men a range of skills of how you deal with those things and explain why they are overreacting. Mostly, violent men are very insecure men. They lack confidence and they think the whole world is looking at them. It is a bit like growing up when you are a boy and you are standing on the tram or on the train and you think everyone is watching. No-one is watching you, but you need someone sometimes to tell you, 'No-one is watching you, son. You are on your own, boy. No-one gives a damn.' Sometimes it is as simple as that, of just telling people, 'You are not the focus of the world, the world is not focusing on you.'

Mr Laming—I have two quick responses to that. Firstly, the feelings bit is one of 10 components. There are 10 components to the COOL program. One session might be about self-esteem, one might be about recognising your emotions, one might be about resolving conflicts, racism, sexism, ageism, those isms which are about difference rather than one is better, one is good and one is bad. That is another session. Another is about alcohol and drugs. So it is in that context. What makes sense to me is a holistic approach, a holistic approach that is not just addressing the kids but has that PD for the teachers so that the teachers are on track about what those particular kids are doing, and an information night for the parents.

Secondly, I do not believe either that men are violent because of the feelings. I firmly believe that it is about functional behaviour. They have learnt that this behaviour gets them what they want. They have learnt over the years that by being a bully, or by being nasty or intimidating—and usually from childhood, and that is why this stuff is important with the boys—that this behaviour gets them what they want.

One of the things that struck me with the last presentation was that there was an enormous discrepancy between male and female statistics around sexual assault. I do not know whether anybody noted that one. Sexual assault on males was 493 and on women was 2,223. It is the fear that goes with that sort of behaviour and, hence, affirmative action, et cetera.

It seems to me a lot of working with the boys in the context of gender relations is about choices. It is about education. It is not about counselling, by the way, later or at the time. It is about saying to boys, 'There are other options here. You can construe your life in a different way.' For me, it really is as simple as that. I do not have the answers to your inquiry, but in terms of on-the-ground stuff it is about opening the doors, it is about telling boys—certainly in our area—they do not have to be the victims of their circumstances, they do not have to be hemmed in by their biographies. There are ways out. I see myself as an educator rather than a counsellor. It is about actually giving them the tools—putting it out on the table; it is about saying, 'Try this one, try that one.' I think the possibilities and skills are enormous if the value is seen.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of the education of boys, you are back to that relationship between the teacher and the child because the role of the teacher is to explain the world as it is, and maybe sometimes teachers do not do that as effectively as we think they can.

Mr Laming—Nor parents, nor peers, and I think the peer education stuff can be really valuable. I think some of the models that are coming out around peer support in schools, peer

education, is valuable. There is a new program down in Sale that is going at the moment with the local secondary college.

CHAIR—It was one of the recommendations of the National Youth Roundtable held in Canberra recently.

Mr Laming—I think there are enormous possibilities.

CHAIR—One of the other things that we have not focused a lot on is a critical part in the equation—parents. What is your experience with the kids that you bring into the COOL program? I presume you have contact with the parents.

Mr Laming—Just to be clear on this, I have not had a formal connection with COOL for three years.

CHAIR—I see.

Mr Laming—It is something that I developed and I helped pilot and then the education department had a coordinator on board that then ran it. It is now defunded. My connection in an ongoing way at that time was in helping to run professional development days for teachers. My experience with the parents—and this is why it made sense for me to be involved at all—was that, in terms of the men coming to the SHED project, something like 73 per cent of those who attend the project have been a victim in one way or another while growing up, so there is that correlation, which does not mean that everyone who is a victim becomes a perpetrator. Those connections come up again and again when working with men. It makes much more sense to give them the emotional literacy earlier than wait till the shit hits the fan later on with all the ramifications.

Mr BARRESI—I wish to clarify one thing. We had someone come in yesterday afternoon from COOL Consulting. Is that an offshoot of your program? Was it involved in the development of your program?

Mr Laming—Peter Little?

Mr BARRESI—Yes.

Mr Laming—What happened is that, in the days of economic rationalism, when it was defunded by the education department he went private. He runs it as a private consultancy. It is important for this inquiry to know that there is a big difference, it seems to me, between saying, 'Let's us privatise this thing' and 'This is something that can go into the open market.' Some of you have obviously worked in schools. In my experience, for most schools the core agenda is the curriculum—the maths and sciences—and this other stuff is an optional extra. I do not see this as an optional extra. I think the big value of COOL was that it was part of the curriculum, because it was about giving that particular opportunity in a way that was not available otherwise.

CHAIR—Someone else said to us—and we will certainly conclude this when we finish our inquiry into vocational education—that education is about preparation for life as much as it is—

if not more—about getting a job. Part of the challenge in all of this is to see that boys—and perhaps even more so their parents—understand that. Thank you, Chris, for making the train ride. It was worth it from our point of view—sometimes in life you chip away and wonder if you can have any impact on things; we ask that every day—it was very useful and it has had an impact.

Proceedings suspended from 12.24 p.m. to 1.35 p.m.

[1.34 p.m.]

COLLINS, Dr Cherry Wedgwood, Senior Lecturer in Education, Deakin University

McLEOD, Dr Julie Elizabeth, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Deakin University

CHAIR—The committee welcomes witnesses and the packed public gallery back to our afternoon session of this inquiry. We have here this afternoon representatives of the Faculty of Education from Deakin University. We invite you to make any comments on the capacity in which you appear before the committee, and a precis of your submission which we can then discuss up to quarter past two.

Dr Collins—I have been involved in gender research both for the Australian Council for Educational Research and for the Faculty of Education at Deakin.

Dr McLeod—I am also in the Faculty of Education at Deakin and I was last year with Cherry Collins and Jane Kenway, one of the co-authors of a report commissioned by DETYA to investigate the factors influencing the educational performance of males and females at school. Some of the information contained in the submission from the faculty is drawn from that document.

Overhead transparencies were then shown—

Dr McLeod—What I would like to do today is just draw to your attention four key issues arising from our submission. I will speak relatively briefly to begin with and then allow opportunity for questions and any elaboration. At the end of our submission we presented about 10 key areas, which is a summary of the key issues we had addressed. From those issues we have focused more narrowly on four in particular, which are the questions of which girls, which boys; gender cultures in schools; literacy; and subject choice and post-school pathways. I am just going to take you very quickly through the key issues we see under each of those points. In terms of the question of which boys and which girls, the submission presents, and our own research has found, that one of the key factors in thinking about the educational experiences and outcomes of boys and girls is that of socioeconomic status. In that sense, we are interested in turning attention away from simply all boys versus all girls to a focus on which boys and which girls. We find it has not been particularly helpful to make these kinds of global or generalised statements or even to imply that 'all boys are failing' or 'all boys are at risk' and that somehow or other all girls are okay now, when it is clearly not the case. So we are proposing in the submission that we need to target policies and public funds at those of groups of boys and girls who are most in trouble and most in need. In order to do that, we needed to disaggregate the data and to look fairly closely at which groups. One of the findings from the DETYA report last year was that, in terms of school performance and outcomes, socioeconomic status was of overarching significance and of a greater determining factor than gender in shaping educational outcomes.

The second point is gender cultures in schools. We argue that schools need to foster—and many other people argue too—diverse and positive ways of being male and female. But linked to that we need to address bullying and homophobic behaviours in school because they are key

in policing dominant masculinity, aggressive masculinity and also in policing particular kinds of ways of being a girl. What we are arguing is that male and female gender identity is relational, that gender develops in opposition or in relation with each other. If you are looking at boys' behaviour, boys' attitudes and boys' gender role, you need also to look at how that is developing in interaction with girls. And in particular, when we are looking at boys' performance in subject areas such as English, which has been a major area of concern, we need to look at the ways in which English curriculum, subject English, and thereby literacy, is understood or misunderstood by boys and girls as being the province of girls, not of boys.

In terms of the data on literacy—you have probably all read a lot and seen a lot of the data on literacy—we have found that more boys than girls are late starters at literacy and that, although boys take off more slowly, once they start they do well, at least until junior secondary school. Late starting does not explain boys' recent turning away from English as teenagers during their adolescent years. What we are suggesting is that we need more research and professional development around the junior high school years, say, from year 7 to about year 9, to help us understand and investigate what is happening with boys and literacy in that area, because that is when their literacy on English performance starts to plateau.

An additional dimension to literacy is that students need to be multi-literate. Literacy is not simply about print competence; it is about literacy and competence in information and communication technology, and the research indicates that boys are in fact doing quite well in that area. Increasing numbers of boys are enrolling, whereas decreasing numbers of girls are enrolling in that area at the senior school level. That has serious positive and sometimes negative consequences for young people's participation in the labour market because that is where a lot of job opportunities are opening up.

The final point is on subject choice and post school pathways. There remain strong post school pathways for boys; what we need to be looking at is the impact of their subject choice and good articulation with employment prospects and further study. There still remain reasonably strong apprenticeship options for boys. Boys' subject choices, in combination with TAFE subjects like information technology or traditional maths and sciences, articulate better to the labour market than do girls' subject choices. In general, girls take a broader range of subjects, whereas boys take a narrower range of subjects, which has better labour market and education pay-offs. Males are still favoured by employers in the full-time labour market. So what we have been trying to look at in drawing your attention to this is what is happening at school and the consequences of what is happening at school once students leave.

We will return to the other points raised at the end of our submission and speak about them if you wish. Other areas are still important, but they are not the ones we have identified to focus on today—for example, the effect of peer group dynamics on male identity. Also, there needs to be further investigation of what gives rise to risk taking behaviours in males and females. Schools need to promote respect for gender differences in a wide range of ways of being male and female—which returns to the issue of gender cultures. Importantly, schools should be encouraged to provide strong leadership and policies to support activities designed to address gender issues. We are arguing for whole-school policies, with strong leadership that supports bottom-up activities from teachers. In particular, we need resources for teacher professional development, particularly in the areas of gender and curriculum. I will leave that there, and then we can elaborate on it through your questions.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Dr McLeod. Dr Collins, do you have anything to add?

Dr Collins—No. I am here today in a back-up role.

CHAIR—In your submission, you said that we should be adopting whole-of-school policies without formal structures and with strong support mechanisms. Can you elaborate on what you mean by that?

Dr Collins—If one wants to do something about gender culture and if you think that the problems boys are experiencing largely reside in something that is happening in the culture of boys in the junior secondary school years, then that is going to require principals in schools, in particular, and whole-school systems to have a new focus on what are called the middle-schooling years and to think a lot harder, not just about subjects and what students necessarily do in class but about what you do about personal development, what you do about helping them to think about who they are and where they are going in ways that are not stereotypically masculine and policed in the playground.

CHAIR—Thank you. Any questions?

Committee members interjecting—

Ms GILLARD—Sorry about our banter. It started this morning when we had Babette Francis here, and our behaviour has gone downhill ever since! The quality of submissions has certainly gone up; our behaviour has gone downhill. Prior to speaking to Babette this morning, we had some work placed before us about the way in which boys respond to current curricula and, particularly, the focus on verbal skills and literacy. They have interviewed some kids and one of the boys—a 13-year-old—said:

> My English teacher wants me to write about my *feelings*, my History teacher wants me to give my *opinions*, and my Science teacher wants me to write my *views* about the environment! I don't know what my *feelings*, *opinions* and *views* are, and I can't write about them. Anyway, they're none of their bloody business! I hate school!!

It was put to us from this submission that there is a difference in the way that boys and girls interact with the curriculum and that it might be that the current structure of the curriculum favours girls because of its emphasis on verbal communication and written work. Have you got a comment on that? That is going to be one of the issues at the crux. I am not coming with a predetermined view; I am just interested to see what your response would be to that.

Dr Collins—We are both going to speak on this one. I do not think that there is a greater emphasis on literacy than there ever has been—in fact, if anything, the emphasis on literacy for boys has gone down. In a number of states, as you know, the requirement to do year 12 English no longer exists. Once upon a time, to get into university you also had to do foreign languages. It was standard for boys to do history and other subjects. There is no question that many boys—I hate talking in generalisations about this thing—avoid language subjects if they can and they certainly cluster into subject areas where the boundaries are very clear and you do not have to talk about your feelings or do any of these things. So they tend, in their upper secondary schools, when they get a choice, to—if they are very bright—cluster into maths and physical science, which we in Australia regard as normal but, of course, it is not normal if you look across the world. It is part of Australian culture. And then, if they are not bright, they tend to

cluster down in the technology subjects. Again, that is a socioeconomic thing which is not a good thing at all, but we look at it that way in Australia. And there is now another cluster around economics, IT and so on.

It seems to me that the teaching challenge and the challenge of schools is to get males to not think that it is feminine to actually think about who they are and to actually think about what their opinions are. They have to grow up and be citizens, not just technicians. That is part of the challenge of schools and it has become a very hard challenge. The question is: what is going on in our society in the culture of boys in schools or the culture of schools that makes boys shy away from these things? It is not that they cannot do it; it is just that, somehow, they do not want to do it. They used to do it, so there is nothing maturational about it, nothing biological about it.

Dr McLeod—I would like to extend some of Cherry's last comments in that there is, as you say, quite a lot of concern these days about what they call the feminisation of the curriculum and about assessment practices that are advantaging girls. Yet, from what Cherry is saying—which I would argue too—the skills that boys are saying that they do not have are in fact skills that are really positive educational and social ones that they do need. We do not trust 13-year-old boys or girls to dictate the curriculum. We are responsive to their needs, but some things are necessary for their development as full, active citizens. As Cherry says, one of the challenges is how to promote that in a way which encourages them, and it is true that a curriculum which evokes, demands or requires boys to reflect on their feelings can be taught in not just interesting ways but ways which can appeal to them. So I do not think it is that simple.

Ms GILLARD—No. We have also had various submitters put to us that the nature of the assessment can actually create a bias in the results towards boys or girls. Their contention is that examination style structures are favoured by boys and continuous assessment, home based task structures, are favoured by girls. Have you got a comment on whether or not you agree with that?

Dr Collins—There is considerable evidence—I think that is a fact—that it is not a question of what they favour or like but that 'check box' answers tend to favour boys and long written answers tend to favour girls. Again, we are not talking about all boys and all girls, but if you are talking about an average, that is the way it works out. It does not necessarily mean that boys and girls like it that way. In fact, there are some very interesting studies where, if you ask kids what they like in classrooms, males and females very often like the same kinds of teachers and they like the same kinds of assessments. But there is a factual issue involved in terms of what styles of assessments tip the scales one way or another if you are taking all boys as a group and all girls as a group.

Ms GILLARD—We have heard some evidence in this inquiry that comparable issues about boys' education are being raised in comparable countries. I was interested in your comment before. Are you saying that it is not true to say, for example, that in Canada, the United Kingdom or other comparable countries boys cluster as strongly in the maths, science and technology end?

Dr Collins—Absolutely.

Ms GILLARD—That is an Australian phenomenon?

Dr Collins—That is an Australian thing. In fact, in the United States, certainly on the eastern seaboard where I have lived, competency in English is highly prestigious to the extent that, if you are taking on English from year 9, when their high schools start, which many boys do because that is how you get into the Ivy League colleges, you actually have to know your Greek and Latin myths and your Bible from cover to cover because these are great literary books. The sort of English curriculum that we ask students to do is very lowbrow by comparison. Many boys do it and many boys are good at it because that is the prestigious thing. It does not mean, of course, that maths does not matter as well and that there are not clusters there. The particular way in which our curriculum is worked out is almost certainly because our school system was founded in the late 19th century, when science and maths were very prestigious things, and that has hung around in a way that is not true elsewhere. It is certainly not true in European countries, and it is not true in England either, where to do classics and languages is still one of the major ways into Oxford and Cambridge.

Ms GILLARD—That is interesting. I do not want to simplify other people's positions, but some of the debate we have heard is that there is almost a biological determinism in terms of boys and girls about a lot of the subject choice, assessment method, et cetera. So evidence like that is interesting.

Dr Collins—Yes. Historically, just think about it. Who were the great writers? The curriculum originally was a curriculum written for boys. Girls are late starters in the school curriculum.

Mr EMERSON—You were saying that low socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of a low education outcome. Maybe we should distinguish between correlation and causality here. If we wanted to identify at risk kids, it would be relatively easy—you would just go to the most disadvantaged communities in Australia and you would find concentrations of them. But in terms of policy implications, if that were the cause of poor education outcomes, you would say that while there are poor suburbs there are going to be poor education outcomes and you cannot do anything about it. We were having this discussion earlier this morning. It seems evident that, notwithstanding that children might have come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, if you put good teachers who are beneficiaries of good professional development into those schools then you can get remarkable results. Would you support that observation?

Dr McLeod—Yes. Some of the recommendations from this report and some contained in here are that resources need to be targeted to those areas and part of those resources is providing professional development for teachers. Yes, we are not saying that it is an impossible situation and that their deficiency is so great that they will never be able to overcome it. Obviously, education is vital in that. So it is noting it but not accepting it as inevitable. It is trying to target attention rather than just give global funding to the issue of boys. It is about trying to define those boys and those groups of students who are most at risk and who are most likely to benefit from intervention.

Dr Collins—There is no question about that, and there is more very recent evidence that teachers can make a huge difference.

Mr SAWFORD—Then why do we continue to write in the literature that socioeconomic status makes the largest difference to educational participation? You used that phrase as well. Why do we continue to use that without qualifications? If you look at longitudinal studies around the world of what is successful schooling, they all identify the relationship between the teacher and the child as being the most powerful of all. They also identify the educational program that is being offered. If you take the one by the inner London education authority in the mid-1980s, the final bit—and I may not have the words right, but essentially I will have it right—is that it is schooling that is the most powerful determinant of future success or failure and that it is far more powerful than socioeconomic background, gender, religion, race, or whatever. That was the conclusion. It emphasised schooling: with boys or girls, it was basically the quality of the teacher, the quality of the principal, the quality of the educational program that was offered—in other words, being balanced. Following on from what Julia asked you about that 13-year-old boy complaining that teachers were asking views, feelings, opinions, whatever—

Dr Collins—These appalling things!

Mr SAWFORD—No, they are not appalling things at all. I would have thought it would be far more balanced, in a sense, too. They are important, but they are just part of what you learn. What is also part of what you learn is the identification of concepts, the application of concepts and the ability to list processes that are involved in a particular intellectual rigour or thought. Yet in much of the stuff that has been presented to us thus far—and we are only very early into this inquiry—you do not see the balancing. Boys are probably good at visual spatial strengths; girls—and this is a generalisation again—have perhaps more verbal skills, communication skills. Both of those things are important, not just one. Maybe boys do need to have more effective teaching in those more feminine skills, but I would have thought the reverse is also true, that it would be very good for girls to have some more analytical skills than is often recognised in the curriculum.

If you look at examinations now compared with those of 20 or 30 years ago, there are distinct changes, and mathematics is one of them. One of your former colleagues, Ken Rowe, pointed out this morning that some of the testing in mathematics is very verbal. It does not say: solve the quadratic equation, or predict that $y = mx+c$, plus a graph. Instead of saying that, there is a whole paragraph. The context in which the mathematical concept is presented has changed.

Dr Collins—Sometimes that is true, yes. It is not always true—I think he was probably exaggerating somewhat. I do not like you talking about verbal skills as if they were somehow feminine. If you went to America and spoke to boys there, you would find that they are highly verbal. Again, we are talking about something to do with our wider culture. If we want to do something about boys, we have to actually think about that in its cultural context. It is not that boys are naturally less verbal than girls.

Mr SAWFORD—We have had a lot of evidence from America that has been put forward to us that does not support your view at all. In fact, the stuff from D'Arcangelo, with the great longitudinal study that they did, basically said that children are being identified as having problems in literacy when, in fact, they do not; they have behaviour problems.

Dr Collins—I think boys are later starters in literacy, that is true.

Mr SAWFORD—But we are not arguing that.

Dr Collins—Okay. It is also true that males can be highly verbal people.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not suggesting otherwise. I am saying there are generalisations made, in what has been presented to us, that sometimes do not back up the visual spatial superiority of boys. Your submission, which is a very good submission, re-emphasises the feminine skills. For example, you use English as a subject. That is fine. But why didn't you use mathematics, why didn't you use science?

Dr McLeod—We could easily use mathematics, but one of the issues that keeps coming up—in public debate, here, in the call for the inquiry, in the submission last year—is that literacy is identified as a source of major public and policy concerns.

Dr Collins—For boys.

Dr McLeod—Yes. That is why we addressed it.

CHAIR—It is in our terms of reference, too.

Dr McLeod—Exactly, so we were attending to the terms of reference—a bit too verbal. To go back to your earlier points, you said that there is a lot of evidence to suggest that the feeling, emoting, thinking, 'what do you feel' skills are being promoted at the expense of the analytic. I am not quite sure what the evidence for that is.

Mr SAWFORD—Just read our submissions. There is plenty of evidence in here.

Dr McLeod—But concerning the anecdotal example you gave about the boy, I would not want to base a lot of discussion on one 13-year-old boy thinking that he is being asked to think or feel too much.

Mr SAWFORD—But only one person raising a point does not make it irrelevant. It is a legitimate question. It deserves an answer and a response.

Dr McLeod—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—We do not have to agree on the response. For goodness sake! A 13-year-old boy has every right to make a point, just as everyone else has, and to be listened to.

Dr McLeod—Yes, that is true, but it is about the rate of evidence that is also available.

Mr SAWFORD—You are answering your question, okay.

Dr Collins—I have access to quite a number of maths classes and I would not say that secondary school maths classes in Australia were very verbal places. They tend to be places where problems are tackled and concepts are learned, and so on—as a generalisation.

Mr BARTLETT—What is your view on the reasons for the widening divergence between TES results of girls and boys?

Dr Collins—There are a number of reasons. I think underlying the whole thing is the slow change that is happening, and rapid change in New South Wales where the results are particularly interesting. In the culture of boys, particularly in the junior secondary school years, I think a lot of them are investing less in schooling than they were in general, across all subjects. They see school as being somehow or other the province of girls, as girls have become more and more successful at it and as there has been more and more fuss in the press about this issue, I think many boys, particularly in New South Wales, are actually adjusting their own heads in relation to their investment in schooling.

Mr BARTLETT—I would not agree that it is because of more and more fuss in the press. I think that trend was happening well before there was any media attention on it. Are you saying that there are problems in the junior secondary years because of factors outside the school environment or because of changes in teaching procedures, practices, curriculum structure and so on?

Dr Collins—I think it is from two things. It is somewhat a question of the culture outside the school environment in the 1980s and 1990s having become in a way more concerned about males being tough, more emphasis than ever before on sport, more emphasis on success and males being macho in the economic sphere as well, but some of it I think has to do with what we are talking about concerning the culture of gender inside the school. If you are going to define being a man or being a boy as not being like girls—and that is one of the ways in which being a boy at secondary school in Australia is most heavily defined; girls are now all over the school, taking part in everything and doing well—then you have two choices: one is to change your definition of what it is to be masculine, that is, it is okay to do things girls do and it is okay to compete with girls; or you are going to have to invest your ego about being a male in something else.

Mr BARTLETT—How do we tackle those issues in the school to the extent that what is happening in the school is a problem? Do you have some suggestions?

Dr Collins—The only places I know which deal with it successfully deal with it directly, which does involve boys in learning to think about their own thoughts and their own feelings and what is driving them, perhaps unconsciously, to do things—to actually learn to talk about these things and think about them. There are successful programs doing that in schools.

Mr BARTLETT—So it is not your view that it has anything to do with curriculum structure, content, teaching techniques, et cetera?

Dr Collins—I do not think so. Do you have any thoughts about that, Julie?

Dr McLeod—This actually addresses some of the questions Rod was raising. Some colleagues at Deakin have been involved in working with young men and trying to develop pedagogies or ways of teaching which promote critical thinking as well as encourage young men to think about their feelings or the ways they are interacting with each other. There are some references to that material in the submission. What they are finding out is that there are

ways of teaching, of working with young boys within their peer group, that are proving very effective in examining cultures of masculinity or the ways they interact. That is not a whole curriculum, it does not take the place of the analytic or mathematical curriculum or whatever; it is just one mode of teaching which they have found to be very effective. So, yes, I think there are new ways of teaching that need to be explored in the same way that new ways of teaching were explored earlier on to try to include girls' presumed learning styles. So there are possibilities there.

CHAIR—Amongst a number of critical messages we received from Dr Ken Rowe this morning was the importance of professional development for teachers. That also seems to be something with which you would agree.

Dr McLeod—Yes.

CHAIR—If we were to do one useful thing with the way we are consuming your hard earned resources, it seems that it would be to advance this. What can or should be done to really put some effort into the professional development of teachers that is not happening at the moment?

Dr Collins—What would have a major impact is doing what you can to ensure that principals, school leaders and staff—particularly during the junior secondary school years—are aware of gender, the cultures of gender and, in particular, the cultures of masculinity; that they think about how to provide opportunities in the health curriculum—or somewhere in the curriculum—for students to be able to discuss the way in which peer pressure functions and the way in which their own thinking functions in relation to school subjects: what it means to be masculine, the sorts of subjects I am going to choose, what I am going to do, whether I like English or not—all these sorts of things.

CHAIR—But how does that affect the professional development of the teacher? Is that what you are talking about?

Dr Collins—Yes, I am. They need to be professionally developed as to how you do that, how you run group sessions and so on.

Dr McLeod—One of the things that are absolutely crucial in professional development—this idea was around in the 1980s, when PEP was around and inclusive education was coming off in schools—is that there needs to be adequate funding to release teachers to undertake professional development. One thing that would be very positive is if money within schools were allocated and tagged for PD in this field and if teachers going for promotion had to demonstrate that they had undertaken post training professional development specifically in these areas. It needs to be not just, 'wouldn't it be nice if you did it' and 'we want to open up your mind'; it needs to be formally linked into promotion procedures.

Dr Collins—I endorse that.

CHAIR—Certainly in the medical world now, if you want to keep practising at a certain level, you have to be involved in a minimum amount of quality assurance and some continuing education.

Dr McLeod—The other thing that has had a negative impact on professional development is the introduction of fees for Masters of Education, bachelor courses and post training courses for teachers. There used to be a large numbers of teachers who would undertake these post initial-training programs. Once they attracted fees, it was a bit of a disincentive. They used to act as a really important forum for ongoing professional development that was not provided by the schools. Numbers are declining at that level. Where are those teachers going?

CHAIR—On the boys thing, this might seem a bit ethereal, I suppose, but in my electorate there is a high level of education; it is a relatively affluent sort of electorate. One of the observations and experiences we have had with the private schools there is that the parents are happy to put a lot of money into the boys' private schools but it is very hard to raise money from the same parents for the girls' private schools. That reflects, I think, a culture which very much still exists amongst parents, including ones my age, which is that they are more concerned about the career prospects of the boy than they are of the girl. The girls seem to have less pressure on them to focus on education as preparing them for work and are freer, it seems, to do what they think in their hearts they would like to do, whereas the boys certainly do have in many cases pressures placed upon them by parents and society generally to be doing things that have got something to do with career. Is that an incorrect observation?

Dr McLeod—That is one observation. There was an article recently in the *Bulletin* addressing this issue and it drew on some research that I have been involved in and some other colleagues in Sydney, working with longitudinal studies of young women and young men. Those studies and the work I have been doing have found that in fact middle-class, and particularly privately educated middle-class, young women are under enormous pressure. They feel absolutely anxious about their school performance, about their career. They have got an incredibly busy schedule of things to do. Boys at elite schools feel similarly. For girls, one of the explanations offered in this article in the *Bulletin* is that it is one of the consequences or legacies of feminism, if you like, where girls feel that they can do anything and in fact they should do everything. They want to be fully rounded, they want to have all these extracurricular activities, they want to get really high TERs. Boys experience that pressure too, but it is a more recent phenomenon for girls to be experiencing that. Again, it is cut across by class. It is not the same for all girls; it is a very middle-class phenomenon.

CHAIR—I have spent most of my working life in public housing estates, so I have worked at the other end, but my experience is that the parents seem more concerned about what is happening to the boys than what is happening to the girls.

Dr Collins—That could well be the case, and it is certainly true that boys tend to cluster in more career oriented subjects than girls do. I think these things could both be true, that girls feel very pressured but at the same time the pressure on boys is more directly from home, or boys are still feeling that they have to get a career. Some of the explanation for why boys on average do not do as well in prestigious subjects as girls, which is a question I was asked before, is because a much broader range of boys take them. So many boys feel pressured to take high-level maths and so on, whereas you have a smaller and more elite group of girls taking high-level maths and therefore their average scores are higher than the scores for the boys. Boys tend to cluster in fewer subjects and have a wider spread, because of what you are talking about, I think: this pressure that they feel to take certain subjects that will lead into careers.

Dr McLeod—If we have a few moments, could I return to one of the points Rod Sawford is raising. I do not think you were satisfied with our responses to those questions. One thing I would like to raise briefly is that there is a lot of concern that the curriculum is not attending to the learning styles or the skills associated traditionally with boys' learning and that it has gone too much to girls. But I think one of the issues that we have been concerned with is that on the one hand you may have a set of dispositions or skills orientations which are more male or more female, but the other question to keep in mind is what sort of knowledge in ways of being in the world we want all students to have at the end of their schooling, whether or not they are gendered one way or the other.

Mr SAWFORD—There was a fellow called Bloom who wrote a book called *The Taxonomy of Educational Directives* who got it right, and there is not one reference to gender in there. It deals with a whole range of skills which any good educational program would promote regardless of whether it is boys or girls. Cherry made reference to some understanding of the classics in terms of some basic problems that face society. What you are saying is quite true. You could tell young people that in ancient Greece with a Periclean aristocracy that civilisation failed because of the rich-poor divide and the barbarians came down from the hills and took it all over, and the same in Rome when Honorius was out playing with his prize poultry and King Alaric and 100,000 Visigoths came down from the hills and took over Rome.

With respect to the example that you were using, these lessons in life are sometimes missing. Yet if you look at a balanced education, you are not terribly concerned about race, gender, religion or socioeconomic background; you are intent on what are the educational aims. I do not think anyone better than Bloom has spelt out what you ought to be aiming at: it is not just synthesis which is the be-all and end-all of the last 20 years in curriculum, it is also analysis. It is not just comprehension; it is interpretation. It is not just translation—you know what I am saying.

Basically, in a lot of the submissions that have come forward, there is not a balanced view of what we ought to be aiming at in educational programs. If that is true in the teaching profession, then they are only teaching part of the curriculum that ought to be valued. And it has got nothing to do with boys or girls; it has got to do with offering and teaching a whole curriculum. We need to make sure that, whether you teach mathematics, language, science or environmental studies, those same skills—those behavioural objectives that ought to be in every curriculum—are there.

Some people are questioning that, in the context of assessment and curriculum of the 1980s, much of that is missing. That says something about lack of knowledge of education. That says something about lack of knowledge of the context and the history of where we have come from in education. It talks more about a reaction to what has been going on in the last 20 years. I think that is what I would prefer people to respond to, and that is really what I was trying to raise with Julie.

Dr Collins—I am sure you are aware that all states in Australia think about the curriculum now in eight key learning areas. That is a pretty broad curriculum. If anything, it has become more technicised, if you like, because technology has now become one of those eight areas in the curriculum—quite rightly, I think, given the knowledge that students need to have. I think

that schooling, until year 10, is a pretty balanced act. After that, it is up to students to choose and we get these interesting choices on gender lines.

CHAIR—I am sorry to have to be a spoilsport, but we have to finish. I think we would have enjoyed speaking to you for a longer period. Thank you for providing us with such a well-researched submission and for coming along to speak to it. Thank you also, Julie, for the work that you put in on Jane Kenway's paper—that is also a very important document. If you hear of, read or see any things that are presented to us with which you disagree, please feel free to let us know.

[2.21 p.m.]

BRUCE, Dr Roderick Lance (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Bruce, for having sufficient commitment and interest to sit through this for so long. You will have a very good insight into what we do in our work. Could you give us an overview of your submission, which we will then discuss through until 3 p.m.

Dr Bruce—I taught at RMIT for 32 years. I took a package three years ago—at the end of 1997. My interest in staying here for the two days and in putting in my submission is that I saw the products of the education system that has been talked about. I have also developed some ideas of my own over that time. I thought they might be worth putting before the committee. I was not sure how they would be seen, but I was very gratified to see that, at least, you have asked me to come and talk about them.

Regarding my background, I went to RMIT to do a part-time PhD in 1967 and, because I had given an undertaking to people there that I would do teacher training as soon as I finished, I did a Dip. Ed. That was after nine years of teaching experience. I can relate to what the Rowes were talking about this morning in terms of the teachers going away from their development classes with fire in their bellies. I will come back to that later on. I found it very rewarding. The course I did was at what was called, at that stage, the Hawthorn Institute of Teaching. We were all experienced but I was probably the most experienced. It was a terrific experience for me. I have done several courses since I have been at RMIT—PhD, Dip. Ed., Graduate Diploma in Applied Statistics and B.Comm. I have done those partly because it is important that, as a teacher, I remain a student as well so that I see it from both sides of the fence. I like watching people strut their stuff—I like to see if I can pick up ideas on things I might use or things I might not use.

The other thing I think is important, and it came out to a certain extent this morning, is the argument about nature versus nurture. I am very much in favour of saying that I cannot do anything about nature and my responsibility is to provide the nurturing. When I went to RMIT as a chemist, the quality of the students in the applied chemistry department—not throughout the technical school, as it was then—was mediocre. In chemistry the students were mediocre and people used to use it as an excuse for no changes in the way they taught. They related to the students based on the idea it was not worth it because they were not good students anyway. It seemed to me that it was much better to take a positive attitude and say, 'I think there are capabilities in these students and the important thing is for me to look at how I might develop that capability.' If they fail then I have to take responsibility for that. That is what has driven me all along.

I do not have much experience with primary and secondary school teachers except seeing them at the end. I did do some primary school science teaching as a student. It was part time and I taught in our Jewish school. That was a tremendous experience. I was blown over by the kids—they were fantastic. But that is probably another story. It would be interesting to look at a group like that. Perhaps it is changing—I am going back 30 years and there was a relationship between the parents and the students and the school that was really something to see.

As I said in my submission, we need to concentrate on improving education and I—like other people from Deakin—think that we have to look at the students as individuals and look at their strengths and their weaknesses and work on those. There is a particular problem at the moment with boys, but the same problem will exist for girls. In my experience they have similar problems. The technique that we use should be considered for both.

In my submission I put in two aspects which I was concerned about. One is the psychology of the learner, and I was rather interested to see that there have not been too many submissions on that aspect. I thought you might have quite a few psychologists coming in. The second thing is the teaching model. After I put in the submission a couple of weeks ago I had the experience of talking to a mother who is a primary school teacher and who is not teaching full time any more but doing relieving work and stuff like that. She has a nine-year-old and a seven-year-old. She was telling me the story of how her nine-year-old was having difficulty reading. He was asked to read to the rest of the class but failed rather badly and so was totally humiliated. She had great difficulty in getting him back to school. I do not know whether this is an isolated incident. It used to happen when I was a child, but maybe these days teachers are more enlightened. It just seemed to me that there was not much attention to the psychology of the child.

As I said in the submission, during my Dip. Ed. one of the things I really grabbed hold of was a Gestalt psychology idea, that each of us has a self-image and that we are very protective of that self-image. There is a lot more to Gestalt psychology than that, but it was just the thing that grabbed me. What I saw as my role was to make sure that when I was teaching, as best I could when you have classes of 50 to 150, the material I presented was within the capabilities of the students and that I was not going to raise their anxiety levels. Learning is a risky thing because failure is the option. I had to make sure that I kept their anxiety level fairly low and I proceeded with material that they could feel comfortable with. I found that worked quite well.

The other thing that struck me yesterday, and this is going back to the psychology bit, was that one of the people—I cannot remember where they were from, but one of the teachers was from Taylors Lakes—talked in terms of problems that boys brought to school, bad behaviour and poor literacy. That really puts a label on people. It seems to me that the idea is that if kids come to school then you have to look at what they need to make that transition. It is not a problem; look at it as a challenge. As I say, I was impressed with them on the whole, but that was just a minor thing that they have obviously got into.

Over the last couple of years we have looked at the problems that girls have had. One of them that I was continually coming up against in the years that I was teaching was the lack of 3D perception. We talked about that and it has been a running joke in the committee since I have been here. Certainly, when I started it was a big problem. I used to teach some stereochemistry, which was three dimensional stuff. I could talk to the class and I could be fairly confident that the boys would be up with me and when you tested them they were okay. I had a group of chemical engineers at one stage where there were a couple of females, but mainly males. I had to be very careful that I just did not go too fast because the girls were well behind. I imagine that what has happened since you have been talking about it is that something has been done to address that. We should look exactly the same way at the problems with boys. I am using the terminology now. They are a bit behind in one particular aspect, and the main problem seems to be literacy. We should just look at it as helping them along with that.

I will continue for a moment on the psychology. We are in a situation where we have community role models and what we are trying to do with males at school, and they do not quite match up. Aggression has come up quite a bit. Let us look at what the community sees presented in public life: in Victoria, we have the football where there is aggression. I am talking of uncontrolled aggression—perhaps it is controlled, but it looks uncontrolled. We had the Grand Final recently where there was definitely an issue of softening up the opposition. The team that won did not need to do that anyway because they are an excellent team. Aggressive behaviour and punching at whatnot was part of the deal. 'You solve your problems by aggression' is the message that comes across—'You make sure you win because you thug them first.'

I also suggest that politics is not a good place for people to get their role model from. I heard on the news last night or the night before about Peter Reith, the government's headkicker. What sort of message do people get? Before that we could have talked about Paul Keating as being the government's headkicker. In Victoria, of course, we had Jeffrey Kennett. He used aggression positively. He certainly used it all the time as part of his technique. Kids who are failing at school look to that situation and say, 'I'm not achieving with this education bit. But if I use this other technique, then it will work because I've seen all the other successful people doing it.' I think we have got to be a bit careful with that as well.

My view is that if I impacted on that self-image and threatened it, what would happen is that the students would shut down. If the school system does not work for them, they will try and develop their self-image in some other direction: they will be a nuisance because they will be bullying or they will be the class clown or whatever. The important thing is to keep them on track.

I have spoken before about a woman who has nine-year-old who has a spelling problem—a problem that does not seem to have gone away; it was a problem that existed when I was a student 50 years ago. In 50 years we have not seen any advancement or improvement. There were a number of kids at school, including me, who were poor spellers. We just have not gone anywhere. Everywhere else in life we have advanced—in science, medicine and probably in psychology and sociology. Dr Kenneth Rowe was saying that, if you went back to classes in the middle ages, you would see exactly the same environment and style of teaching to a large extent. I think that is a pity. What I wanted to do was to suggest a different way of looking at it for a model.

You have probably read in the submission that the model I suggested was on the basis of a computer model; that we had to divide what we wanted to achieve with learners into facts and knowledge—and I used knowledge in a different way to Kim Beazley. I am talking about things which are basically facts; they are written down somewhere. To use that, we had to have what I call intellectual software and I am advocating that that intellectual software has to be learnt by experience. I gave a couple of sporting examples, which do have some relevance in this particular situation, but I have thought of a better one since: learning to ride a bike, which involves the fear aspect, concern about what might happen if you fall off. You cannot really teach someone to ride a bike; all you can do is help them to learn to ride a bike. The normal procedure is that you hang on to the back of their seat and then, when they seem to be going okay, you let them go. As soon as they start to fall, you grab them again to maintain their confidence. You obviously do not let them hurt themselves.

I think that is what the learning bit is about, particularly the software element. What you need to do is get them into the process of thinking, and you also need to provide them with feedback. It probably needs to be on a one-to-one basis, because you then reduce the problem of humiliating the kids in front of their peers if they make a mistake. We all make mistakes. On a one-to-one basis, you can try to see what they are thinking and correct it and so on. I read a de Bono book recently in which he was criticising Socrates. But this is what Socrates was doing—he sat with people around his feet and he got them to talk. De Bono said that he was always critical, but what he was doing was sharpening their thinking processes. It was also part of the Oxbridge system of a one-to-one tutorial, which obviously is difficult to achieve these days because of the cost.

What we are looking at is kids who do not develop the software for one reason or another, and I think parents are an important part of this. If you have parents who are well educated, then by nature they are asking questions, they are stroking thoughts out and so on; whereas if you look at disadvantaged groups—particularly if there is a language disadvantage as well—then there is a self consciousness for a start and maybe not a willingness to engage the child in the same sort of discussion that might lead them to develop this software. Another good aspect of the one-to-one teaching is that somebody cares, and that has been repeated over and over again. Kids really respond to someone just talking to them on their own for a while without the rest of the class there.

I think you can put oral communication and written communication into a fairly similar basket. If you look at, say, MS Word these days, you see it has a spell-checker and a grammar-corrector. Somewhere in that system is built a whole series of standard phrases and whatnot—fairly simple things that you can write into software. I think that is what happens with oral communication and what should happen with written communication. If we think about it, we recognise that kids are quite good at oral communication by the time they get to school. For the limited exposure that they have had—mainly to their parents and perhaps to a bit of preschool—they are quite competent in oral communication. We will come back to the idea of what they have to say—whether or not it is about feelings and all that jazz—but I think they are quite proficient. How have they done that? They have done that by interacting with someone on a one-to-one basis. You talk to the children. We all know that mothers are encouraged to talk to their kids and that they develop that oral communication. It does not matter what they talk about to a large extent; parents do not worry about what they talk about. They develop that software and then they can go on and talk about anything that they want to talk about.

When I was at school, you were given an essay to write and you went away and wrote that essay. As we have said, it was quite often on feelings, opinions, ideas and stuff like that—and the boys do not appreciate that. It seems to me that there are two processes involved: there is getting your ideas straight—having something up here that you want to express—and there is the vehicle for expressing them. So, again, we are back to the data and the software. What might help in the literacy debate is a concentration on the software, on getting the technique right. I would not be worried about what they wrote about, whether they wanted to write about what happened yesterday or what they saw on TV; I would just get them writing and I would concentrate on giving them feedback on the structure of their sentences, et cetera. So there are two stages that have to be developed. You cannot start talking about ideas until you have the vehicle to do that—and that is mainly written and, to an extent, oral communication.

With regard to the next part of the software bit, I do not think there is a package that we presently have on the mass market that will do this, although people are working on artificial intelligence and presumably some of this comes up there. So the analogy that I swapped to was that of a jigsaw puzzle. I saw a lot of what goes on in a school as being the presentation of knowledge, which is like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The teachers will put that into a context; they will have a picture. But, in the end, the students have to have their own picture because they are the ones who are going to feed it back; they are the ones who are going to express it as an idea. Until they have got that picture, they cannot express it. So you have got two problems: you have got their problem of having the skills to express it, and you have got the problem of them having it sorted out—the analysis bit up here. That also has to be sorted out.

If you accept that jigsaw puzzle analogy, then problem solving—and I am using the term in its general sense—becomes like finding a missing piece within that jigsaw. So you have to imagine what that piece might look like and then go and test whether that is a reasonable situation, whether that is a reasonable view of things. I think there are lots of things that support that. First of all with regard to teachers, I might be able to appeal to you on the basis that quite often it is said that you really learn your subject when you have to teach it. I am suggesting that quite often it is the first time, when you have to explain it to kids, that you are really in the position where you want to get it absolutely right. You think about it very deeply, you put all the pieces of the jigsaw together and then you are in a position to be able to feed it out to them to answer their questions and so on.

I think that is what they were talking about this morning when they were talking about 'fire in the belly'. These were teachers who were doing in-service training; they had had some experience. They went to these people, they presented them with some ideas and they started to put all the pieces that they had together with the pieces they were collecting, and they were seeing a picture which was really exciting them. If you are going to present a speech in the House, then I guess the same sort of thing applies: you really want to know your subject or you are going to be found out. The other thing I would like to suggest is that these thinking skills are generic—they are not subject based—so you can apply them to history, science or whatever. The context changes slightly but the principles still apply.

CHAIR—Dr Bruce, if I could just interrupt you: we have had nearly 30 minutes, so we are running out of time.

Dr Bruce—Okay, I will finish in a minute. One of the problems we have got at the moment is that most students can still rote learn the material, so we are seeing them in tertiary education without any of those skills but still learning by rote. Of course, as has been discussed, the examination system really does favour rote learning. If you can spiel it out in an exam situation, it is much easier to do than thinking. The thesis that I am trying to put up is that we need to think about a model for teaching which is related to computer systems. If we separate out the knowledge from the actual processing of that knowledge, then we might improve what is going on. Sorry that I took so long.

CHAIR—No, that is very good. It is very interesting and extremely comprehensive.

Mr BARTLETT—Regarding your view that self-image is one of the critical factors in terms of success of education, would you then say that declining self-image, boys relative to girls, has

been a significant factor in the relative decline in the performance of boys relative to the performance of girls?

Dr Bruce—That is a hard one for me to answer since I have not been in the system, but I think boys are more sensitive to attacks on their self-image. Girls are much more accepting of authority—all those sorts of things—and I think girls probably rote learn. My experience is that they rote learn better than boys. My answer to your question, without having been involved in the system, would be: yes, I would expect boys to suffer more from damage to their self-image than girls.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you mean in a community context, rather than just at school?

CHAIR—This is your personal observation, not based on any research?

Dr Bruce—I cannot come to you with any research, although it was interesting to hear the Rowes this morning because I thought there was a convergence of our ideas. Maybe you did not see it that way.

Mr BARTLETT—On another tack, it is generally agreed that boys respond better to more structured learning approaches and girls handle unstructured approaches better. That certainly seems to be the case at primary and secondary level. In your experience is that also the case at tertiary level or does that become less of a factor at a tertiary level?

Dr Bruce—I think concepts are more important to boys. I do not think they have the same capacity to rote learn. You would have experienced marking exam questions. You can tell whether a student has rote learned the answer—not all of them, because some of them are very good at it, but every now and then with a rote learned answer you see there is a conflict in the argument and they do not see it because they have rote learned it. You can also see the student who understands the concepts—they might not have them fully correct but there is a flow in it and the argument is all there. Boys are much better at that. I think we all go through a stage of rote learning, but I think girls hang onto it for longer—it is a winning strategy so it is difficult to get them to change.

Mr BARTLETT—In terms of your style of teaching at university, and those of your colleagues, have you found that the boys have responded better to more structured approaches and that the girls have been able to cope better with greater freedom, with less definitional restraints on how they tackle a particular problem et cetera?

Dr Bruce—Tertiary education is pretty strongly structured. I do not think there is a distinction between the two at that stage.

Mr SAWFORD—I was a bit disappointed that in your original submission you did not actually develop some of these points that you have made, which I think are fairly strong points. Perhaps if I address two or three of them you could quickly comment on them. You argue in your submission that intellectual skills development is not addressed directly, which I think is a very important point. Under ‘Aims of education’, you use the example of the computer, but I think you also use a better example in the submission when you say:

The best graduates ... analyse information, use the analysis to problem-solve and effectively communicate their thoughts to others.

Further on you argue:

The current curricula is directed at increasing an individual's knowledge base and only indirectly directed at developing intellectual skills.

So you are reinforcing that point again. You are probably emphasising the point that a lot of people do not actually understand that knowledge is a very low intellectual skill. I wish more people would understand that, but obviously they do not. Then you argue:

The current curricula doesn't need to be changed—

But you go on to say:

... the emphasis on the development of intellectual skills (analysis and problem-solving skills)—

ought to be increased. Why did you write that sort of stuff, which I thought was very plausible and logical, and yet in your oral presentation you did not mention any of it?

Dr Bruce—I thought that I had in using the analogy of the computer, with the knowledge being the data and the intellectual skills being the software. Maybe I did not get that across but that was the idea of it. You asked if I would like to expand on that? I think what happens is that—

Mr SAWFORD—You are basically saying that intellectual skills are not being emphasised.

Dr Bruce—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—And you are saying that analysis and problem solving are not being addressed effectively, that there is more emphasis on a knowledge base rather than on developing intellectual skills. I happen to agree with you, but I wish you would explain to me why you came to those conclusions.

Dr Bruce—Because when you put tertiary students in a problem-solving position, they have no solution. They do not know how to do it, and the reason they do not know how to do it is two things. First of all, they cannot do the analysis, so you can give them the information but they cannot put it together—that is, they cannot put the jigsaw together, they cannot see how the pieces fit together. If they get to that stage then you have a chance of quizzing them so that you can get them to come up with a solution.

Mr SAWFORD—Why do you think that has happened?

Dr Bruce—For the reason I said. If we are talking about the sciences—and you and I both have a background in the sciences—if I went to RMIT and talked to the staff, they would say there has been a dumbing down in the sciences. That is probably a politically incorrect word to use, but what has happened is that the rigour and the concepts that you were talking about have disappeared. They have been softened, so the students do not have to do the hard thing. They do

not have to do the analysis, they do not have to create the jigsaw and they do not have to have their own picture. When I was younger, the shift was from chemistry and physics to biology, because it was descriptive. Biology has got much tougher, so now the shift is to ecology which, again, is descriptive. It is so it can be rote learnt. In my opinion, we have to lead by the hand the students out of that. Rote learning is a very valuable thing, but we have to lead them out of that into the next situation, which is to do the processing of the information so that they comprehend what it all means and what its significance is so that they can go on and use it.

Mr SAWFORD—If you are correct, that is a pretty severe indictment on the current pedagogy, isn't it?

Dr Bruce—I have listened to the discussion of the quality of teachers. I would say that a large proportion of those teachers cannot do what we were just talking about themselves. So how are they going to teach the students to do it? There are a number of graduates in the course that I was involved in teaching who would go out who could not do that. They would become quite good analytical chemists. As long as they are crunching numbers and so long as the answer is in a book, they are okay. You ask them to problem solve, you ask them why a process is not working or why they are not getting the result they expect from an instrument and they have no idea of working out how they might go about sorting that out.

Mr SAWFORD—You were at RMIT for 30 years. Did you notice significant changes in the analytical skills of the students who arrived on your doorstep over those 30 years?

Dr Bruce—They are much worse now. It does not matter what you do with good students, they will always be good. You do not have to teach them; they teach themselves. So we are talking about the bottom end. We have to keep this in mind all the time. The bottom end is getting bigger. When I went to RMIT, you had to have pure and applied maths, chemistry and physics or you would not get in the door. I do not think you have to have any maths now. How can you teach chemistry seriously without maths? But if you say that you have to have maths then the department will disappear. People are writing their own death warrant.

CHAIR—I do not know whether I agree with that.

Dr Bruce—Agree with what?

CHAIR—I studied medicine and I had not done any of that sort of stuff at school, because I was no good at it.

Mr SAWFORD—You have answered your own question.

CHAIR—I am talking about physics, chemistry and all that sort of business. What we have learned in a more enlightened era is that we need people going into medicine who do have innate problem-solving, conceptual and analytical skills as well as a capacity to—unfortunately in medicine—rote learn a lot of information. But once we get them in there, we can teach them all the stuff at university which they have not had.

Dr Bruce—Melbourne University is considering putting them through a science degree first of all and then taking them on to medicine.

CHAIR—That is right: a graduate course.

Dr Bruce—Why would that be?

CHAIR—For the same reason—you can get kids with TERs in the mid-70s into science and then pick out the ones that have personal skills as well before you get them into a medical group.

Dr Bruce—You are right about medicine. Medicine is an area where rote learning is probably the major factor in getting in there and staying in there. I think they are interested in putting them through a science course because they are interested in developing their analytical and problem solving skills. That is a personal opinion, and I can quite happily accept—

CHAIR—The problem is that all of these kids have been studying like dogs doing subjects that, in their hearts, they do not want to do in order to get into medicine. Then, at the business end of the course, they feel as though they have spent their lives doing the wrong thing, and we are not matching community need.

Mr BARRESI—If we moved back to teaching intellectual skills and analytical problem solving, do you believe that would advantage boys?

Dr Bruce—I do not think we have ever taught intellectual skills as such. If you teach concepts—maybe Rod and I would have an argument over this—they can be learnt by rote. Would you agree with that?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Dr Bruce—Or they can be understood.

Mr SAWFORD—Not understood, I would argue. But they can be taught.

Dr Bruce—I agree, but I am saying that you can rote learn them. We have taught concepts in the past, and people have rote learnt them, gone on to tertiary education, where they continue to rote learn them, and I would say they are coming out the other end still having only rote learnt them. Or the students have, perhaps by the weight of the concepts they have had to learn by rote, developed a system that allows them to see them as a picture. If you have a jigsaw puzzle, you can come in from any part. You do not have to have the bit you want; you can work out from the next bit what should be there and, of course, that jogs your memory. Barry Jones is the person. He will answer a question, and he will tell you the picture all around it as well because that is the way he has learnt it.

Mr BARRESI—The Drs Rowe mentioned this morning that in VCE, verbal reasoning and communication skills are the strongest and that one of the reasons why boys do not do well in it are verbal reasoning and communication skills. So do we teach intellectual skills at the expense of verbal reasoning and communication skills, or is there some way we can carry both of them through?

Dr Bruce—You have to carry both of them through because there is no point having the intellectual skills and not being able to express them to other people. You have to carry them both through. If you have got the intellectual skills, then you have got the picture in your mind that you want to communicate. Then you need the language skills to be able to present that in a logical sequence so that people can follow. I did not achieve that today.

Mr BARRESI—Yet some would say that life skills such as communication and verbal reasoning are in the long run far more important to your continuing success in developing relationships—whether it be at work with your colleagues or expressing yourself—than anything else. Looking at my time in human resources for organisations, two people might be there who are equal in the technical aspects of the job, but the person who would fail would be the one that just could not manage the interpersonal aspects.

Dr Bruce—I am not making a judgment on interpersonal skills; I am making the point that communication has a system, and it has the ideas that you want to communicate. They are two separate things and they have to be brought together. That is the only argument I am trying to make. Interpersonal skills, as I see it, are something different. It is how you relate to other people. There may be an issue there of how you express your relationship to other people.

Mr SAWFORD—Following on from what Phil was saying, when people describe communication skills, they mean a whole range of things that do not necessarily mean communication skills: they mean interpersonal skills; they mean presentation skills. I thought your definition was in fact what communication skills are: you analyse a piece of information, you use the analysis to problem solve and you can effectively communicate that to other people. That is what communication skills are. To me that is what they mean; they might mean something else to someone else. Presentation skills are something completely different. It is a bit of an act, basically—the gift of the gab. It may not necessarily communicate anything. It may communicate that I have a good control of language and I can remember 'Nuclear Medicine 2' and I can repeat page 113 with a graph.

CHAIR—The newsreader versus the—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, the newsreader concept.

Dr Bruce—I would agree with you. But I think if you are going to effectively present something—it does not matter what it is—you have to have a clear image in your mind of what you want to present. It is like your teaching experience. If you went into a class not properly prepared—apart from the fact that you would be concerned that you were not properly prepared—the thing falls apart at some stage because you have not thought it through. You are telling a story—no matter what it is—even if it is interpersonal relationships. You are communicating with someone and you are communicating about something. You have to be clear in your mind as to what you are communicating about, otherwise it will fall apart. I keep coming back to the same point. There are two things: you have to have the analysis so that you know what you want to talk about, and you have to have the skills. I lump communication skills—written and oral—under the same heading as intellectual skills. They are all part of your software.

CHAIR—As someone representing a group of people who are accused of having neither communication skills nor intellectual skills, thank you very much, Dr Bruce, for giving us so much to think about. If you are not staying any longer, thank you for your participation. I appreciate it very much. If you have comments to make on anything you have heard in the last day or two, or anything else that comes forward, then please convey those to us.

Proceedings suspended from 3.01 p.m. to 3.14 p.m.

COUTTS, Mr Colin Raymond, Head of Junior School, Trinity Grammar School

EVANS, Dr Heather Marjorie, Coordinator of Teaching and Learning Strategies, Trinity Grammar School

CHAIR—I welcome Mr Colin Coutts and Dr Heather Evans from Trinity Grammar School. Would you give us an overview of the Trinity submission focusing on what you think are the most important issues? Then we will go into question and answer until 4.00 p.m.

Mr Coutts—Thank you very much. I am Head of the Junior School at Trinity, which means that I am responsible for the day-to-day administration of the junior school which has 330 boys, and an early learning centre of 60 boys and girls. I have been teaching for 34 years. I started teaching in the technical system, although having trained as a primary teacher. I taught for the first six years in the technical system in a number of schools and then for nine years at a private school. I went back to the department for a period of time and then subsequently have come back into the independent system. I then moved from secondary into a primary position. For the last 16 years I have been teaching as a primary teacher. Despite being head of the school I still teach a minimum of eight lessons a week and often 50 per cent of the timetabled lessons at the school. I will pass over to Heather.

Dr Evans—I am Coordinator of Teaching and Learning Strategies at Trinity Grammar, which means that I have the job of working with teachers to improve the quality of what goes on in their classrooms. It covers from the early learning centre through to year 12. I also teach chemistry and science in the secondary section. I have taught in an all girls school, co-ed schools, and all boys schools.

We have come here to talk about the positives of boys education. Although we acknowledge the research that people have done showing the poor attitudes of boys to schooling, we have found that at Trinity our programs seem to have minimised those attitudes. We think we have got a very successful program and we think we are doing a great job at teaching boys.

We are most proud of our leadership program. Our leadership starts off in the sandpits at the early learning centre and goes through to year 12, and then the Old Grammarians come back and assist us with our leadership program. That is probably the most outstanding thing that we do for the benefit of boys.

We have a very wide co-curricular program which incorporates the arts and music. One of our most effective and popular classes is cooking in year 10. We have waiting lists for that. Debating and all of the supposedly non-boyish things are very popular. There are no gender differences, boys just do everything.

We have a year 8 journey which we think is making a great deal of impact on improving the self-esteem of boys in year 8 and setting them up for the next step into years 9 and 10. Many boys seem to drop off at the end of year 8. We think we have got a program which consolidates the boys. We take them off campus for a week. We work with them for a week with consultants,

staff and old boys coming back. We have this program which gives them a journey for the rest of their school life.

We combine years 9 and 10 classes and there are 130 units the boys can choose from in order to make their pathway from year 8 through to year 11. In years 9 and 10 your classes have mixed age groups. One of our big skills is that we have the boys working with different age levels a lot. We have a buddy system in the primary system. We have year 9s going down and helping with grade 2s and 3s. We have year 10s with year 7s. We have year 11s teaching year 10s. We try as much as possible to have this interacting of the different age groups. We are now open for questions because our submission just puts that in a little bit more detail.

Mr SAWFORD—How long has Trinity existed?

Dr Evans—One hundred years.

Mr Coutts—I would like to add to what Heather said. Lots of schools have buddy programs. Eight or nine years ago I read quite a deal about it and then started researching a little bit more myself. I was aware of the fact that the senior school had a system where year 11s worked with year 8s and year 10s with year 7s. I extended that so that every boy in grade 6 had a buddy in prep or grade 1, and that every boy in grade 5 had a buddy in grade 2. Today we have our grade 3 boys even having a relationship with the children in the three-year olds and four-year-olds in kindergarten. The year 9 boys actually come down and do robotics with the grade 4s. The grade 4 kids cannot handle some of the materials. The grades 9s are sensational at doing it. When boys go away on camp, it is grade 4 and grade 6 with year 9 leaders.

Boys of about 14 often present as quite a problem in the secondary system in a lot of schools, but we have about 80 boys who have gone through a training program and really knock me down wanting to go on those camps or assisting with things like house sports and house athletics, and they take a very responsible position when they do these things. It is interesting: there is a spin-off onto self-image, that we were talking about before. Self-image is very important with boys. If you can boost that self-image, then a lot of the other things seem to get knocked over. We have tried—particularly in the junior school, but I am aware that it is the ethos of the school—to create an environment that is very warm and fuzzy and happy so that they all feel valued. I have also tried to select staff that are very warm towards boys. Boys in particular need a great deal of warmth and reassurance in nearly every subject they are approaching.

CHAIR—A number of people who have spoken to us have emphasised the importance of professional development for teachers. Your colleague the principal of Scotch College said to us yesterday that one of the most important things for him is to be able to choose the teachers that teach in the school. Is it fair to say that, if you have got enthusiastic, committed teachers, you are halfway there?

Dr Evans—I would say so, but you certainly have to PD the staff. If the staff are willing to see every student as an individual person—it does not matter about their gender—you are halfway there, and you have to love the teaching. So I think, yes—if the staff are enthusiastic and are willing to learn. At Trinity our ethos—it is certainly mine—is that learning is a lifelong

thing; you just continue to do it. If that is the ethos of the staff, then that becomes the ethos of the students. When we have old boys coming back, they double that up.

CHAIR—I realise that disciplinary programs are probably not something you feel comfortable talking about publicly, but all schools have kids—usually boys, it seems—who seem to be in trouble. How do you deal with that in your school? I presume the problem is no better or worse at your school than at any similar sort of school.

Mr Coutts—We participated in a survey about four or five years ago performed by the Austin Hospital. It was interesting. They compared 20 different schools. I cannot remember the name of the research, but I believe it was done by the head of Pulteney Grammar.

Dr Evans—Our system is that, as a classroom teacher, if you are concerned about a boy's wellbeing, you go and talk to one of the counsellors. We have three counsellors: two chaplains in the senior school and another one. We have quite a lot of them. Ordinary discipline for misbehaviour is dealt with in house—in your own room. If you cannot deal with it with a glare, or by changing the tactics of your teaching, that is a different problem. There is the discipline that is to do with day-to-day management, which would be done by changing the way you are teaching, changing the task, varying it. But if you are concerned about a student's wellbeing, then you talk to the counsellors. The counsellors have a regular meeting with the head of year, where these names come through. So we have form teachers and head of year, and the counsellors are out to the side, but there are regular meetings every 10 days of each of the year levels with the counsellors where they talk over the problem. Then strategies are put in place. The student is brought in to be spoken to and to try and sort out what the problem is and how one would work a program which is positive and moving in the right direction. From there, if there is major discipline, it then goes to the deputy head. Again, it is more finding out why and working out strategies.

Mr Coutts—You essentially have to provide support when boys do act out. Sometimes parents think that I have a magic switch under my desk and I will just turn all the teasing and bullying off. I am not saying that we do not have any teasing and bullying, but what I do say is that we try to put into place situations where there is a great deal of positive reinforcement. Once you start being negative towards boys, you actually crush their self-esteem. We are talking about, say, teasing and bullying, or what I would prefer to call 'assertive behaviour'. If you go back to prep, to the sandpit, the psychologists that I have been listening to over the last few years tell me that, when you get children who are assertive in prep, if they are not dealt with satisfactorily, if they are not more or less told that this behaviour is inappropriate or if you do not try and establish a culture where that sort of behaviour is inappropriate, it will just continue to fester away.

We have particularly gone out of our way to make sure that, in the junior school—I know it is transferred into the senior school as well—we very much reward good behaviour. Where you see bad behaviour, you give children a mild warning or something like that. You really cannot drop bricks on people; you have to be fairly soft when you do it. I speak to boys quite a lot, so I act in a counselling role on that point, but I expect class teachers to deal with any discipline that happens within their class by themselves. If they feel that they want to discuss it with me, they often will. I might even see the boy and go through it. Generally, it is really easy to find out what the issues are behind a lot of these problems. Sometimes they are familial problems, and

you then have to go and speak to the parents or whatever, because it is certainly a cooperative relationship among parents and schools and the boys.

I have a yellow smiley. It is just a piece of yellow cardboard with a green smiley face on it. The kids call them Mr Coutts's smilies. Grade 6 boys queue up at the door on Friday to get them, as do grade 2, 3 and 4 boys. Kids will say, 'I've had 17 of Mr Coutts's smilies,' and you think, 'Goodness gracious, it's a little smiley.' I do not want them ever to feel intimidated about coming into my office, and yet every boy at Trinity Junior School knows that there is a line in the sand. I think boys, in particular, do need to know about lines in the sand. They need to know about structure, certainly, but then you have to use it. I give parents an analogy when they come to me and ask, 'We're having trouble with John, what do you recommend?' I say, 'It's just like fishing: you let them run for a while, then you just wind them back and then you let them run for a while.' If need be, I will often talk to a boy with his parents there and the class teacher, and it is interesting. Sometimes, actually, it helps the boy but it also helps the parent, and then you talk about having a consistent approach at home and at school.

It is interesting. We do not have what I would call major problems, and when we did this thing with the Austin Hospital, I think Smee was head of Pulteney Grammar. He attributed the situation of a lot less bullying at years 8, 9, 10 and 11 to the leadership program, where kids do have an older buddy that they can talk to about it—not an older buddy that they can go to and ask, 'Look, can you deal with this guy?' but someone they can go to and work it through with. When I was in America in 1997, I went to a few situations where they have these children sitting under umbrellas in yards and kids go up and say, 'He's just teased me.' When it comes down to it, in resolving teasing, bullying and other situations, a lot of it has to be kid resolution. They have to learn it, but you have to actually give them a safety net and you have to give them means by which they can communicate it through their parents to you or through staff members, through their buddies or through somebody to somebody so it can be dealt with.

We have tried to set up a culture in the junior school where we reward a lot. We have a number of activities that involve boys working together from grade 3 to grade 6, or whatever, so that boys are always in situations where they are dealing with older or younger boys. Even where the preps and grade 1 play, boys from grade 6 go around there. I say, 'If there are more than five boys, don't go around there,' and they are around there actually to mentor the behaviour that takes place in prep 1. Funnily enough, if they say to the kids, 'Don't throw tanbark,' it often has a far better effect or impact than if I say, 'Don't throw tanbark.'

CHAIR—Your school is a prestigious school—it is in Kew; my electorate is a very similar sort of area—and I imagine that, predominantly but not universally, you are draining kids from high socioeconomic areas. Do you think the system that you have—your buddy system, your mentoring, your year 8 journey and so on—could it be applied just as easily in a low SES area in an independent or government school environment?

Dr Evans—Yes, I think so. It is unique only that we run it, but what we are espousing is not unique. In year 10 in what we call the Leppitt leaders training, which was just held last weekend, we had half the year 10s plus 30 year 11 boys as the trainers, plus a cohort of about 40 teachers and visiting old boys and parents. We have picked the eyes out of every leadership leaflet or booklet that has ever been done and we have this manual, but we just live the system. What we are doing is not anything to do with money.

The fact that we go off to our own school camp means money is involved. But it does not mean that you have to have a school camp in order to run this sort of program where you have skill share; the year 11 boys teach the year 10 boys, the year 10 boys teach the year 10 boys the skill, and then they go to the year 7 and 8 camp and teach them. So what we are doing is teaching. I was out in the forest two weeks ago and the year 10 boys were teaching the other year 10 boys the skills of navigation. My role at the back was simply to act as yet another critical friend. When the lesson was over—it is a five minute lesson on how to use the compass—the boys themselves would go through the positives of that lesson, point out the negatives to the boy who was teaching, the year 11 boy would give his comments, and then I would add my own—again a positive—just as a debrief. We do an awful lot of this critical friend debriefing in the leadership skills program. I do not think that is socioeconomic.

Mr Coutts—It is interesting. I have worked at four independent schools: Wesley, Melbourne Grammar, Hailebury and Trinity. Hailebury, in terms of the socioeconomic side, certainly has a far greater diversity of breadth of student than those other schools. I acknowledge that we certainly have resources that those other schools do not have. We use a video that was made by Moreland Primary School on the bullying and teasing side of things. They have had enormous success because, again, they have something that they persevere with. Ours might be a little bit different or might have factors that they do not include, but they have had enormous success with their program. I think it comes back again to what you were talking about. You have to have fairly enthusiastic, dedicated people who will get in behind this and just keep working it through. If it gets endemic enough, then you will actually get everybody to do it. It does not matter whether the child is at Trinity Grammar School, Moreland Primary School or Bentleigh West. If they feel valued enough and if they feel that they have some ownership in what is taking place and in the discussions, you can get changes in behaviour, even in boys who do not feel valued. We have had plenty of boys who have come in from state primary schools, parish schools or whatever with fairly big problems. If you genuinely work with them, you can turn them around.

CHAIR—Obviously, there was a point at which you implemented these various programs. Has it improved your school disciplinary programs, the academic outcomes? Are there things that you can measure and say, 'This is so much better now'?

Dr Evans—The leadership program has been going for 20 years. So, no, there has been no straight research. I have actually just started doing some research on boys' education because there has been very little research done on boys and how they learn. We are just starting. It will not be on the disciplinary aspect. We are doing some comparisons with Ruyton, which is our neighbouring girls school, on how boys learn and how girls learn. I can walk you through that, but that is different.

CHAIR—No, that is okay.

Dr Evans—It is interesting. We are setting up a grid. Each level 7 science and level 7 maths at both schools have decided to teach one unit. In year 7 science, we are going to teach a unit on classification. We have had a number of meetings. We have drawn up this large grid of multiple intelligences versus Bloom's taxonomy. We have a whole lot of activities that both schools are going to agree to have available. We are going to teach the unit with the boys and the girls being given the option of, say, having to score 50 points and having to go down Bloom. You will have

to go down the scale in order to acquire the 50 points. We are then going to draw a map. We are going to map these, so that will be research that will show us what we are interested in. If there is a difference between the tasks that the boys are choosing compared with the tasks that the girls are choosing, whether that selection process, which is happening naturally at level 7, is going to impede their ability to do certain subjects later on is what I would like to find out. That is one of the processes that we are beginning. As far as I can see, that sort of work has not been done. Then we will be able to make steps.

Mr SAWFORD—Regarding teaching and learning styles of girls, I think you said before, Heather, that you taught in an all girls school.

Dr Evans—Yes, I did.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe this is asking you to respond anecdotally, and maybe you could prepare something that is scientific, but from an anecdotal recall—

Dr Evans—They are different, they smell differently.

Mr SAWFORD—would you like to make some comment on the emphasis in terms of learning and teaching styles that are effective with boys and girls?

Dr Evans—I am just trying to work out whether my teaching style has changed. I do not know whether mine has because I have always tried to make it as interesting and as multilayered as I possibly could. The difference I noticed going from all girls to all boys was the smell of the after-shave and the bumping in the corridors. You lose track and you change. People say, 'You've changed in five years,' but I do not notice the change, so that is why I want to do this research so we can actually have some concrete statements. The Science Talent Search I used to run at the all girls, I ran it at co-eds and I run it at the boys. They do it the same; they probably do not like writing the essays as much, but last year they all wrote essays for me. No, I cannot pinpoint a difference. Certainly some of the research says that boys do learn differently, but I do not think it is absolutely concrete.

Mr Coutts—What do you think about the visual learning aspect of notebook computers?

Dr Evans—That improves the boys.

Mr Coutts—I have been talking to one of our year 12 literature teachers who has a combination of girls from Ruyton and boys from Trinity in her lit class—the VCE class—and she says that the boys are certainly far greater risk takers in what they will do with the software and things like that, and if they get a screen freeze or a variety of issues the girls will just bail out. We have notebook computers from grade 5 through to year 12 and we have four to six computers in each classroom from prep to year 4. I have seen an enormous change in the pattern. I show people around the school quite regularly—sometimes three different lots a day and when we go in and just hear the tapping of computer keyboards, people say, 'Gee, it's very quiet.' I think to myself, 'What did you actually expect them to be doing—throwing shoes across the room or something like that?' But I have noticed the change at year 5 now: kids come in and they just get absorbed straight away in using notebook computers. Certainly the access to those is another dimension for them, I suppose. But we do not just use them as word processors;

they are used for Excel spreadsheets, access database, Powerpoint presentations, all sorts of things. Seven years ago we were thinking we would just use them as word processors.

When I watch a boy in grade 5 who has only been at the school for four or five weeks and is giving a Powerpoint presentation, I cannot believe the impact for the other boys. The screen is up there, a great big monitor, and in the grade 5 or 6 classrooms the teacher is teaching through the monitor. They can have their own notebook connected up to it and they might be saying, 'Your Excel spreadsheet should look like this. I am in cell C or whatever.' I can go into that same room a little bit later and the person is using the blackboard, a more traditional method, but there is a change in the classroom set-up, from desks being in rows to being in blocks of four or five. The whole style of learning is far more active at a primary level than it was 20 years ago or even 10 years ago, when we used to be very passive. And we have cut our class sizes down, which I think is one of the key issues with boys.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your class size?

Mr Coutts—We have reduced our class size from an average of nearly 30 to an average of 20. Okay, we have got 24s in the grade 6 classes, but if you have taken six boys out of a grade 6 classroom it has freed up a hell of a lot of room by taking out six desks or tables. The prep classes—preps 1, 2 and 3—are varying from 18 to 20 or 21. Interestingly, if you get a little bit too far below that, you can get too small and you do not get any bounce in your class at all. With regard to boys in particular, if I get up here to walk around and drag this off the desk, it may just be an accident. Girls tend not to do that. When I was teaching at Melbourne Grammar, and it was co-ed, I had eight girls in each class of 30. They never presented any problems for us in terms of anything like that, but the boys were always knocking pencils and things off. But if you give them a little bit more room then, surprisingly, some of those problems disappear. We all know class size is a reasonable issue, but for boys it is actually a very important issue. I think teachers have to be a little bit dynamic in the way they use their classrooms and the way they set things up.

Dr Evans—And choice. I cannot give you anecdotal evidence because I am a science teacher. I think if you ask the English teachers you might get a difference, but being science it is just so active anyway when the girls do it activity based and the boys do it. Certainly, we use an intranet, which helps again. The aim of the secondary school intranet is to make it copy a primary school classroom. So a primary school classroom is beautifully set up always with seven or eight activities. They are just alive. They have always been like that. Traditional secondary classrooms are not like that. They can be quite cold and sterile. In the planning of our intranet we have mapped it out so that it should look like a primary classroom so that when you open up to whatever subject you are teaching you can have access to written material at different layers. You can go into visual stuff and you can go into all sorts of activities. It is only 12 months old but already it is making a huge difference in the way the teachers are thinking about it. We use the computers to teach concept maps and all those things. That makes us resource rich. In that respect we are ahead of a poorer school.

Mr SAWFORD—I will just follow up with one other question. There is a bit of feedback coming back that in terms of extensive use of information technology and computers in schools that boys have almost got to the stage where it is all blaze, they have had enough, they have done all this and they are starting to act out and demand the verbal—

Dr Evans—That is a teaching problem, not a technology program problem.

Mr SAWFORD—I agree with that, but those things are happening.

Dr Evans—They were probably happening with the pen.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, they probably were.

Dr Evans—The problem is not with the technology. Technology in the hands of the good teacher is a really useful tool; technology in the hands of a dull teacher is dull work. If it is dull on paper it will be dull on the computer. If you cannot get your teaching to be interesting enough and at the right levels to allow for the different learning styles, and if you only teach verbal stuff, then you are asking for trouble because a huge amount of your students are not going to be learning that way, and to assume that they are is to ask for disaster.

Mr SAWFORD—So if you are having problems in schools, you would be looking at the quality of the teaching. Is that correct?

Dr Evans—Absolutely. I think we have to look at how the material is being presented because the assumption is made—and it is made at all levels including lecturing at university—that you present the material the way you like to learn. We did in-services this year with the staff. I ran for 100 staff a little exercise that divided up your audio learning, your kinesthetic learning, and your visual. We had just a little task and it just divided up which one you were better in. What we tend to do is teach the way we like to learn. That is fine, but your students are not like that. I have been in this role 18 months because it was created specially. One of my roles is to really get learning styles as just an ordinary word that goes around our staffroom. For a secondary school, that is really something. It is a long journey. It is certainly not perfect but we are much more enlightened about the way we like to learn, and then you are able to say, 'My son or my daughter does not learn this way. Why am I teaching en masse the way I like to learn?' So, yes, if there is a problem you have to change the way the classroom is set up.

Mr SAWFORD—If you had a result in one of your classes, assuming you are teaching boys and girls, of a 15.2 differential, the first thing that you would look at would be the teaching. Is that correct?

Dr Evans—I would look at the way the material is being presented and the levels at which they are presenting it and the number of input points there are. If you are a global learner you need to have an overview of what is going on before you can begin to do something. For that sort of learning you must have some material which gives an overview. If you are a lock step learner, you need to have it put that way. If you like to listen, then you could have videos and things. I think you just have to broaden the type of learning. Every lesson cannot cater for everybody. I think that is just unrealistic. Over a unit of work you should be allowing for the majority of learners to make progress and then you should have resources available to support that.

Mr SAWFORD—I just wanted it on the record. Thank you.

Mr Coutts—One of the things to do with training of teachers too is that the number of training days that they are spending out in schools has been reduced by almost 50 per cent over the last 10 to 20 years, and so I think a lot of people are not necessarily getting enough experience in the right sorts of blocks.

I was on a committee with people at Melbourne University to try to change the way that they delivered their teacher training service to the schools. But they were so locked into a university set-up that they were not going to be as flexible as we would have liked. We tried to go for a compromise, and that worked a lot better. It was for people to be in a school on a more regular basis rather than in a school for a chunk of two weeks—they just get to grips with Trinity, for example, and their next teaching round might be at Galvin Park Secondary College for two weeks. It is quite a different environment and so there is not any continuity. There is a lot to do with teacher training that perhaps needs to be addressed by people further up, with input from tertiary, primary and secondary levels.

CHAIR—I cannot help but feel that Dr Kemp has asked us to look at the wrong thing. We should be looking at teacher education—undergraduate and postgraduate—and everything else that surrounds it.

Dr Evans—And you need to look at the morale of the teacher, too. To have an energetic, enthusiastic teacher, you have to have a happy teacher. If the system is not creating happiness, then you are asking for almost an impossibility.

CHAIR—Exactly.

Mr BARRESI—Mr Coutts, teachers are all-important in this process—we all agree with that. What are you paying your teachers in terms of salaries? In terms of the overall industry benchmarks, what percentile are they being paid? In the top 75 percentile?

Mr Coutts—Probably in the top 50 per cent, I imagine.

Mr BARRESI—What is your retention rate amongst teachers?

Mr Coutts—Our retention rate is very high, and I think that stability is needed. But I also think turnover is important, otherwise you tend to get a little bit of staleness. It is my belief that some organisational change is actually critical. When I started at the junior school, most of our staff were probably over 45. Now we have got a spread of staff from 25 through to, say, 55 or 56—which is me. It is important because you need young people with ideas, as well. We have introduced a couple of young people and mentored them with somebody so that they are teaching at grade 2 or 4 with an experienced teacher. Our starting rate might be a little bit higher than that of the department. We are certainly employing a graduate next year—often independent schools will not necessarily employ graduates. We will pair this person with one of our quite experienced teachers. Our retention rate is very good, but I also encourage people to move—not because I want to get rid of them but because I think that, for your own personal development, you need to work in several schools. I have been lucky. I have worked in a variety of schools, and I suspect that that may have been one of the reasons why I was fortunate enough to get the position that I now have.

Dr Evans—We also send teachers on exchange.

Mr BARRESI—To other independent schools?

Dr Evans—Yes, in England. At the moment we have a teacher from England, and one of our staff went over there for 12 months. He will come back.

Mr SAWFORD—You must be subsidising the one that went from Australia to England!

Mr Coutts—Or Canada, or the US. Our boys in year 9 and 10 spend time either in Germany as part of an exchange program with a German school, in Fulda, or the kids go to Seattle.

Dr Evans—They are all over the place.

Mr Coutts—There are a variety of places that they go to. I know some schools do this with a six-month or one-year exchange, but we have tried to have it so that they go for four to six weeks so that the kids get an international experience. They can also go up to the Northern Territory to spend time with an Aboriginal group for six weeks. These experiences have a massive impact on their lives and they really do notice those things.

Dr Evans—But we do have staff that have been there for over 30 years.

Mr BARRESI—So it is an active policy of the school to have that flexibility in terms of the background of the teachers and their experience? Where do you source your teachers from? Do they all come from independent schools?

Mr Coutts—No, they do not.

Dr Evans—I have just been involved in panels this week. Some come from private schools but quite a lot come from the ministry.

Mr Coutts—We were talking about this in the junior school staffroom the other day. I certainly did not go to an independent school. Actually we have got half, I would say; and half of the people that have been in independent schools have also been in Catholic schools.

Mr BARRESI—I would have thought that paying the 50 percentile was quite low for an independent school. I imagine you are talking about the 50 percentile level amongst independent schools?

Dr Evans—I do not understand your question. Are we in the top paid private—

Mr SAWFORD—Just tell us how much you pay your teachers.

Mr Coutts—We would be on the 94 percentile. I am sorry; I misinterpreted your question. I thought you were talking about staff in general.

Mr BARRESI—The way that salary structures are worked out is in terms of benchmarking against industry. Are you in the top 10 percentile?

Dr Evans—We just got another pay rise, which puts us level with 'like-minded independent schools'.

Mr Coutts—I know the school council likes to keep Trinity's salary structure within the top 10 per cent.

Mr BARRESI—So the attraction of coming to Trinity is salary? Or is there something else you are offering them?

Dr Evans—No, I do not think it is totally salary. Salary is one. I think the conditions are superb. Many of them come for our laptop program. They come because of that, and we are all radio linked, so the Internet is available anywhere. We do not have any cords, so we are at the cutting edge of this technological area. I think we just have excellent facilities and a superb headmaster, so people come. They say, 'I hear you've got so-and-so. Can we come?' It is stability. We are caring, I think.

Mr Coutts—I know it is not quite the same at the senior school, because there has certainly been a shortage of maths and science teachers at the moment when we have advertised secondary positions. But, two or three years ago, if I advertised a position in the junior school, I would get somewhere in the order of 250 to 300 applicants. Over the last couple of years—I think there is going to be a shortage of teachers very shortly—it has been dropping to about 70. We advertised a position about two months ago. There were about 75 applicants. Maybe 45 of those would have been people who are in the fourth year of their degree at the moment.

Mr BARRESI—You mentioned that you are likely to employ a graduate very soon. Could you take me through the typical career structure that that graduate would be facing at Trinity?

Dr Evans—We will do it one at a time, because it is slightly different in the secondary system. I have a fellow who is in his first year out this year in science. He was straight out of school, is now straight out of university and has come to us. They have a mentor, so somebody is chosen to be their mentor and to guide them. On the first three days of the year, there are meetings for staff. One of those days is totally an orientation day for new staff—no matter what age—and their mentors, where we run through a bit of the culture of the school, but there is a mentoring system that goes on throughout. When you get to report writing, they are assisted in doing that. Within 12 to 18 months, that person would probably be applying for some sort of position of authority. You can be an assistant head of year. There are lots of positions that you can get over and above your salary. Then heads of department are available, heads of year and housemasters. My job goes off to the side up there. In the career pathway you can move up to level 14, I think—I never take any notice. You can move up in increments. You can also get these extra jobs, which pay extra money on top of those.

Mr Coutts—I think it is slightly different in the primary section in that we probably do not have as many positions of responsibility, but we are actually looking at that at the moment. For example, there is a girl starting next year. I will just throw in, while I am thinking about it, that it is very important that we encourage more male teachers into primary education. How we do

that, I really do not know at the moment. But the girl who is starting next year is a fairly exciting prospect. She could, for example, in three or four years time look at applying for a position as coordinator of prep to year 2. She might also then want to be a curriculum coordinator or she could look at being on one of the various committees in the key learning areas. She might want to be head of the science group that is involved in the junior school. If she were to move initially into one of those, she could be head of the science or the maths key learning areas. Then she could go on to come to attention in terms of perhaps moving up to being a curriculum coordinator or whatever. Then she might even look for positions outside Trinity in a deputy's role, a curriculum role or one of those other areas. But it is interesting. We have the mentoring program as well and I think it is important.

My stepson is a fourth year teacher in the state system. He has had three one-year contracts. The second year he was out teaching he had a one-term contract. So essentially he has been paid for 10 months of the year for a long period of time. He is an enthusiastic boy, teaches art—which is interesting for a male—and he has just got a permanent position. He was telling me that when he went to the school he works in at the moment nobody did anything. On the first day he went into the art room it was an absolute bombshell. He did not know what he was supposed to do. He was head of graphics. He had not had any experience in being head of a subject area.

If somebody came into our school and had been out teaching for three or four years, or even five years, people would still walk them through the first part because each school is different and has its nuances, all those little things that you have to find out about. Even if you have been in a school for 10 years there are still things that you find out. I think that support, that safety net, be it for boys or for staff, is very important indeed. In the issue about male teachers we are very lucky. Probably half of the teachers who work in the junior school at Trinity are males. Some of them are five-star teachers and a couple of them are two-star teachers, and I am the aware of that. Female teachers in primary schools are generally all super teachers. Sometimes they can be a little hard on boys in particular and that is something that they have to be aware of and made aware of. You need male role models around in the primary school and certainly in a secondary school environment.

I see so many parents who bring their children in from the other systems that are available. Yesterday a lady had a boy who is coming into year 7 and a boy who is coming into year 4. So between the two of them they have been at school for nearly 12 years and have not had a male teacher. That is actually fairly important. They need to have those other male role models. I think that is fairly important particularly for boys.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the gender balance in your school in the junior and the secondary sections?

Mr Coutts—It is about 50-50 in the senior school.

Dr Evans—It is 60-40 in the junior school.

Mr Coutts—Trinity is pretty good compared to a number of the other boys' schools that I have worked at. Interestingly enough, over the time that I have been there they have had a female head of science and a female head of English. A lot of the heads of faculties are female. That is actually something that is making quite a clear statement, I think, to the boys, also.

Ms GILLARD—I wanted to ask about the gender balance but it has been answered.

Dr Evans—It is not 50-50.

Mr BARRESI—Of those applicants for positions, what percentage would come from the government school system?

Mr Coutts—I would say 60 to 70 per cent.

Mr BARTLETT—Can you give us any indication as to why?

Mr Coutts—In the positions that we just advertised?

Mr BARTLETT—No, as to why you have got so many from the public system.

Mr Coutts—Just recently we had nine interviews and it finished up that there were two positions because one of the girls was going on maternity leave. We interviewed two very experienced teachers who have certainly been teaching prep themselves for the last 10 years. Neither of them can get out of the prep class in the schools that they are at because the principals know they are good teachers. But these people need a break from teaching prep. Teaching prep is very demanding, a lot more demanding than teaching grade 6. Honestly, they were tired and all they do is grumble. I find that when I interview people and try to get them to talk about the positive side of things, they go back and say, 'I am on this committee and I have got to be the occupational health and safety person and if we do not do the rubbish bins—' It just goes on and on and on and you think, 'I do not want to hear about this; I want to hear about you.' Instead of them elaborating on some of the things that they do, they grumble.

The three ladies that we interviewed were all in their mid-40s and I was looking to get an experienced teacher to replace an experienced teacher. They were all grumbling about what they have to do. The lady that we have teaching prep came across from a nearby primary school at the end of last year and she was just saying to me last night, 'Thank goodness we do not have all these meetings.' Actually I think they are being flogged with meetings at lunch time, after school. One of the principal reasons you are at a school is to teach children and you need to be fresh for that. I think there has been a lot of curriculum change, particularly in the Victorian system over the last few years, but I think we have been able to do all the curriculum documentation and address the issues without having meetings every night. I think people need to be fresh to do the job that they are there to do.

Dr Evans—I think two out of the three that I interviewed this week were from government schools.

Mr BARTLETT—I am interested, Dr Evans, in the unit system. Could you perhaps elaborate on that? I think you said it operates in years 9 and 10?

Dr Evans—Yes. Every faculty puts up a series of subjects. So in science I think we offer 20 science units that we could teach. I offer one which is preparation for chemistry at VCE level so it is a slightly modified year 11 course available to years 9 and 10, but there are three other chemistry ones. So each faculty head puts up a number of choices and then they are put on this

huge grid and the boys are given certain rules. I think I put in the submission the basic rules—they have got to do so many sciences and so many of the other different subjects. First aid is one of the compulsory subjects. There is no choice; every boy in year 9 does one term of first aid and comes out with a qualification in first aid. That is the only compulsory subject.

Mr BARTLETT—It includes English, maths and the whole lot.

Dr Evans—Absolutely the whole lot. The English is divided up and they do it in a slightly different way. They put their options forward and some of those options are based on skill level. For half the year you might be in the reading group that has problems, so that you improve your reading within a group, and in the second half of the year you would choose another subject—it would be an English subject, but it would be with a different grouping of people. Basically, every six months or every semester you are in a different subject, but during the day you may never be with the same peer group for two lessons in a row.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you find, for instance, that boys with reading problems would volunteer to go into those?

Dr Evans—They are, because that is where they are choosing the books that they would like to read—that is one of the benefits.

Mr BARTLETT—But there is no compulsion to do some reading at all?

Dr Evans—Everybody would do reading.

Mr BARTLETT—Everybody would?

Dr Evans—Absolutely. Reading is not a problem for us; our library just booms.

Mr BARTLETT—Has there been any measured impact on the academic performance at both ends of the spectrum—the slower and the better students?

Dr Evans—Our marks have not deteriorated in year 12. Certainly, anecdotally, it is a much happier school to be in—you have chosen the science that you want to do or, if you only want to do three sciences over year 9 and 10, that is fine, and if you really love geography, you can do more of that. It has given a huge amount of flexibility, but it is done with guidance. There is a booklet set up for year 9 and 10, the parents and the year level coordinators. The mixing of the two year levels has been wonderful; to have year 9 and 10 boys in the same room has been a really interesting experience.

Mr BARTLETT—But there has been no discernible measured impact on academic performance?

Dr Evans—No discernible impact.

Mr BARTLETT—And no greater or lesser ease of transition into year 11?

Dr Evans—No. It is probably easier because there is some—

Mr BARTLETT—Flexibility.

Dr Evans—Yes, we have targeted a few. If you want to do chemistry, for instance, I strongly recommend that you do my chemistry at year 10, but you can choose a lower, more general interest chemistry as well. There are some subjects that are clearly designated as excellent preparations for VCE and then there are others that are purely interest level subjects. You can study the origins of the earth. It is teacher dependent on what they want to learn because we are not constrained by CSFs, either, so that helps.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for providing us with a submission and giving us such a great insight into the way you run the school. It is obviously something to be commended. If you have got any comments on anything that you see or hear coming out of this inquiry, please let us know.

[4.15 p.m.]

KIMBER, Mr Ross, Assistant General Manager, School Programs and Student Welfare Division, Office of Schools, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victorian Government

STEWART, Ms Jane Shirley, Manager, Cross Curriculum Centre, School Programs and Student Welfare Division, Office of Schools, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victorian Government

CHAIR—I welcome the Victorian government Department of Education, Employment and Training. Would you give us an overview of how the Victorian government sees this issue and then we will discuss it up to and including 4.45 p.m. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Kimber—I am the Acting General Manager of the Schools Programs and Student Welfare Division, in which our gender equity area is located. With me is Jane Stewart, who has particular responsibility for managing the immediate programs relating to gender equity issues, among her other responsibilities.

At the outset I need to indicate that the submission we are putting before the inquiry is still to be signed off at the Premier's level. The processes are being followed in respect of the department itself, and we are now looking to have our submission go to the Premier for final sign-off. We do have drafts of it here that we would be happy to put in front of people at this inquiry, but it would be on the understanding that it is yet to be fully signed off by the Premier's office.

CHAIR—As much as we would like to see it, I think it is probably in your interests and ours that you wait until the Premier has approved it. I must say that it does seem unusual, but that is life.

Mr Kimber—That is fine. We can talk to it and the key issues that relate to it. I will give some brief context and then Jane and I together will be able to talk through a number of the issues that it raises. Within Victoria at the moment two major ministerial reviews have been undertaken. One of those relates to *Public education: the next generation*, a report that was brought down in the last little while. Earlier this week, the Premier and the Minister for Education made statements about the directions that would flow out of those reviews, in particular the one relating to the *Public education: the next generation* report. That is the context for Victoria in respect of this issue.

We also have the context of the national gender equity framework, which is an important one for us. A number of research reports have been generated, which we have used as the basis for looking significantly at issues that relate to the education of boys, particularly in the context of whole school approaches. As well as that, data has been gathered from the board of studies on student achievement in the various subjects that relate to our Victorian certificate of education. Increasingly, we are collecting data that impact on our view of the way in which students are

performing across the board at primary and secondary levels. We have also been in contact and worked closely with a significant number of schools within our system to look at current practices that relate to the education of boys within the context of a general policy implementation framework that has as its basis the fact that we need to ensure that all students succeed in their schooling. There are issues of student performance, student retention and, increasingly, issues to do with teaching and learning. I will come back to those in a little while.

In those main areas, we see some significant issues that we believe are important for this inquiry. The submission that we have compiled addresses, in particular, issues that have been flagged under the gender equity framework. A number of issues relate to that, and it also certainly relates to research that has been undertaken and the results of that research. In particular, our submission also addresses a range of programs for schools, programs that are in place within our department and that pick up on issues to do with success for all the students within our system. All of that has led to the recommendations that we will put before the inquiry.

The work that we have undertaken leads us to the view that we do have a significant issue in relation to the education of boys within the school system. Through the research, we have identified, in particular, a number of key issues that indicate that there are particular groups of boys—and indeed girls—who require specialist assistance, intervention and exposure to a range of teaching and learning situations that will enable them to have their particular needs met. In relation to the evidence that we have collected—and I will come back to that in a little while—we certainly believe that there are specific issues that relate to teacher training and to the professional development and training of teachers who are currently within the service. Particularly, we see that there are important implications for teaching practice and the opportunities for learning that need to be in place within a classroom. We see particular issues related to curriculum content, and increasingly we see that there is a need to address issues in relation to school organisation.

We have been particularly interested in the areas that have been identified nationally in respect of the distinction made between boys' education and girls' education. What we are concerned about is that we do not see that there is such a clear-cut, binary split between boys' education and girls' education. All the work that we have been engaged in would lead us to the view that boys should not be seen as competing victims, and this is an important issue that has come out of the national work. We believe that there needs to be a considerable amount of research done in that area and in other areas.

The performance of boys is one area that we are collecting more and more evidence about—that is, their actual academic performance. We are particularly interested in looking underneath the issue of boys' performance, student performance as a whole, and looking at the key factors that impact on that performance. Preliminary work that we have undertaken would indicate to us that the overall performance of boys is not as good as the data that comes from girls. So, relatively speaking, boys in general seem to be underachieving against the full cohort of girls. But what we also know from the data that we have got is that the range of performance for boys and girls is about the same. We recognise that within the full cohort of boys there are particular groups of boys who would require specialist forms of assistance and intervention. We have also identified that within the girls' cohort there would be a similar requirement. We believe that, in relation to that, there is a significant degree of complexity in the issue of boys' education.

We do not see that there are any simple answers that can be given in respect of boys' education. We cannot generalise between one group of boys and the full cohort of boys. We believe that, as we collect more and more data and as we are getting work from schools in this area through monitoring our triennial reviews, we are now in a better position—although not yet to an end point by any stretch of the imagination—to identify the areas where we believe further work would be necessary in relation to teasing out the key issues that impact on boys' education. There are high performing boys. We have indications from our VCE data that there are significant numbers of high performing boys in VCE subjects. That is shown through the data that we collect in relation to the VCE Premier's Awards in this state, which is information that is available. There are high performing girls but we recognise that in many instances the high performing boys seem to be more in evidence in the top 10 in our VCE subjects than girls. All that is indicating is that the range of boys' and girls' performance is about the same, although we recognise that there are more boys at that very high level of many of our VCE subjects.

We believe that a significant amount of work needs to be done on a research base at a Commonwealth level. We recognise that there is still an enormous amount of work to be done in this area. We believe that we are only now beginning to start the process of identifying the key issues in relation to boys. We believe that, in the areas of literacy, school retention, in terms of the behaviour of particular groups of boys, and in the area of subject choice, we need to do far more work that spans the variables in relation to impact on student performance, achievement and retention rates, alongside the gender variable. For example, issues to do with socioeconomic status and cultural and linguistic diversity are key issues, we believe, alongside gender in relation to the performance of boys within our system. We believe that we need to do far more work in that particular area.

In particular, we believe that significant work needs to be done at the classroom level in respect of boys' education. We believe that there is insufficient evidence and data at this time for us to be conclusive about the culture that exists within classrooms. We believe that the teaching practices of teachers need to be looked at and also that the learning environment for boys and girls needs to be looked at carefully. We need to see whether there is a significant mismatch between the teaching practices of teachers and the learning styles of students. We believe that, in a national context, coming out of work of this kind related to this inquiry, there needs to be a significant national effort in relation to research. There needs to be a fully thought through gender equity strategy that needs to take into account the research, the data that comes from such research and the flow-on from that research in terms of key things that then need to be done. We would argue quite strongly from the Victorian point of view that a cooperative and collaborative effort between states and territories, in the context of a Commonwealth declared priority, would be the way to go forward in respect of that.

We believe that out of all of that ought to come work that would represent a balanced approach to boys' education that would certainly address the needs of particular groups of boys. Alongside that, there would probably need to be work that would relate to particular groups of girls. We would prefer to see that the issue of boys' education is addressed in the context of a holistic approach to the education of all students and that the research should therefore be carefully designed to pick up on the key variables that relate to success at school in terms of where students go beyond school and the options they have. We would not see a simplistic or simple view in relation to boys' education as being in the best interests of boys and girls

because we see the necessity for a significantly thought through strategy in this area. We acknowledge that there is deep feeling within the community and we believe that, as part of that strategy, there needs to be a mechanism or series of mechanisms that enable that feeling within the community to be tapped into and brought to bear on any outcomes in relation to strategic thinking about this area.

Ultimately, through a longitudinal study, we believe significant issues would be addressed that would lead to directions that could then be taken at a national level, but recognising that collaboration and cooperation between the states and territories ought to be a significant part of that. The reason for suggesting that is that we need to be able to harness the research and work that is currently in place around the state and we need to be able to synthesise the thinking from all those particular research efforts, with a clear focus on pointers to the way we should go. In a nutshell, that is the approach that we are suggesting. We also believe that there are particular issues that we need to pick up on in relation to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds—for example, refugees. Quite clearly in our indicative work there are issues that need to be addressed in relation to boys and the cultural backgrounds they bring with them when they have come to Australia and find themselves in a different cultural environment in which their behaviours may need to be looked at and worked through.

We believe there are no simple answers to this very complex set of issues. The research that we have looked at indicates that there are no simple solutions. We need to be clear, though, about a research base, a development base, that can take us to a point where, nationally, we can address this problem.

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—Thank you, Ross. Jane, do you want to add anything?

Ms Stewart—No, I think Ross has covered most of it, except to say that in looking at boys education and how well they do at school in subjects, which Ross talked about, we are also looking at what happens to boys beyond school and how well schools are equipping them for their life beyond school. So there is that general context as well.

ACTING CHAIR—I should just explain that Brendan has had to go and do a radio interview but he will be back in a moment. I will start off with a couple of general questions. We are at the very beginning of this inquiry—this is only the second city where we have conducted some public hearings. In Canberra, at the first public hearing, the Commonwealth department provided us with some information that related to New South Wales but they made some generalisations about the rest of Australia, which was similar. That information was that, over a range of attributes in New South Wales prior to 1980, the differentials between boys' and girls' achievements averaged about 0.6, so it was less than one percentage point—in other words, they were very much the same. That has changed in the last 20 years, and I suppose there is a legitimate question to be asked: why has that changed? It seems from the small number of witnesses that we have had thus far that there is a concentration by some on the view that if the relationship between a teacher and a child is at fault somewhere, or there is poor teaching or whatever, you have got a big problem.

There is also another point of view that I find a bit hard to fathom; there is almost a sense of denial that there is a problem. In other words, there is a denial that those differentials are there and it seems that for 20 years people have not wanted to do very much about it. I find that a bit

hard to accept. Ross, you gave an example too when you said that we have had 20 years, rightfully, looking at some of the ways in which girls were disadvantaged in schools. We have done this for over 25 years, quite rightfully. Why would anyone be embarrassed or feel intimidated by looking at this? I do not believe in feminist conspiracies, and I do not think anybody on this panel does—even though we have had that information presented to us. What we are concerned about is that if those differentials are there, they ought to be addressed, and if that means some affirmative action for boys education, so be it. What is the problem with that? But it seems that, even in your context, you were very defensive about having any particular programs for boys. Yet the evidence says that the differentials are there.

I agree with your statement that we should be advantaging all students—that is basically the name of the game if you are in teaching. If there is a problem in teaching, it is because of inadequate teaching. It may be that there are some things that have happened over the last 20 years that plausibly explain what has happened—not as a conspiracy, but just as a description of what has occurred. Lots of things have happened in education over the last 100 years—some of them good, some of them bad. But when there have been mistakes, it has taken a long time to identify the mistakes and do something about them. There seems to me to be a sense of denial in accepting that we have a problem with boys education. Yet every submission that we have had, bar one, says that there is a problem—we have not got yours yet. That is a long rambling set of comments; would you like to respond to that?

Mr Kimber—I will start and perhaps Jane can pick up on a few possible case studies, for example, that I think would indicate to us—and hopefully to you—that we do not regard this as insignificant issue.

You have used the word 'problem'. I guess it is synonymous with 'It is a matter of serious concern for us'. We have done a significant amount of work identifying with particular schools where they believe that issues to do with boys education have been clearly identified, put up front and recognised, and where there has been a serious attempt at a whole-school level to address the issues. I want to make that point at the start—that all the work that we have looked at in respect of what schools are doing shows that the issue of boys education needs to be tackled at a whole-school level. To tackle it at a one-teacher level or one-faculty level within the school does not get us very far. In fact, it is a systemic issue within schools and needs to be recognised as a systemic issue within schools. We do have a range of schools that have quite clearly not been in any form of denial at all, but have been very up front in indicating that this is an issue. If you would like to hear a bit of that stuff, it might be worth while for Jane to elaborate on it.

Ms Stewart—One document that I brought to give you, if you are interested, is the project report, *Working with boys*, which summarises a range of case studies of schools that have set up specific programs to work with boys. But I think what you were picking up when you implied that there was a defensiveness about identifying that there is a problem—

ACTING CHAIR—I said 'denial'. It was not defensive—absolute denial.

Ms Stewart—You were making some comment about what Ross was saying about a defensiveness. I think what Ross was saying—which I did not read as defensive—was that, yes, there is an issue, but it is not a simplistic issue. If you just say, 'Boys aren't doing as well in

these subjects' and take that in isolation from all the other things that are happening, and that should happen, for boys in school, and respond in a knee-jerk way to that, then what you will have is a simplistic solution, not a solution that perhaps could be as far reaching as we would like it to be.

When we look at these issues we like to take on board a whole range of factors: boys' enjoyment of school; the difference between their achievement and their potential, which we are starting to get some information on; what happens to boys after school; and what happens to boys who leave school early. There is a whole range of factors. We are beginning to get a picture, and we do not want to oversimplify that picture because it is complex. The work that we have done in the education of girls area over the last 20-odd years and in the gender equity area in general has provided a lot of information which needs to be built on and incorporated, so that we do not make some of the perhaps simplistic mistakes in looking at boys' education that we made in trying to address girls' education. That would be another aspect of it.

Schools that have had success in working with boys have, as Ross said, taken a whole school approach. They have looked at a range of issues across the school, they have got the support of their staff and they have worked on programs that are integrated into the way the whole school operates, not just the 'let's do something about getting more boys to read more books' way of addressing literacy issues, for example. We are saying that it is a complex issue and therefore we need to have a multifaceted approach, not a simplistic approach, in addressing it. We do not feel that all the data is in yet, nor has it been completely analysed. Collecting data does not necessarily mean that you have analysed it accurately, and we want to look at the way that data is actually being interpreted. Again, in the submission, which you do not have, we looked at a whole range of data that has been collected and looked at the ways that people are interpreting it. We feel that it is better to be well informed before we proceed with a strategy that in hindsight might seem simplistic and not to have addressed the issues.

Mr Kimber—I am probably feeding back and I am not sure whether I am going to be right, but if you are saying that we would be reluctant to take action on any issue that we identify, I think the reverse. We have a significant commitment within the system to continuous improvement. We have a significant commitment to the fact that intervention is a necessary part of the way we ought to construct our programs for students and that that intervention could be, and often will be, at an individual level for a particular student but that it also can be and should be directed at a particular cohort of students who require assistance.

Ultimately, we take the view that, in constructing programs within schools, you need to be clear about the need for all students to succeed, there needs to be a situation where appropriate targets for achievement are in place and that there needs to be regular monitoring and evaluation of where students are in a learning continuum. Increasingly, in Victoria's view, we will be taking up the issues of social competence and, within that area, the issue of particular groups of boys or individuals will be looked at. I could probably go around another range of issues there. But we are not, in any way, shape or form, resiling from the importance of action where there is a clearly identified problem, issue, concern or area for development, whether at an individual, group or full cohort level.

Mr BARRESI—Mr Kimber, we have heard from a number of witnesses yesterday and today about some of the problems and differentials between boys and girls. I am pleased to see that

you agree that there is an issue there and that, in resolving it, we ought not to address one issue to the detriment of another. What came across very strongly from the evidence—apart from the effectiveness of teacher and professional development—is the importance of curriculum design and curriculum structure and the fact that boys probably have a greater chance of learning if it is problem solving or analysis based teaching, whereas girls do if it is verbal reasoning and communications based teaching.

The private schools tell us that one of the advantages they have is flexibility; they have the flexibility to be able to design the curriculum and respond to the various needs of their students. How prepared is the bureaucracy to allow government schools to have that same level of flexibility to allow the teachers at the grassroots, and the principals, to be able to respond to the needs of the various cohorts within their education system? Or are we trying to come up with a solution which is so empirically based at a departmental level that it is going to be one size fits all?

Mr Kimber—No. Underpinning that is the notion of the homogenisation of curriculum design and implementation and teacher behaviour. I say quite categorically that our commitment in Victoria is to meeting the needs of individual students and then aggregating up from the needs of individual students to small groups of students or cohorts of students—looking at whole groups of students from that point of view.

Our curriculum base in Victoria is the curriculum and standards framework. That framework is a representation of essential learnings in eight key learning areas, expressed at a higher level in terms of learning outcomes in particular parts of each subject or key learning area. The responsibility of schools is to design the most appropriate way to deliver those outcomes to students. All of the work we have done in recent years, particularly this year, has been to generate a range of learning activities that would enable teachers to operate creatively and smartly within the classroom, picking up on the individual needs of students. For example, last week we launched a product called 'Curriculum at work', which is in CD-ROM format, and we have delivered it to every teacher in the state—every teacher now has their own personalised copy of it. The product presents learning activities, assessment ideas and resources for all key learning areas across the compulsory years of schooling; it is a very significant advance for us. Those materials differentiate the needs of students. We have built into those materials the fact that you need to design activities that will pick up on the individual needs of students. Maybe Jane could pick up on the issue you raised initially about the different kinds of learning style, which I think was implicit. Would you like us to do that?

Mr BARRESI—Yes. Could you also address the flexibility to be able to adopt those different styles.

Ms Stewart—I think the department's approach is the exact opposite of what you are saying. What we are trying to do is encourage that. One of the areas I am responsible for is the education of gifted students. Certainly within that area, which is not limited to boys or girls, our work with teachers is to enhance their understanding of the ways in which students learn and to support them in being flexible in the way they teach so that they do not just teach with a particular chalk and talk, or whatever teaching style, but understand that different kids are going to learn differently. It might mean that they give the kids the opportunity to move around the

classroom so that they are not sitting all day. I am sure you know from today that after a while it is not so easy to take information in.

We are very concerned about that, and that goes across a whole range of areas. We have a very big research and practice strategy, which is the middle years of schooling strategy, looking particularly at young adolescents. Clearly, the sorts of things you are referring to with boys' education are paramount in that research. Again, we just do not feel like all the information is in yet, not that it ever will be. This a school based project; it is not a central thing being put on schools. We are learning from what schools are saying works in the middle years, and that is then being developed and taken out to other schools by the teachers involved in that research. It focuses on literacy, on thinking skills and on the engagement of students—the whole issue of what gets kids excited about school and makes them want to learn.

Mr BARRESI—You made the statement once again just then that you do not think you have all the evidence in yet. What time frame are you giving yourself? There seems to be quite a lot of evidence out there already. What are you waiting for in terms of evidence?

Ms Stewart—I do not think it is a stop-start thing. In my experience, education is cyclical. As you gain more information you enhance and improve the way you operate, whether it be as a teacher or as a central bureaucrat, and then you learn from that. We have enough information to say that we have to do something about the middle years; we need to have a really serious action research project on that—that is happening. From that we are learning more. So it is an evolution.

Mr Kimber—The point about evidence coming in is that in Victoria we have not been engaged in the collection of aggregated data from schools with respect to student performance. It is only in the last four or five years that, because we have a standardised curriculum framework for schools, we are now able to collect data from all schools for all years about the performance of our students. That is a critical factor for us. We are now in a position where we can begin serious analysis of that trend data over those years and then lead into the serious questions which need to be asked about what that analysis might be telling us.

Mr BARRESI—The recent research that was released in Victoria regarding the retention of boys in schools in the northern and western suburbs and also along the southern bay-side suburbs seemed to indicate that there is some sort of causal link with the socioeconomic status of the environment that schools are operating in. What is the department's view on this? We have heard some conflicting evidence about the effect of the SES on achievement levels.

Mr Kimber—That data has certainly been quoted in the context of the review in Victoria that has been headed up by Peter Kirby in relation to post-compulsory years of schooling. What has come out of that particular report indicates that there now needs to be quite specific work done at a local level to ensure that the pathways students take are clear from a student perspective, that they should be in the context of full knowledge and understanding of appropriate career or post-school options for students. With the announcement of Minister Kosky and the Premier earlier this week that local learning and employment networks will be established across the state—15 of them within the next year—we need to focus very much on tracking and monitoring students as they progress through the post-compulsory years and move within a

TAFE context or a continuing training context. The issue that you raise is very serious and has now prompted government to action in respect of how students can best be supported.

CHAIR—I have been on this case now for only a few weeks. We finished an inquiry into employee share plans; concurrently we ran another one on mature age unemployment. I have no background in education, but I have to say—and I know what you are doing is a constant feedback loop—that a fairly disturbing picture is emerging already, as far as I can see, not so much only in how boys compare with girls but also as to where boys were even only a decade ago.

At least here in Victoria, as you know with your literacy benchmarking and that 7.3 per cent differential, obviously there are some boys who are doing extremely well. It is just ridiculous to generalise too much. You then have your retention rate differential and a number of other indicators that suggest that boys are doing quite poorly.

The other thing that is emerging from what I can see is the problems with teachers, especially in the government system. There seems to be a problem with the sort of people who are going into teaching, the sorts of expectations that they have, the kind of educational levels that are required and the undergraduate training that they are getting before they go into teaching. There are teachers going into schools where they do not really want to be and there is a problem with a career path. There is the perennial problem of inadequate payment and working conditions and principals that cannot decide who is going to teach in the school and who cannot. I think Dr Rowe earlier today referred to it as the 'rubber on the road' stuff. Professional development seems to be another thematic issue that is emerging. These seem to be the sorts of things that require fairly significant attention. If you have a gender equity unit going there, which is great—nothing should be done in any way to disrupt the progress that girls are making—there seems to be a very serious problem emerging with boys.

Mr Kimber—The issue of a gender equity unit is a very important one to us and it is not a unit that relates to girls' education. It is important to say that that gender equity unit is addressing boys' education and girls' education.

The whole issue of teacher training, pre-service training, in-service training, the standards that teachers exhibit as they come into the system and as they move through the system, is a significant one. It is for that very reason the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Victorian Institute of Teaching has been established. There are key issues that that committee is addressing, accreditation and certification in relation to teachers and courses. The big one that is critical to the work of that committee is the standards that need to relate to the teaching profession, and those standards in relation to the teaching profession are now being built into the agreement in respect of the latest award for teachers in this state. The issue of standards and the fact that teachers need to meet certain standards before they can progress on a pay scale is something that is new and different in this state.

That is through agreement with unions, the employer, and so on. That is a fairly landmark decision that has been made in Victoria. That will then provide the impetus for our tertiary sector in relation to teacher training courses. We are dealing with that issue. But that Ministerial Advisory Committee is in its interim form, working towards its full establishment in April of next year.

CHAIR—Going back to the introductory comments you made about the submission, am I right in believing that there is going to be some sort of change in policy in Victoria? Is that why it has to go to the top end of the government?

Mr Kimber—No, it is simply a matter of a final sign-off, as I indicated.

Ms Stewart—It is a government submission so the Premier signs off on it—that is all.

Mr SAWFORD—I just want to raise the resources question, the one that no government department ever wants to raise—governments of either persuasions, state or federal. In the last 20 years resources as a per capita basis of GDP have fallen alarmingly in education in this country, and governments of all persuasions, state and federal, have contributed to that. They have administered it; that has happened.

We used to have in the states sectoral administration of education. In South Australia there was an autonomous junior primary unit, an autonomous primary unit, an autonomous technical school unit. They competed with each other and they had various initiatives. That has all been amalgamated into basically one department. A whole range of things has happened over the last 20 years. Teacher training has changed dramatically. The age profile of teachers is now probably my age, 56, isn't it? I know they keep saying 48 but I think they are my age, unfortunately, because we were the peak group.

CHAIR—It was the top—

Mr SAWFORD—The top group, yes. A lot of changes have happened and those things must have impacted on what happens in schools. They always have. I do not see anyone addressing those issues. If you do not know where you have been—and in education this is unfortunately too often true—you will not know where you are and there is no bloody way you will know where you are going. That is a pretty apt description of education in Australia in the last 20 years for whole ranges of people—the profession, the union, the community, the media; you can put everybody into all of this—and I am not into allocating blame. There have been some deficits that have occurred in the last 25 years. We are dealing with one. I would prefer if we were dealing with a more generalised topic rather than the education of boys, but that is the brief we have got. Those great changes that have occurred do not seem to be acknowledged or understood. Am I shooting my mouth off, or is that an accurate statement?

Mr Kimber—There is an enormous number of issues in what you have just said. If there is one central theme that has run through the development in Victorian government school education over the last 20 years it is a significant transfer of responsibility to schools for their own management.

Mr SAWFORD—This is the state politicians. The problem is having to wear the blame.

Mr Kimber—I need to go on and say, though, particularly with this current government, there is a strong and overt commitment—publicly stated through the *Public education: the next generation* report and the words of the Premier earlier this week—for that system to be a connected system. Self-managing schools need to operate within a state-wide framework that is

characterised by significant resource allocation and in respect of which there is an accountability framework that schools must be involved in with their school councils.

Mr SAWFORD—Every government department all over the world that has gone into self-management has reduced funding overall for education. You point to one example where that has not occurred. You cannot.

Mr Kimber—I do not think I am in a position to comment on that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is what has happened. It is a way governments have used to reduce their education expenditure. It is the same in France, Germany, parts of Scandinavia, the UK, the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

Mr Kimber—I do not think I am in a position to comment on that.

Mr SAWFORD—You ought to be. You are in the department.

Mr Kimber—I am attempting to say that—

Mr SAWFORD—You should know that information. I know you have to represent a government department, I understand that imposes limitations, but you should know that information.

Mr Kimber—If there is a question on notice that we could provide information on for you, I would be happy to follow that through.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay, but you made the point that governments are pushing self-management of schools.

Mr Kimber—No, I am saying that a constant theme of education here in Victoria over the last 20 years, through successive governments, is towards that, but within a state-wide framework where there is a clear accountability framework, and that schools cannot operate as islands. They need to be accountable; they are accountable to their local communities and back to government.

Mr SAWFORD—But there is a resource dividend attached to that, isn't there?

Mr Kimber—There is a resource allocation that matches—

Mr SAWFORD—Which has been reducing for 20 years.

Mr Kimber—I do not have that information.

Mr BARRESI—We have been told that Scandinavian schools were pretty good today.

Mr SAWFORD—Sweden, maybe—they spend a lot of money. They do not spend a lot of money in Denmark or Norway.

CHAIR—It is probably hard enough looking after Victoria, let alone the Norwegians. Thanks for coming. I do understand the way the system works and why you are not able to get a submission to us at the moment, but we would appreciate it if you could send a copy as soon as it is signed off.

Mr Kimber—We will get that through to you as soon as we possibly can.

CHAIR—I wish you well with the gender equity program in trying to address the problems, which are not unique to Victoria. Thanks very much.

[4.56 p.m.]

FITZGERALD, Mr Denis, Federal President, Australian Education Union

JENNINGS, Ms Barbara, Acting Federal Women's Officer, Australian Education Union

CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to make an opening statement, after which the committee will ask you questions.

Mr Fitzgerald—Our submission is as received and not lacking in detail, which is perhaps a characteristic of teachers; it certainly is of unions. I would wish to make certain points. Autobiographically, my own teaching background commenced in a boys' boarding school in rural New South Wales, proceeded to a girls' high school, then three consecutive coeducational schools and then another boys' high school in Sydney's west. Having been somewhat autobiographical, one thing I want to say is to counsel an avoidance of the anecdotal. In considering the more than two million children we have, drawing inferences from particular experiences is perhaps not the best way to develop forms of the best public policy. Having followed the debate, which has been somewhat lively in recent months, I have noticed that there has sometimes been a tendency by some of the commentators to look for questions of correlation rather than causation—that is, they say that a certain circumstance exists in schools and there is, at the level of marks for some boys in some school systems, a distinct and identifiable problem, so there must be a causal connection. We think that is very important in the way that this debate is carried out, but we welcome the opportunity, in fact, to address a federal parliament inquiry into equity based issues because in recent years it has been less than fashionable to look at key questions of equity in education. We think it is the very essence of good public policy in education.

We would also observe that many of the things that are detected as problems and significant concerns manifest themselves in schools but are not caused by schools—that is, schools are the places where our millions of youngsters go and where problems to do with gender and other forms of inequity take place, but that does not suggest that these things come from teachers or schools or whatever. One clear sign of the evidence in relation to that is that the issues that your important committee is looking at, in fact, are international. They manifest themselves in many of the industrialised developed nations. There has been, in recent decades, a redefinition of what it is to be a boy and questions of what we call the social construction of gender being, in this particular brief, how to grow up to be a man. Those sorts of things have been significantly problematic across a range of cultures so we will not find the solution just by thinking that they can be solved within a school or school system or, indeed, uniquely to Australia. What we do suggest is that there are certain things in relation to this policy that schools do have limits on but there have been, in recent times, significant constraints even allowing for what schools can do. For example—and I do not want to dwell on this—70 per cent of Australia's boys are in our public school systems and we have had a systematic run-down of the resource levels for boys and their achievement, along with girls too. This is not accepting the inevitable but we do have legislation before the federal parliament that will significantly exacerbate that inequity. That is causing significant bitterness and division, and it is not an unrelated observation we make.

So the majority system, if we are to address the important questions before the committee and the parliament, cannot be addressed without a fully funded, free, quality public education system. It is the main game in public policy, and sometimes it is not given the priority it deserves.

We look at this as teachers. As a teacher looks across his or her classroom, they do not just see the blonde haired one there, or the boys there, or the girls there; they look at the intersecting nature of the needs of a class. They do not just think of it as the short kids, the tall kids, the boys, the girls, the poorer ones, the battlers, the brilliant; they look at it in terms of policy and good methodology, good programming and good school leadership. They look at the levels of intersection, that is, which boys, which girls, which boys are underperforming, and at the level of some marks and those indices that is real. Again, if it is just reduced to a question of teacher quality, we must ensure that and we need lots of teachers. There are, for example, 155,000 members of my union, therefore questions of teacher quality, of keeping that set of standards up, is imperative, and it is a perennial need. But we will not be able to say that it is only about teacher quality because if, with the same teachers, the girls are doing very well but the boys are not doing as well on some indices, it does not stand to reason that it is purely a question, or a question, of teacher quality. That is a separate and important discussion.

We do not think the idea of working towards a separate boys education policy is good educational leadership because it identifies and defines a boy only in terms of something to do with the nature of their birth—that is, their gender. We need to look at the intersections that cause underperformance for girls and boys in terms of social class, background, parental aspiration, financial motivation, teacher input and so forth. That is the way good public policy is formed in relation to education.

We suggest that the current federal department has an excellent framework for Australian schools—its gender equity policy. We cannot, as adult humans, grow sensibly towards our own maturation without a coordinate policy as women and men. Similarly, in schools policy, we cannot do it by this notion of hiving off a boys policy. We suggest the federal department's policy 'Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools' is an excellent base for working towards its full recommendation. There are times at which the Australian Education Union expresses some disquiet about the federal department, but we leap at this opportunity to commend this document and its policy directions. Similarly, we think that, rather than your committee having to do this episodically, there is a strong case to re-establish the national advisory body on gender equity which operated up until 1997. It would be very useful if that could be reconvened and we worked towards bipartisan approaches to these distinct and undeniable problems that exist for boys and girls within our education system, because equity and unequal outcomes have probably been the essential interest of professional unions in education in recent decades.

Part of that is that boys and girls education initiatives are parallel priorities. We teach groups of children. We teach them on a community basis. We teach them according to the things that will reproduce the best value system and enable them to grow up together towards their maturation. A separate policy would tend to be missing the point, missing the complexity of the problem. Within this, one of the things that is fundamental and one of the reasons that this has, we suggest, an international dimension is that what we are looking at is the way what it is to be a man and the things required of males are fundamentally different, say, from at the end of

World War II or even the Vietnam War era. As we move towards a post-industrial society, the things that are rewarded in boys and girls and the things that schools reward have changed fundamentally. It is not so much a transformation from the stereotypes of the hunter gatherer.

But the reason that there have been curriculum and assessment re-emphases is that our society and economy has had an impact on curriculum and assessment theory. Different things are valued and acknowledged and rewarded. It is not a boy/girl thing; it is to do with the nature of the things that we need now that certain processes are no longer needed or valued much in our society, our culture, or our economy. That is the chief driving force for curriculum and assessment change.

Within that we are always going to have, on current demographics, about a quarter of a million people who describe themselves as, and who are in fact, teachers, across public and private systems. Therefore, keeping the quality up in changing times is going to be essential, imperative. And, as I say, this crosses all systems. The question of professional development in the changing nature of maleness and femaleness is going to be an integral part of that. How to teach people from different cultural backgrounds, how to teach boys and girls in different ways and together as they grow towards their own maturation, and how governments and departments work towards supporting that professional judgment, is going to be essential for the good of the boys and girls in our classroom. It is going to be essential within this dramatic and almost revolutionary change that is being experienced by males and females. We are suggesting that schools develop gender equity plans, that this is part of what you do as a school. We have to work out whatever the nature of the gender equity plan is for the school to allow for the certain transformations that are taking place in the identities and demands of boys and girls.

There is clearly a need, and this is fundamental to what we submit, to understand the nature of the intersection. You cannot generalise. If there is one message that we can draw from the research, despite its somewhat incomplete nature in some sense, it is that that research shows that the intersecting power of, say, rural and isolated communities, the boys in those communities, are not necessarily performing as well as, say, privileged or materially comfortable city boys. But you could get the rank of girl/boy against the various indices and it is not a simple parallel or conflicting pattern. In stressing the social location of schools we cannot overlook the question of some marks, and schooling is much more than the sum total of marks, but, of course, it is an important indicator and one that parents and students increasingly are encouraged to look at in terms of the definition of success. But if we look at post-school experiences, if we look at career patterns, if we look at advantage that males still have within the broader community, this is a much more complex matter than boy versus girl.

I think what we need to do is to continue this research and evaluation set of mechanisms because this is always going to be in flux. The demands made in 10 years time on males and females, as we move to further post-industrial high tech, virtual careers, the nature of jobs, careers and self-identity, are going to continue to expand and to change. We do need to look at the nature of good teaching, and the demands on what it is to be a good teacher are going to continue to evolve.

I would suggest that you have probably heard some small amount already about the nature of learning styles and teaching styles. It is not accurate to say that there is a boy's learning style and a girl's learning style. What is true is that youngsters learn in different ways and sometimes

there is some correlation to do with gender. But there are other much more important correlations. What we need in terms of that support is the knowledge that you can work with the teaching profession and the AEU to look at those curriculum practices that are inclusive of gender and the different learning styles there. It is also to do with social class and important things like non-English-speaking background and Aboriginality. We will not begin to address the inequities if we only look at some form of correlation and without looking at the complexities of the questions here, because these are the key indicators and the indicators that come up in relation to class and gender. The complexities and contradictions that exist there are going to be essential, and the nature of our learning environments as they change, as our schools become more technologically equipped, is going to be essential in relation to that.

We are seeing the old form of maleness changing. Perhaps some of the things that were valued in the old form of maleness are no longer valued by school systems. What we need to do is to look at this as a complex, socially located question that schools and teaching organisations do want to address, but with you and not in any conflict laden way. This is one of the real issues. It is very good to be back to questions of equity in education, and you have detected a significant substrand in the way that it is interlocked with many other forms of inequity.

Ms Jennings—There are a couple of things I would like to add. As Denis has said, we are a national union and we represent over 155,000 members. In preparing this submission, we have drawn very deeply on teachers' experience and research and on the professional research that has been done right across the country. So this submission does have input from all the states and territories.

As Denis was saying, one of the issues that concern us most as a professional association is what it is to be a male in today's society. We feel that a lot of the limitations, the damage and the at-risk behaviour of boys can be tracked back to that limited stereotype of dominant masculinity that used to be in vogue in the 1950s—or perhaps mythically in the 1950s. We do feel that that needs to be at the base of any of the gender equity initiatives that are carried out, that there needs to be some discussion on what it means to be a man or a woman in today's society. The stereotypes for men and women are very limiting and can carry with them lack of choices and a lot of damage. That is something we feel must be central to looking at any of the gender equity initiatives. I can see some raised eyebrows; I will probably get some questions.

CHAIR—No, I am just thinking of my colleague, Mr Sawford—in a positive sense, I hasten to add.

Ms Jennings—I will probably get some questions from Mr Sawford.

CHAIR—He is a sporting enthusiast.

Mr BARRESI—We will release him soon!

Ms Jennings—Is that another in-joke?

CHAIR—It is just that when things are said I look to see if anyone has any questions. That is all.

Ms Jennings—Another point Denis has been making is that we are very concerned about the professional aspects of teachers. We are very concerned about quality teaching. That is what we are here for: quality eduction, quality teaching. We believe the question is one of good teachers, not whether they are male or female. We feel the research says that it is not about the gender of the teacher; it is about the quality of the teacher and the quality of the relationship the teacher has with students. We feel that the research bears that out very clearly.

We do not feel that the research shows that the problem for boys has worsened over time. We feel that there have always been issues with boys and literacy. We think they are of grave concern. We think they have a connection with that dominant masculinity and the limiting nature of that, that it is regarded as being feminine if a boy is good at English or school work—engaged in English, literacy or school work. We believe that is one of the issues that need to be discussed, that you can be male and still be involved in learning and love learning, English and literacy.

We believe that, if you look at the post-school outcomes, girls remain disadvantaged in terms of where they end up once they get into the work force. Boys who have poorer literacy still end up earning more money 18 months later and are more likely than the girls to have a training or an employment situation. The Richard Teese work shows that, the DETYA research that came out in the year 2000 shows that and the latest ACER research that came out in September 2000 shows that. We believe it is a complex issue. We believe, as Denis has said, that the boys' and the girls' stuff is integrally involved and you must look at both aspects.

Mr BARTLETT—Ms Jennings, what is your role within the AEU?

Ms Jennings—I am the Acting Federal Women's Officer, and in real life I am the Victorian Women's Officer.

Mr BARTLETT—Is there a federal men's officer?

Ms Jennings—The reason we have a women's officer is that there are still a lot of issues that face girls in schools. It is a recognition within the union and within the profession that there are still a lot of issues that face girls and women teachers. As you are no doubt aware, the profession is approximately 70 per cent female, but across the nation only about 30 per cent of principals are female. This is something that concerns us as a profession because it means we are not tapping the diversity of talent that we have. This is why we have a Federal Women's Officer. It is a recognition that these issues are still significant issues for society, the profession, and for schools.

Mr BARTLETT—It would seem to me that there are issues affecting men as well that are equally as important.

Ms Jennings—That is true, and I am sure as you read our submission that you saw that our whole focus is one of gender equity. Our concern is for excellent education for all students, as Denis said.

Mr BARTLETT—You said in your introductory comments that you do not feel the problem for boys has worsened over time. How do you respond then to the growing divergence in the TES results for girls and boys?

Ms Jennings—If you look at those, the overall TES results for girls have improved. But if you look at what happens at that level, the girls are taking a loose, irrational group of subjects whereas the boys are tending to take the ones that lead more clearly on to careers and the high status subjects.

Mr BARTLETT—But the girls are still getting much higher TES scores than the boys, and at an increasing rate.

Ms Jennings—The research from Deakin University showed earlier that that tends to be because the girls are preselected. Only a limited number of them go for those maths and physics subjects whereas a broader range of boys tend to go for them. That brings the average mark for the boys down in relation to the girls.

Mr BARTLETT—But the overall result still is a growing divergence between the total TES scores for girls and boys.

Ms Jennings—Yes, but what do you make of that in terms of the consequences? Teaching and schooling is about the whole of your life. When you look at what happens with the girls after school, any advantage they may have had at school does not translate.

Mr BARTLETT—But even if that is the case, that does not justify it. If there is something happening within schools or if there is something happening within the community that is leading to a growing divergence in school results, that is not justified by saying that it sorts itself out in the end in terms of employment outcomes or earning capacity. Surely, if we are focusing on equality, equity and what is happening in school, we ought to be trying to tackle that issue of divergence in school results.

Mr Fitzgerald—One of the interesting statistical outcomes of having reports on TER, UAI, TS and so forth is that that is based on this normative model where there are always going to be winners and losers, that the whole reporting system is about ranking either boys or girls, social classes, systems or schools on a first to last basis. What is going to be very interesting, because the essence of education is about getting youngsters to achieve their full human potential, is the developments that are taking place in New South Wales and other systems, where they are moving towards a standards reference form of reporting. I am sorry for the jargon. Basically, it means that increasingly reporting is going to be about what you know and what you can do, rather than who you beat. The key thing for us to work out is that boys and girls, against this form of standards reporting, over time will be increasing the standards at which they do achieve. That old style model of reporting is one that makes winners and losers, on whatever indices, inevitable. What we must make sure is that people achieve their full human potential against ever increasing standards.

Mr BARTLETT—I have got no problems with that, but what I am saying is that the current measurement is indicating a growing divergence. Is it your view that if you change the measurement you will no longer have a growing divergence?

Mr Fitzgerald—No, I am not saying that. I am saying that the philosophy of reporting is changing in Australia and that will continue. What we need to do is to make sure that girls and boys, across a range of backgrounds, are able to achieve their full human potential and that the standard, the bar if you like, is raised progressively.

What you could find—and this is undetectable in the old data—is that a group of students that you might take, say rural students, may have done worse in a relative sense than people from other parts of the state or system, but in an absolute, as opposed to a relative sense, they have been improving over time. That is not to engage in any form of statistical fiction. I am saying that, in terms of constructing something for the future, we need forms of reporting that in fact acknowledge and reward people, regardless of whether or not they are rich or poor, boy or girl, for ever higher levels of achievement.

Mr BARTLETT—Sure, but I still come back to my basic point that even if we change the monitoring, the measurement or the evaluation system, if there is an underlying divergence there that should show up in the new measurement system as well. We need to be addressing the causes, whether they be community based, family based or in terms of what is happening in the school curriculum and their pedagogical techniques or whatever.

Mr Fitzgerald—That is right. If we find, as we do, that students in rural or regional Australia tend on average to get marks lower than city based people then that is something we need to address. With people from battling backgrounds—lower SES and so forth—that is happening and we need to address that. These are the things, as I say, in relation to the intersections that we need to work out. Certain boys from, if you like, privileged or advantaged backgrounds are doing better than girls who come from, say, working-class backgrounds. We need to know why these—

Mr BARTLETT—I notice you make those comparisons in your submission here but equally if you take any socioeconomic group it still seems to be the case that girls are doing better than boys within any of those groups.

Mr Fitzgerald—No, I don't—

Mr BARTLETT—In most groups that seems to be the case.

Mr BARRESI—That was the evidence that was given to us today.

Mr BARTLETT—The evidence that we were given seems to support that—perhaps not in every group but in the majority of them—girls are doing better than boys.

Mr Fitzgerald—Yes. But which girls? You cannot say that we are comforted because that is the case and this is a fixed pattern, and that reinforces the point that you cannot look at educational disadvantage or underperformance with only one factor. Let us look at the various factors as they intersect and see how we can address them.

CHAIR—It just seemed the evidence we have had is that girls are outperforming boys right across the SES spectrum and more so in fact at the lower end. And of course within that group

some boys are doing extremely well and are not a problem to anybody and some girls are doing very badly.

Mr Fitzgerald—I am sorry, there is another conclusion to be drawn from that data there—that SES is the prime determinant of outcome in the fundamental inequality. That is a conclusion to be drawn from that data.

CHAIR—Sure, and most people seem to say that—

Mr SAWFORD—It may not be correct.

CHAIR—but the Rowes for example earlier today said it determines where you start but it does not determine where you end. Where you end up depends on the sort of teaching that you are going to get, whether you are at the poorer end or the top end.

Mr Fitzgerald—I wish it were true that we could redress every social inequality of childhood experiences just by teaching it away.

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Jennings—The research you are talking about is the research from the Rowes this morning?

CHAIR—There was a whole range of important stuff.

Mr BARTLETT—That was just one example.

Ms Jennings—I think that there is also a lot of research like the principals' association work, the Deakin University submission, the submission from Professor Lyn Yates and our own that shows that girls are not doing better at every level. I do not think that is true and it is not saying that there is not a problem with boys. There is a problem with boys definitely and there is a problem with girls and it should not be about them competing. They are different problems that they face. And if you do look at the post school outcomes, even if the girls are better at literacy it does not seem to translate into any advantage. So I think you need to keep that in mind too. This is probably very obvious to you that it is such a complex area and you can do a lot of things with the statistics.

Mr SAWFORD—Being in politics after having 25 years in teaching is an interesting experience. Denis, you are still in politics, and, Barbara, you are in terms of a teacher union in a different context. One thing dealing with the community has taught me is that the community very seldom get it wrong. After elections I have heard people on my side of politics, when we have lost, blame all sorts of things, and I have heard this mob on the other side, when they lost unlosable elections in 1993 et cetera, give all sorts of excuses. I have to say that when I read this I thought that sometimes the AEU is its own worst enemy. Look at a couple of things that you have here. Under 'Boys, literacy and learning'—and, Denis, you stated this as well—it says:

... socioeconomic status that plays a major determining role in level of achievement in both numeracy and literacy.

Under 'Good teachers, not necessarily male teachers' there is a statement that it is the quality of the relationship each student establishes with his teacher that has the greatest impact on student success. I would have thought that that would have been a more fulsome statement if it included the quality of the educational program and of the relationship, not just the quality. You actually need something to interact with. In terms of a significant longitudinal study in an English speaking area, I can think of no more significant study than the one by the inner London education authority in the mid-1980s, which was a seven-year study trying to determine the qualities that determined success or failure in children—boys and girls. Quite overwhelmingly, what it came up with was the quality of schooling—that is, the quality of the educational program that was offered, the quality of the teachers and the relationship—and that that was far more important than gender, religion, race or socioeconomic background.

There are a number of examples given on the socioeconomic background, comparing various areas. In the 1960s, in Andrew Peacock's area the access to universities was about 20-odd per cent; in Taperoo, where I lived, it was four per cent. A group of teachers changed that to 40 per cent in Taperoo, while Kew remained at 23 per cent. The socioeconomic disadvantage never changed. The quality of the teachers changed, the quality of the principals changed and the relationship between the parents, the children and the teachers changed dramatically. The gender balance was fifty-fifty. There is no reference here to gender balance. In a previous example we had—admittedly, it was a boys school, a private school, and a very well off private school, I would imagine: Trinity Grammar—they mentioned that they seemed to be doing very well with their boys. You could argue that it is because they come from privileged backgrounds. I suspect it has more to do with the quality of the teaching, the teaching program and what they actually do.

It just seems that there is a lot of defence in this submission. There are questions about the culture of masculinity in schools and its effects—homophobia and so on. I would have thought most boys do not really care much about all of this. I am not saying that does not exist in schools, but it is the minority. Okay, you are nodding to indicate that you are saying something else. There is a section here on 'Debunking the feminist damage myth'. I agree with that; I do not believe in feminist conspiracies either. But there is another paragraph in that which says:

> Another myth which cannot be substantiated is the 'feminisation of teaching in schools'.

I think most reasonable people would think that if 70 or 80 per cent of the teachers are female, you have got a feminised teaching force. This has some Orwellian sort of nonsense in it. It is feminised. What is wrong with that? I do not see anything wrong with that necessarily, but that may be a question that needs to be asked. Perhaps gender balance is a question that the AEU need to address. Perhaps the intake of teacher training needs to be addressed. Perhaps the creation of the single comprehensive high school, on the recommendations of the Karmel report in 1973, was wrong. Perhaps all the implementations, with the best of intentions, of the Blackburn report in 1984 in relation to assessment are not all right. Maybe the amalgamation of various sectors in education may not have been a good thing. Maybe that has allowed a thing that you are very passionate about, Denis—the reduction of resourcing.

I agree with you that resourcing is the main game. In fact, as my colleagues know, it was my wish that this inquiry addressed resourcing. We are going to have to address the education of boys through that. Would you like to respond to some of those things?

Mr Fitzgerald—Yes. There is a fair bit of substance there. I do not want to keep anyone in. That would the worst thing I could do as a teacher at the end of a long day. In the first sentence of the first paragraph of the overview of our submission we say:

> Teachers across Australia are in no doubt that there are fundamental changes affecting boys and men which are leading to shifts, doubts, under performance and self-questioning for some young males across Australia.

And it goes on. If things are taken paragraph by paragraph, they may, in isolation, be seen as incomplete because they would be. In relation to feminisation, that is an implicit argument, one that has been put by people well beyond and outside this committee, that there is something intrinsically pejorative about having a lot of women and that this somehow is a causal connection to the underperformance of boys. That is the Realpolitik of the observation. There is no evidence, if you take the way we relate to other human beings and the way a child sees a teacher, that they will see the gender of their teacher as one of the major characteristics. Not many of us think that a teacher's performance is all to do with the nature of his maleness, his femaleness, or whatever. It is a question of teacher quality. When we reflect on our own teachers or on good teacher performance, we do not say, 'What a good male teacher he was because his maleness or his femaleness manifested itself,' whatever it may be. Why we make the emphasis in relation to the human interaction is that implicit within the quality of the human interaction is that good teaching and human interaction flow from strong programming, educational leadership and a cohesive vision across an entire school and system as to the purposes of that school and system. But where the rubber hits the road is in the classroom in the nature of that interaction. To imply, as it has been beyond this committee, that there is something intrinsically at deficit about having a female teacher, does not work out educationally or in logic.

In relation to the history of education, the development of coeducational schools in Australia were first inspired by the Butler act in England of 1944 and were principally taken up in New South Wales with the Wyndham scheme that was first enacted from 1959. Comprehensive schools took off in New South Wales in the early 1960s at about the same time that the transformation took place from the Leaving Certificate to the HSC. That comprehensive form of education correlated to the history of one of the highest performances of boys in relation to girls that we have ever seen. I cannot speak for the specific example that compared one electorate with Mr Peacock's electorate, but I know that every form of index and correlation about outcome, if it is solely about teacher performance, means this in Australia: all the good teachers, to use Sydney as an example, are in the northern suburbs, which they might well be because of the quality of their representation or are in the eastern suburbs; or in Melbourne they are in the eastern suburbs, and on and on we could go. It is not true. My experience in disadvantaged schooling—which is my background—is, if we argue that it is just a question of teacher performance and teacher quality and that the best teachers get the best results, that uttering the evidence disproves it.

There are other factors well beyond schooling—I would like to be able to teach our way out of disadvantage, but that is simply not the case. It is about well-resourced schools that have a belief in a system, and it is about governments and departments that support the teaching profession, that identify key problems of underperformance across a range of indices and that allow and encourage teachers and educational leaders to address them. But I do not think we can reduce it to monocausal explanations or that we can just 'do' that: if we can just teach harder and better or change the quality of the teachers in one particular community, that will

transform it. I do not think the evidence suggests that at all. You all know within your own electorates of fabulous teachers who may not be existing in schools who get outstanding results for a whole set of reasons.

Mr SAWFORD—And the reverse.

Mr Fitzgerald—Indeed.

Ms Jennings—I would like to come back to the point about the feminisation of the teaching profession. It is true that the majority—

Mr SAWFORD—It is a statement of fact. Why make a big deal of it?

Ms Jennings—I will explain. The majority of teachers are female; that is true. But the majority of leaders of schools are male—70 per cent of the leadership of schools.

Mr BARRESI—They are not in a classroom situation, are they?

Ms Jennings—No, but they are making decisions about how the school is run, and the majority of senior bureaucrats are also male. As you heard the Victorian government say before, and this is general across Australia, a lot more of the educational work of a school has been devolved to the principal.

Mr SAWFORD—You cannot argue on the one hand that gender is important and on the other hand that it is not important. That is what you are doing.

Ms Jennings—No, I am saying—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, you are. You are arguing that male leadership in schools is one thing and gender in another—

Ms Jennings—You could say that they counterbalance each other—if 70 per cent here are male and 70 per cent here are female? I do not think you can say the profession is feminised because the majority of classroom teachers are; the majority of decision makers, people who set the trends and make the decisions, are male. That is one point that I felt needed to be made.

Mr SAWFORD—The principal of Scotch College was here yesterday, and he said that not one boy in that school wants to be a teacher.

Ms Jennings—That is not surprising.

Mr Fitzgerald—That is perhaps not unique to Scotch College. There have been 20 years of open season on teachers, and I am bipartisan about this. It is unsurprising that people draw the conclusions: (a) that they do not want to be teachers; and (b) that learning is not a valued characteristic in youngsters. This is because people who are in charge of governments of all stripes have got stuck into the profession, the organisations and all parts of them and teachers in general. People draw conclusions that not only is teaching unimportant and unattractive as a

career; so are the things that teachers do. I cannot overestimate how important the messages that political leaders give to children in the classroom and the way they speak about the teaching profession are to how children value what teachers do. This may impact disproportionately on males—but I will not draw that out. If teaching as a profession is undervalued, it is unsurprising that learning is undervalued to.

Mr SAWFORD—Sorry, Ms Jennings, I interrupted you. You want to finish off.

Ms Jennings—That is all right.

CHAIR—I said to one of the witnesses here today, if you required the sort of TES to get into teaching that you require to get into dentistry, law, medicine or engineering and you are expected to earn $90,000 to $100,000 a year, with a reasonable career path, I do not think we would even be having this inquiry. It is as not as simple as that, of course, but we could make teaching a profession that people really aspired to and saw as something worth while. You are right about comments made generally by politicians and people in positions of authority and influence about teachers; that has a big impact. But at the moment, from what I have seen of the sorts of kids who are going into teaching, it is very unusual to get a highly motivated, really bright young man or woman who wants to be a teacher. Generally, it is, 'Am I going to be unemployed or am I going to teach?'

Mr Fitzgerald—I think it varies and that there is some evidence to suggest that there has been a turnaround in that, but that is as yet inconclusive. Until teaching is given an appropriate status—I do not mean in terms of affectation but in terms of substance—we will have a problem in continuing to have the high quality of teachers that we have now. It varies across faculties, frankly.

CHAIR—Another practical dimension of it is that the principal—I forget his name—of Scotch College—

Mr BARRESI—Dr Donaldson.

CHAIR—Yes. Dr Donaldson made a good point. He said that one of things that they would like to be able to do as a school is to have some role in the recruitment of those who go into teaching as undergraduates and to have some influence on that. Then I suggested to him that we might think of some practical ways in which that might be achieved. Another dimension to that is that the ACT government and, more recently, the New South Wales government are trying to pension off teachers over the age of 45 when, to me—certainly from our experience in the mature age inquiry—they are the sorts of people we want in the work force. We ought to be recruiting them, not getting them out. If there are problems with them being stale or out of touch, as they have been described, then that reflects on the system; it is not supporting professional development, for example. Have you got any ideas about recruiting mature age workers and schools being involved in recruitment? The other issue is: is there a minimum level? In a former life, as you know, I was involved in the medical profession. If TERs for medicine dropped to the mid-80s, I can tell you that the medical profession would be out there saying that that is the floor. Yet in teaching, and I have to say in nursing also, the entry level that is required has become so low that it is very worrying.

Mr Fitzgerald—I think we can overstate that. We are the largest occupational group. There are more teachers than any other occupational item—there are a quarter of million. We do have a joint responsibility between policy makers and the profession to ensure that those standards remain as high as they are now, because they are hugely impressive now. I think there is no one point at which that can be identified. The point of entry to training is important but also the quality of people as they leave training is important. Pre-service training is essential but so is the in-service training because teaching is not something you can be ready to have done and then know how to do it and then perform it for the next 30 years—that ongoing process is essential.

Similarly, it has to mean something in the culture to be a teacher. I think we need to address again the question of registration of teachers: that is, anyone who wants to be a teacher in Australia ought to have a minimal level—and when I say minimal I mean a platform; I do not mean to reduce it—a platform level of training, of practical experience and of successful experience in a probationary time, and then continuing quality over that. For example, we insist that anyone who treats our pet is registered, but we do not made that national insistence around registration of all teachers, and it must mean something. The question of registration of teachers is a question of teacher supply and ongoing quality, and the combination of supported high quality pre-service and in-service training is also essential. One of the by-products of the devolution of management in recent times is that hands-on mechanisms of quality control of teacher performance has tended to be done via blunt instruments of testing and different forms of interview. You can gain in some parts of Australia career advancement without anyone actually having seen you teach. So some of the management things that have taken place in recent years have been unfortunate in terms of professional standards as well.

CHAIR—I think at that point we will finish. Thank you so much. You have obviously put a lot of effort into the submission. As you can see, we do not all agree with every aspect of it, but such is the complexity of the issue. Amongst the issues is this whole professional development issue, recruitment and retention, and—without having had an educational background myself—one thing I can certainly see is that there are industrial issues which are clearly a part of the reason why we cannot get kids to even look at it as a career. If you have some supplementary thoughts on that, including fleshing out this registration concept, could you send us something on that?

Mr Fitzgerald—Yes, we will do that.

Mr BARRESI—I do not know whether this is a part of what you have already been asked, but the concept of getting people into the teaching profession midway through their career life is something that I would certainly value your input on. Obviously there is a disincentive at the moment: if you are a 40-year-old who has just decided to have a total change in career away from banking into teaching, you still have to get a Dip. Ed, and then there is a loss of income during that time. I do not know whether the union has thought about how to attract people midway through their career life. If you have, we would like to hear about it.

CHAIR—The New South Wales government is now prepared to spend $50,000 for each mature age teacher it pensions off. We could spend that $50,000 recruiting somebody into it, helping them through their Dip. Ed. and all the rest of it.

Mr Fitzgerald—Similarly, we would look in a welcoming way at those where we were able to attract the best and the brightest of graduates at the point of graduation. So that in the government system—frankly that is the one on whose behalf we speak—we could ensure that we get the best and brightest. And there are forms of incentives that we could make that would continue the high quality teaching service we have now, because that is what we have now, and I say that in no defensive way whatsoever.

Mr BARTLETT—Would the AEU support salary differentials for, say, graduates with masters or PhDs?

Mr Fitzgerald—That already exists. For example, in most systems across Australia, if you have a postgraduate degree or an honours degree, you start at a higher level, and that means for each year you are ahead. The idea of a simple payment, of some connection between payment and results, has tended to be unsatisfactory overseas. The incentives of people in the service in terms of effective outcome looks to be other than that. Looking at ways to make sure that we attract and retain the best and the brightest to keep our standards high is something that we have a professional responsibility to discuss. But I would not include notions of salary differential in that. The history of that in the US, for example, is that they have tended to go disproportionately to areas of social advantage rather than necessary teacher quality.

CHAIR—Thank you, Denis and Barbara. That was very good.

Ms Jennings—Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR—It is your taxes at work!

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

That the committee receives as evidence the following exhibits: overheads presented by the Endeavour Forum, overheads presented by Dr Julie McLeod, and *Working with boys project report* of the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 5.49 p.m.