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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

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SYDNEY

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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.

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GRAHAM, Mr Martin, Relieving Manager, Liaison Coordination, Strategic Relations Directorate, New South Wales Department of Education and Training 302

GREEN, Mr George, Assistant Director-General, Student Services and Equity Programs, New South Wales Department of Education and Training 302

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Committee met at 9.14 a.m.

CHAIR—I declare open the first day of public hearings in Sydney of the inquiry into the education of boys and welcome participants and, of course, others who have come to listen to these hearings today. The purpose of this inquiry is to examine 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. We are also aiming to identify successful educational strategies and ways to promote their wider adoption in schools. Over the next two days in Sydney the committee expects to hear evidence about the nature and extent of boys' educational problems and ways in which boys are affected, how boys' difficulties relate to broader social and economic change, why fewer males are choosing teaching as a profession and whether gender differences in audio processing account for boys lagging behind girls in early literacy development.

[9.15 a.m.]

ALEGOUNARIAS, Mr Tom, Acting Director, Strategic Relations, New South Wales Department of Education and Training

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McMORROW, Dr James Frederick, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Planning, New South Wales Department of Education and Training

NIELSEN, Ms Joy, Manager, Gender Equity Unit, New South Wales Department of Education and Training

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and remind you that the proceedings here today are proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the House itself. The deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of the parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but if at any stage there is anything that you want said in camera, please indicate that that is the case and we will certainly consider that.

Dr McMorrow—I will just mention a few things in a couple of minutes for our opening statement, and I might ask my colleague to more specifically address the department's key strategy for dealing with this issue. Just for the record, on behalf of the New South Wales government, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training welcomes this opportunity to participate in this hearing relating to the House of Representatives inquiry into the education of boys. It is certainly a sign of the significance of this issue that, as committee members, you have taken time out from the parliament when there is a very significant bill before the parliament—and I just comment on that in passing.

The New South Wales public school system has been active in dealing with gender issues and education for at least 20 years. The New South Wales gender equity strategy, which was introduced by the Minister for Education and Training, the honourable John Aquilina MP, is grounded on a broad commitment to equity based on the principle that all people are equal and should enjoy equal freedom to achieve. Applied to schooling, this principle means that all children and young people, boys and girls, should enjoy equal freedom and opportunity to achieve their personal best. They should be free to achieve learning outcomes that have value

and significance for them in their everyday lives, as well as leading to outcomes that are valued in the wider society. I will not make this too formal, Chair. This is relatively informal. For the record, these are things we would like to say.

The New South Wales public school system accepts freely and fully its obligations to conform with the provisions of the country's antidiscrimination legislation that exists to protect freedom and opportunity. For New South Wales public schools, the gender equity strategy reinforces its responsibilities under New South Wales legislation. The gender equity strategy provides a strong framework within which schools can develop ways to remove barriers to learning that arise from irrational, outmoded or damaging ways of expressing sex differences. The complex and fluid ways in which such factors as social class and culture, including religion and ethnicity and gender—which I understand to be the social arrangements relating to sex differences—interact to influence schooling across school communities work in ways that can help or hinder young people in learning.

The New South Wales department, over the last 20 years, has developed policies and practices that reflect reputable research and scholarly insights that can be understood and supported by schools and their communities. The strategy draws on experience of programs concerned with gender that go back, for example, to the highly significant report of the Commonwealth Schools Commission titled *Girls, school and society* in the 1970s—in 1975, I think.

New South Wales was subsequently an active participant in the development of a national policy for the education of girls—a policy that was a model of collaborative effort among the states and territories, with the Commonwealth, through the Schools Commission, playing a facilitating and coordinating role. Over the last 20 years, extensive research has been focused on the educational implications of the dominant beliefs and practices about what constitutes 'femininity'. This was a response to widespread concerns at that time about the underparticipation, and therefore underachievement, of girls as a group in valued aspects of education and training. This has led in turn to a growing understanding of the ways in which masculinity is understood and expressed in society and in schools. It affects boys' engagement with learning, their learning behaviour, their patterns of participation and the outcomes they achieve. The current gender equity strategy was developed in consultation with a broadly representative group from the education community. It focuses on the real work of schools of teaching and learning, school culture and the relationship between the school and its community.

We think it is important in this House of Representatives inquiry to acknowledge the constructive contributions that successive Commonwealth governments have made. Various initiatives undertaken in close collaboration with states and territories over the years have helped systems and schools to improve their understanding of complex gender issues. I guess the bottom line is that we would want that collaboration to continue as a result of this inquiry.

These understandings in turn have informed such important aspects of schooling as literacy teaching and learning and behaviour management. We think that a key aspect of what we need to continue to do is to provide high quality professional development of our teachers. New South Wales has valued the work done by governments acting collaboratively through, for example, the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs in its

work around gender equity. The New South Wales gender equity strategy draws on and complements that work. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has funded projects such as the project on the educational performance of males and females and their destinations, undertaken by Collins, Kenway and McLeod, through Deakin University and the University of South Australia. We think that is an example of a constructive contribution to an informed debate.

Such collaborative work is critical at a time when familiar patterns of transition from school to work and from childhood to adulthood have changed radically, in response to global economic changes and technological advances. The increasing premium being placed on knowledge and skills which are both specialised and transferable, the growth in information technologies and the increased marketisation of schooling are placing pressures on systems resource capacities. Gender issues and concerns relating to the education of boys need to be seen in this context. They need to be dealt with in education systems and schools as issues which are central to education and to teaching and learning.

What education research and experience tell us clearly is that, other things being equal, those who will succeed best at school are generally those for whom school is a safe and secure learning environment, who become fluent readers early in their school careers and who engage actively with learning and spend most time on learning tasks. The challenge for public education systems in New South Wales and in the other states and territories is to establish in all public schools the conditions most likely to encourage and enable that active engagement with learning and time spent on worthwhile learning tasks. This has to happen for students with a wide range of abilities, interests and aspirations, from the full range of socioeconomic circumstances. The key means by which schools can do this comes down in the end to effective teaching across the curriculum at all stages of schooling and, I would add, across all sectors of education and training—I am not sure that that has been adequately emphasised in this inquiry so far; you might like to touch on that in some questions—complemented, of course, by specific interventions where necessary.

I turn briefly to the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Bill 2000, which is currently before the federal parliament. From a New South Wales perspective, it is disappointing that the Commonwealth has paid so little heed in the bill, and in the related debate, to the unique responsibilities of public school systems. I do not need to tell you that. The Commonwealth's interest in the education of boys will ring a bit hollow with some if the parliament fails to give an explicit commitment to public schools— including by amending the bill—to remove the enrolment benchmark adjustment. This mechanism is already being used without rational justification to take from the states resources of $20 million—and there is potentially much more to come—for teaching in public schools. I am sure the committee understands that the vast majority of boys are in public schools. Those groups of boys and girls who are most at risk of leaving school prematurely, ill-prepared for the realities of the so-called new economy, are very largely dependent on the public school system for their future life chances.

That is some of the background to our submission in a number of respects. But, with your indulgence, I will ask my colleagues to say a couple of things about our gender equity strategy, which is the cornerstone of the department's strategies in this important area.

Mr Green—I must apologise for my voice. I think I will have to go and find a good doctor as I have a bit of laryngitis. I will not speak for very long—I will explain why in a moment. You have in front of you what we might call the broad document: the original document that was published on the strategy and signed off by Minister Aquilina in the early part of the first term of the Carr government.

Mr SAWFORD—The good old pink and blue.

Mr Green—Yes. We have moved on, but somebody probably thought that it was an appropriate colour scheme at the time. The strategy is unlike other documents we find in education jurisdictions from time to time in that it is underpinned by a very solid program of action that has impacted upon every school in the system and has now been in place for some five years. The strategy led to the implementation of training and development programs across the state, raising a whole range of issues with teachers about gender and the development of substantial resources that had been made available to schools across the New South Wales public education system.

I guess we have been quite happy with the reception and the commitment that we have noted in schools on this issue. It has to be said though—I am sure that your report will bring this out—that, since the publication of this report, the issue has moved on quite strongly. That is apparent in schools and in what they are doing. Our plan now is to move to a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of this strategy during 2001, and we have plans under way for that now. That will lead us into a new five-year strategy around the issue of gender equity. In that sense, your inquiry is very timely and has the potential to provide us with an additional source of advice with the benefit of a national, rather than a state, perspective.

I thought it would be useful, given that Joy Nielsen, who is manager of the Gender Equity Unit, has just joined us, to have Joy talk more about what has happened on the ground during this time. Until recently, Joy was the student services and equity coordinator in a district office, which means that she had line responsibility for the implementation of this strategy. Prior to that, Joy worked in south-western Sydney in a variety of roles working with what we might largely call disadvantaged youth. I will now hand over to Joy, if that is appropriate, to talk about what happened as a result of all this.

Ms Nielsen—Since the implementation of the strategy, we have held intensive professional development courses for 40 student services and equity coordinators across the state and 80 gender equity network facilitators. In each of our 40 districts we have a primary and a secondary network facilitator. We have carried out ongoing training for those people directly. In addition to that, we have also carried out training through other programs which are more indirect, such as the student at risk or disadvantaged schools programs, recognising that connection between gender and the disadvantaged.

We have trained people across the state, looking at gender and literacy, particularly looking at boys and literacy programs, and they have taken those up. Classroom teachers have access training through those district networks; so they have gone on to do that training. We have produced quite an extensive resource kit which includes training for teachers and resources for use in the classroom. We have looked at gender as an educational issue and gone on from there to support schools to take a whole school approach to gender and gender relations. We have

produced resources to assist the work with parents because parents have a very big influence on their children. We are developing further guidelines, particularly for schools that are considering developing programs specifically for boys.

I will just talk a bit about what is actually happening in schools. In the Northern Beaches I was out and about in schools and noticed that, for example, a lot of schools, in using the State Literacy Strategy in collaboration with the boys in literacy program, have worked very much with boys. One school I talked to recently have actually tracked their boys from year 3 to year 5 and found value for those students using the systematic explicit teaching, which is outlined in our strategy. I was in the western suburbs last week and students from a boys school were saying, 'I feel differently now. I do things differently because I have been through these programs.' A boy was saying that he used to solve conflict by fighting and violence, and since he had been through a program on looking at the construction of masculinity, at communication and peer mediation and those sorts of programs, he actually was able to think: 'No, it is not right to be a boy by being violent but you need to have these skills for communications and so forth.'

I saw an excellent teacher in the Mount Druitt area actually teaching both boys and girls about the construction of gender and having girls and boys look at what they needed to be feminine and what they needed to be to be masculine and how having these narrow ideas could actually limit their opportunities. They were given the opportunity to choose a wider range of HSC subjects not limited by those ideas of femininity and masculinity. I have been at another school out in the Blacktown area—a primary school—where they are actually teaching students about sex based harassment. That sex based harassment, which the research is showing is happening in schools, can also limit what boys and girls do.

So they were looking at those sorts of things for students. That was being supported by parents coming in and the parent training happening. So it was being reflected at home when children went home. These sorts of programs are happening in schools. Schools are expected to report on what they are doing. There are many gender programs reported across the state. They are implementing them in many ways in different schools. What is important is that they are actually doing things in schools that will make a difference for both boys and girls with respect to the limitation that can be placed on both male and female students.

CHAIR—Firstly, I just thank all of you for coming along. I should say by way of introduction that, whilst I appreciate that both the states and the Commonwealth have a particular point of view about the funding issues, in this inquiry we are basically putting aside our party political differences and our state-Commonwealth arguments over those issues and focusing on the text of the inquiry—the substance of it, at least.

Secondly, I must say, having read the submission, that I congratulate you for what you are doing and what you are trying to do, firstly in recognising that there is a problem and, secondly, in initiating what seems to be some very good programs to deal with it. That New South Wales has done better in boy/girl literacy benchmarking in the primary school is in no small way due to the things you have been doing.

How do you react to the HSC results where the girls are outperforming the boys—and I think the 1998 figures showed that in 64 out of the 70 subjects taken the average was by 11

percentage points? I think fewer than one in three boys are in the top 100 all-round achievers. So, whilst clear progress is being made in the primary level, at the secondary level the girls are performing better—and, by the way, nothing that comes out of this inquiry will in any way diminish the important progress that girls have made and should have made. Is that a concern to you?

Mr Green—Jim is our representative on the Board of Studies and has considerable data. I would just like to pick you up on your statement about the girls outperforming boys. Some girls are doing extremely well in the HSC, many girls are not. So generalisations, such as all the girls are beating all the boys, are misleading in the debate. It is certainly the case that some girls, usually girls from high socioeconomic backgrounds, are performing very well in the HSC, but we have very significant concerns about the educational outcome for many girls. We would not want this debate to detract from the fact that Aboriginal girls are not doing very well; girls from low socioeconomic backgrounds are doing very poorly; and many girls from some non-English-speaking background groups are also doing very poorly by comparison with all other groups, including boys.

CHAIR—We have certainly had that put to us. Rurality, how far you are from the Opera House, I suppose, and whether you have an indigenous or non-English-speaking background, and low socioeconomic status all compound what gender differences there may be in terms of outcome. But we have also been told that, for example, in the bottom quintile boys are represented two to one against the girls. So I accept what you are saying that some girls are doing extremely well, as are some boys, but there just seems to be a fairly marked differentiation at the bottom and the top. Is it sufficiently concerning to be doing something other than what the department is already doing?

Dr McMorrow—You asked about the HSC in particular?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr McMorrow—Perhaps I could comment on that and ease into your other question which I actually find agonisingly difficult in many respects. I do not think any of us are wanting to get up a competition about who is best and who is worst, and I take the bona fides of that as a given. The HSC is also difficult in New South Wales and, I think, in other states and territories. At least from this state's point of view, the gap in achievement has widened over the last 10 years or more between boys and girls. Halfway through the last decade—and I think Robert MacCann's work on this that you may have seen indicated this—boys were overrepresented at the extremes, the top and the bottom. I think that is starting to level out at the top as more girls are taking, and doing well in, subjects such as mathematics and science which, I understand, is not quite the case in some other states. I do not fully understand that but I note that trend.

I also note, without being too flippant, that these differences are widening in a stage of schooling where you have a better gender balance of teachers. I think that is just a commentary. I am not falling into correlations or causes—I do not really understand all that. What is right is that, firstly, up until now in New South Wales HSC outcomes data have been 'norm referenced' rather than 'standard referenced'—that is the jargon. That is to say, they have been about scaling methodologies that are designed to rank students. They have discriminated between them. The

whole point of those assessment mechanisms is to find ways of sharpening the differences between students mainly for tertiary entrance purposes.

The recent changes to the HSC will change all that. Students will be assessed and reported on in relation to what they can know, understand and do, and then the ranking can occur for the universities. I do not think that will remove this issue, but it will sharpen up and give us the chance over time to see what the real improvements in student learning have been in relation to standards of learning, as well as in relation to each other. We do not have the former now; I do not think any state has.

In relation to the tertiary entrance rank in this state—currently the universities entrance score—you should speak to the scaling committee of the University Admissions Council to understand that. It is a device deliberately to sharpen differences and, to some extent, exaggerated at the top, you will see. It only matters, of course, for a small number of courses. I think that is part of the story. There is counterbalancing. English is a compulsory subject within the New South Wales Higher School Certificate. That is the subject that is, in essence, causing most of the difference.

CHAIR—I understand. In terms of gender equity, are you concerned about the lack of male teachers in primary education especially? We understand that about one in five teachers is male. Certainly parent groups seem to be concerned about it, and some academics and sociologists. Is it something that you are concerned about? What strategies have you perhaps developed to try and address it—or what would you recommend to us to recommend?

Mr Green—Like everyone else, we note the difference. We do not know whether it is an issue for concern. We see no differences in the pattern of achievement across schools with various levels of male teachers. This is in pure outcome terms. I know it is anecdotal, but I spent a couple of days last week in a small country school with an all-female staff and I do not think I have ever met a happier, more contented, better adjusted group of little boys than I met at that school. So I do not know of any hard evidence—obviously, if you become aware of some, we will be interested to hear of it—that shows that there is actually an advantage. But I accept that, anecdotally, people say it would be a good thing if there were more male role models in primary schools.

We have to be extremely careful, though, about the issue of quality of teachers. I do not think the gender of a teacher is nearly as much an issue as the quality of the teacher and the quality of the pedagogy that that teacher applies in the classroom. The major thrust for us is around the quality of teaching. This state had a similar issue in the 1950s and the early 1960s. In order to get more males into primary teaching the entry level for males was reduced. Young women coming into teaching had to achieve a considerably higher score at the old Leaving Certificate than young men. That produced some real concerns for the system in terms of the quality of teachers which persisted for a whole generation of teachers. So it is not something that we would take on lightly again.

You may be aware that the government has commissioned a review of teacher education in New South Wales that is being undertaken by Dr Gregor Ramsey. Dr Ramsey will be reporting in the near future and we will be very interested to see his recommendations on preservice

training for teachers. But, as I said, our concern as a system is to get the best quality teachers into the classroom, regardless of gender.

Mr SAWFORD—I would like to acknowledge—even though I accept what Brendan has said about the states grants bill and the enrolment benchmark adjustment, and perhaps we will leave it there, in terms of its impact on state education—the positive tone of the submission, particularly in its recommendations to the Commonwealth in terms of leadership. My questions are to do with emphasis. Maybe I can start by going backwards; I was going to start the other way around. George, you mentioned the quality of teaching as being more important than the gender of the teacher. I do not have any problem with that. Yet your submission suggests otherwise. You cannot have two bob each way. Let me go back. The results of the Inner London Education Authority's longitudinal study published in *The Times* in April 1986 suggest, and I just want to read the comments so we get them right—

Dr McMorrow—Are they here?

Mr SAWFORD—No, but I am referring to your particular study. Their major finding, in fact their major recommendation, was:

... the most important determinant of future success or failure of boys or girls was the quality of the educational program that is offered to children between the ages of seven and 12 and that the quality of schooling, that is the educational program, was more important than socioeconomic background, race, religion, nationality, or gender.

So if we are looking for reasons for poor performance among boys or girls, why is it in this submission as well that race, socioeconomic status, nationality and gender are offered as reasons, but schooling or the quality of the educational program is offered as an afterthought?

Dr McMorrow—I do not think I accept that.

Mr SAWFORD—I will read to you what you said:

The only way to understand the impact of gender on educational achievement is through its interaction with other socio-cultural factors such as Aboriginality, socio-economic status, ethnicity and language background and geographic location.

Then under 'Causes and causal relationships' you say, as an afterthought:

Nonetheless, schooling is a key socialising agency—

I am just repeating what you are saying.

Dr McMorrow—I do not wish to retract.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you wish to comment?

Dr McMorrow—I think both things are right really. Look on page 11 of our submission.

CHAIR—This is a very important point that you want to make because a number of people have basically said to us, 'If the kids are poor, they're coming to school underfed,' and all that sort of stuff. You basically take a defeatist attitude—that is what they have implied—whereas

others have said, 'Where the rubber hits the road, if you've got enthusiastic, committed, well-trained, professionally developed teachers, then you'll get a better result.'

Dr McMorrow—We are not at the deficit end of that debate. It may not have been clearly enough expressed, but let me have a go and my colleagues will help me if I have got it slightly wrong. On page 11 we do have the results of some internal analysis which show that, in fact, if you try to look at those things through this particular technique that affect learning outcomes in English language and literacy assessment, 92 per cent are factors other than gender. But of those other factors within that, you have got 63 per cent which I think would be consistent with what you are talking about. I think they are issues about the quality of teaching and learning and school organisation and community support and the like.

Mr SAWFORD—The point I am making is that many people have come before this committee and made similar comments to what is in this submission. But you cannot have the quality of teachers as important and gender as a secondary issue and then come back and argue that gender is a prime issue and that educational program is a secondary issue. Yet in this submission, I repeat to you, that is what you have done, and you are not the only education department in this country to have done the same.

Dr McMorrow—I think our position is that it has to be a comprehensive and balanced view about this. Gender is an important component as those figures show, but it cannot be seen in isolation.

Mr SAWFORD—I am saying—and I suppose you are reinforcing it in the pie graph on page 11—that the educational program is in fact the key.

Mr Alegounarias—What may not be apparent is that we chose not to include pie charts that would apparently show a smaller factor of gender by way of emphasising that, for us, boys education and gender is the key issue. If it is not clear, it should have been made clearer. We attempted, both in the beginning and at key points, to be explicit about the fact that the department does not retract responsibility to the extent that it can carry that responsibility—that is, complete responsibility in our everyday work for the education outcomes of boys and girls. For instance, if it were applied to year 3 literacy basic skills tests, the gender gap would be four per cent and it would be halved to two per cent if you took the other factors into account. We were trying not to underemphasise. In fact, the disclaimers in here show that it is about interaction and that the other factors that are emphasised so often need to have a gender element as well. I accept your point about how it might be taken. We could have included pie charts that attempted to underemphasise it, but this was the largest gap—in year 7 literacy.

Ms Davidson—May I add one other thing? When you write anything you become very conscious of the complexities involved. We have two issues. The first is the fact that children can come to school with a range of difficulties—they may not have been fed and they may not be healthy. In New South Wales we are seeking, through the Families First program, to ensure that agencies work better together to try to overcome some of these issues. For example, if children are not fed, that is clearly the basic need. You cannot concentrate on learning if you are starving or if you need good food. We are looking at ways to help schools work more effectively when resources are scarce. One of the programs that we cannot deal with here—schools as community centres—has achieved this. In the small number of areas where it has been introduced we have ensured that young people from this background are ready for school

introduced we have ensured that young people from this background are ready for school and better able to learn because some of the other issues have been addressed.

The other issue that we talked about involves students at the Higher School Certificate end. We have not put a lot about it in our submission—other groups will do that—but parents and teachers need to work together on these issues. This committee will highlight issues for parents, who will start to ask, 'What can we do?' We note that on many occasions the parents of boys have a much narrower view of what is appropriate for their sons to do for the Higher School Certificate than what their daughters should do. Subject selection for girls extends across a much broader range of areas. Again, we find the whole issue incredibly complex. One of the needs that we emphasise to teachers is how we can make all the things we learn appropriate to teachers who can then pick them up and incorporate them into what they are doing in schools. That is one of the things we will be seeking—and we will be looking to you also for some insight in this area.

Mr SAWFORD—Jim, in your introduction you commented that you were formerly an economist. If you went around our political offices—whether National Party, Liberal or Labor—you might find written on their whiteboards, 'Is the economy stupid?' I wonder whether on the whiteboards of bureaucrats of Australian educationalists it is written, 'The educational program is stupid.' Basically, you can look at Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*—I am sure all of you are familiar with that text—and identify the different ways in which boys and girls learn. Do you acknowledge that, if I set up a curriculum and I incorporated analysis, insight, visual and spatial skills, conceptualisation, active learning and comprehension, it would favour boys? If I wanted to set up a curriculum to favour girls, I would devise one that included synthesis, intuition, verbal skills, description, translation and a whole range of other things. You can favour one gender or the other in the type of learning that you organise.

Some people have put it to us that, compared with 20 years ago, even the examination systems are far more verbal than they ever were—even in mathematics. Would anyone like to comment on the different learning styles of boys and girls and whether the construction of the current curriculum and examination systems—I am not saying deliberately, but unintentionally—perhaps disadvantages boys?

Dr McMorrow—I think there is something in what you say. I had not quite finished what I was saying about the HSC—and, by the way, there are some factors that might be of interest to the committee there. One of them is that the assessment regime within the Higher School Certificate relies, in my view, overly heavily on pen and paper, on written examination answers. I am not sure about mathematics—I do not think that is quite right in New South Wales, other than in the lower level courses that were introduced for underachieving students in that area, which will change under the new HSC.

I think there is a strong case for diversifying the range of assessment methods in particular at the senior levels to give a broader range of knowledge skills and understandings brought to bear. This is particularly the case when you have universities amalgamating all that into a single score, which we think is ridiculous as an example and an outcome of 12 years of schooling. One of the things we are grappling with in the new HSC arrangements is to give a more integrated role to a range of subject areas, particularly in vocational education and training, that are valued in themselves and valued by the students and others. That is a key to the answer why it has

happened perhaps in the way you are suggesting. But the last thing to say about it is that that curriculum still has to be valued and important to the community and to the students.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you for the answer. You mentioned that in the mid-1970s a lot of reports came out. There was another one that came out via Karmel.

Dr McMorrow—I remember it well.

Mr SAWFORD—It was a watershed report in many ways, but like all reports it had failures, and one was perhaps its failure to recognise the importance of the sources in primary schools, but also it recommended the creation of the single comprehensive high school. You just mentioned vocational education. Do you think in a comparison between public and private education that public education, by the creation of the single comprehensive high school, has indirectly disadvantaged boys, because I have never seen in this country a successful academic high school with a successful vocational educational program. Certainly, there are some advertisements on that type, but when you actually sit down and talk to the kids and the teachers involved, the competition between the two styles always means the academic, the faculties, win out, and vocational education comes second.

When public education had diversity—and we all acknowledge the strength of diversity in education—in terms of technical schools, selective high schools, selective technical schools, area schools, agricultural schools, there was a diversity in the public system that some people would argue no longer exists. I know it is a little different in New South Wales, but right across Australia we really do have single, comprehensive high schools. I am not arguing for a return to a school system that is dead and buried, but in terms of the uniformity of public education, particularly at junior secondary level, do you think that is a problem for boys?

Dr McMorrow—I noticed your comments in the *Hansard* on the Karmel report and, having been involved in a previous life around that, I was not sure whether that was right and so I re-read the Karmel report. In fact, because I knew them I took the opportunity of talking to a couple of the authors, and you might do the same. I am not sure that is right.

Mr SAWFORD—I can refer you to the actual paragraphs and the reasons. I cannot remember them now but they are in that speech.

Dr McMorrow—You might do that because I think the emphases in that report were somewhat different. We do not need to take time up on that now, I will talk to you later about it because I am interested in that history more than anything. New South Wales I have to say—and I do not want to sound like Queensland is different—in relation to the balance of selective and comprehensive schools has been that way for some time, and the selective schools in this state are very strong performers in the HSC, very strong. We can give you clear evidence of that. There are issues about the relationship within a public school system of the balance between different kinds of selective schools. There are academic selectors, there are performing arts selectors and the like, and a comprehensive model.

There are some recent changes in that, through the better coordination at the senior secondary level between academic and vocational studies within senior secondary schooling, and between

schools, TAFE and universities that we think have some significant potential. We are happy to give you further information about the government's collegiate education program.

Mr SAWFORD—That would be welcome.

CHAIR—Mr Bartlett has some questions—he is a former teacher.

Mr BARTLETT—Firstly, just a quick comment for the record. The states grants bill involves an increase of 21 per cent in public school funding over the next quadrennium on top of an increase of 25 per cent over the past quadrennium. Ms Nielsen, you said that programs on gender construction and masculinity have led to a significant improvement in social behaviour and interaction at the school level. What sort of impact have they had on learning outcomes and how has it been measured?

Ms Nielsen—I am talking about speaking to some specific boys and in some schools where they have been given social skills to solve conflict differently. When I talked about sex based harassment and the work around that, what we found was that that can limit boys to taking that narrow range of subjects. What we are working towards is having boys not being harassed by 'that's sissy' or 'that's girlie' but being able to take a wider range of subjects. This is a long process, and it is not one that happens overnight, because of all the influences that come not only from schools but from other areas in society. It is a slow process.

Mr BARTLETT—Is it your view that that is likely to lead to improved learning outcomes?

Ms Nielsen—If boys then would choose a wider range of subjects because they are not limited by what it means to be a man, then that could show that boys' HSC results may in fact be affected by their subject choice and their limitation. There is a lot of research around that, outside the schooling system, that shows that.

Mr BARTLETT—Even though they are being outperformed by girls in most subject areas?

Ms Nielsen—I think we need to keep on asking which boys, which girls and not generalise about all boys. I was speaking to a teacher last week in the Penrith area and he was talking about sex based harassment and how that can limit boys' opportunities for taking subjects. He said he remembered a boy crying because his parents would not let him take a certain subject which was his favourite subject. That boy is not going to do as well if he has to take an alternative subject that his parents think appropriate for his employment.

Mr BARTLETT—On page 3 of your submission you made the comment:

> It is not possible or appropriate to prescribe processes to achieve improvements in boys' schooling in some circumstances.

Can you just elaborate on those circumstances and what you mean by that?

Mr Alegounarias—The point there was that there is a trap that governments and systems fall into where you can prescribe a one size fits all approach to complex issues. In an inquiry such as yours there is always the chance—the temptation, I guess—that there would be some

practices that are identified as effective and the thought might emerge that it is appropriate that that practice would be replicated elsewhere. But the complexity of the issue that we have attempted to highlight, our experience in running an education system, is that it would be inappropriate to prescribe models of practice from afar for systems that allude to schools.

Dr McMorrow—With reference to the 21 per cent, I would like to table the schedule in the bill that shows that per capita grants to government schools will be zero per cent in real terms and will reduce if the EBA is applied. The 21 per cent in Minister Kemp's publication—

Mr SAWFORD—If you had listened to my speech in the parliament, you would have known that.

Dr McMorrow—Just so you know this when you consider the bill, it reflects the index used by the Commonwealth to adjust for inflation.

Mrs MAY—We were talking about male teachers versus female teachers. In one of your tables that you submitted to the inquiry, I was very interested to see that in 1999 the take-up rate for a Bachelor of Education was 83 per cent women. That is a very high number. I wonder why men are not taking up the option to come into teaching as a profession. It is really just a comment. I know we have talked about the quality of education and not so much a balance, but that figure does seem very high when maybe in some areas we are looking for role models for our young men; 83 per cent seemed very high to me.

CHAIR—And are you concerned about what seems to be a low level of academic requirement for people to be accepted into teaching?

Dr McMorrow—On the latter, yes, although I think there has been some small improvement over the last few years. The requirement for teaching is pretty comparable to a range of other areas such as science, certainly nursing and even, I think, commerce. I would have to double-check all of that; I am speaking off the top of my head. Last time I looked at this over the last few years, teaching was sort of there in the middle of the pack beyond those for entry into, of course, medicine, law and economics. I think you will find that that trend has changed, but it is still not good enough and we do need to look at ways in which we can better recruit and sustain high quality teachers, including high quality male teachers, into the profession. And as George mentions, we are looking to a report from a year-long review on teacher education into this by Gregor Ramsey which, if you are still going, we will pass on to you.

Mrs MAY—Is there a high turnover rate out of the state system? Are we losing or not?

Mr Green—No. In fact the turnover rate out of the state system is very low, and in historical terms it is extremely low.

CHAIR—On that point, we saw some publicity that the New South Wales government was trying to retire off teachers over age 45 or something like that. I will not speak on behalf of my colleagues but it seems to me, at least, that they are the kind of people we ought to be getting into teaching—people who have life skills, in a sense, and wisdom. I appreciate you are probably targeting people who you feel have perhaps had enough, but is there a case for looking

at a strategy of, instead of recruiting school leavers, actually bringing people like any one of us or you?

Dr McMorrow—We would look forward to any applications, particularly for civics and citizenship.

CHAIR—It would obviously require resources—people need career transition packages—

Dr McMorrow—I think the answer is yes, we do. It was actually one of the terms of reference that the minister gave to this review by Gregor Ramsey—to broaden, including obtaining experienced mature age teachers. It is not inconsistent with the strategy to provide ways and means of helping older teachers who have been in the system—and who, to some extent maybe, feel locked into that system for decades—with ways of repositioning their careers. That is an issue, by the way, that I think all professions and occupations are going to need to deal with.

Mr SAWFORD—Following on Margaret's question on the gender bit: we have had two private boys schools give evidence when we were at a very early stage of this inquiry. It was interesting that they both reported that the male-female teacher gender ratio in their junior secondary years was 60:40 in favour of males, and in the junior school was 50:50. That is different from the public system, isn't it?

Dr McMorrow—I am not aware of the specific figures. The figures from the bureau—

Mr SAWFORD—These schools were Tintern Grammar in Melbourne and Canberra Grammar in Canberra.

Dr McMorrow—I know about Canberra Grammar. I can only go on the broad brush statistics, which show very little difference between government and non-government schools in male and female ratios. The statistics I have here are from the 1999 Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Mr SAWFORD—No, these are boys schools.

Dr McMorrow—I would have to get some data on that for you.

Mr SAWFORD—That would be interesting.

Mrs MAY—We touched on professional development earlier, particularly with the gender equity strategy. How is that accessed? How wide is that teacher development? Does every teacher have access to it throughout New South Wales?

Ms Nielsen—It is across the state. The 80 gender equity network coordinators I talked about and the 40 student services and equity coordinators are in districts. We have 40 districts across the states. Those networks in each district allow for teachers from all the schools in that district to access the professional development.

Mrs MAY—We are reaching rural, remote areas? All of New South Wales?

Ms Nielsen—Yes. That is across New South Wales. There are two gender equity network facilitators in every district across New South Wales, and the student services and equity coordinator coordinating that. Those networks meet in different ways in rural areas. In urban areas they are more likely to meet as a whole; in some rural areas they would meet as clusters because of geographical location.

Mrs MAY—And is that development ongoing?

Ms Nielsen—Yes, it is ongoing.

Mrs ELSON—Dr McMorrow, you said in your opening statement that the gap had widened with the underachievement of boys over the last decade. Mr Green said that in a socially disadvantaged area there were many girls not achieving. I looked at both of those issues and thought that, over 10 years, surely something has been done to rectify that. Do you have figures to show it is improving—that people from socially disadvantaged areas are not dropping out of the public school system, as I see in my area? In the socially disadvantaged area of my electorate, the parents are actually going without themselves to put their children into private education, because they feel the public school system has not identified that there are social problems and the teachers are not experienced enough to handle them and encourage those children from disadvantaged areas.

The teachers are not experienced enough. I have a few teachers in my family who say they have not upgraded any skills to handle that sort of behaviour. I wondered if the New South Wales education system is doing something about that. With something that has been identified over 10 years, we should start seeing results now. Do you have results that show the trend is changing with boys—say in the last 12 months or two years? You would think that when something has been identified in the first five years you would change that system and we would start seeing results now.

Mr Green—Can I say that in the preface to your question you made a number of generalisations and I would probably refute them, seriatim.

Mrs ELSON—Do you have figures to back them up?

Mr Green—You made a statement that teachers in disadvantaged areas, in your terms, were less experienced, that they were not supported and a whole range of other things. I think they need to be unpacked first.

CHAIR—That did seem to be a bit of a theme from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry into remote areas.

Mr Green—Yes, there is a distinction there. But I was involved in some work a few years ago to look at the level of experience of teachers working in areas covered by the Disadvantaged Schools Program in western and south-western Sydney, because there were some assumptions on the part of state government that what you said was the case. When it was looked at, it is not the case. There are many very, very experienced and competent teachers who

choose to live out their careers working in disadvantaged areas and see that as their particular forte in teaching. We did not find that high turnover. In disadvantaged remote rural areas, it is definitely an issue and it is one that we are addressing through a range of strategies.

Mrs ELSON—I will put it another way: do you have figures on teachers that are teaching in disadvantaged areas of the extra upgrading of their skills. Are they forced to take extra upgrade of their skills to handle socially disadvantaged children?

Mr Green—I can provide details on what is now known as the Priority Schools Funding Program in New South Wales which injects—I will not try to pull a figure out of mid-air—tens of millions of dollars in additional funding into schools that are identified as being in about the bottom 20 per cent of socioeconomic areas. It provides those schools with additional funding to implement programs around literacy, et cetera. It also provides them with a very substantial staffing supplement, which means that some of those schools have up to five or even 5½ or six additional teachers appointed to the staff. Tom is an ex-DSP consultant.

Mr Alegounarias—In terms of the DSP, the Disadvantaged Schools Program, for low socioeconomic status communities, it was $56 million in 1999-2000.

Mrs ELSON—Probably I am not looking at the amount of money that goes into disadvantaged schools. Speaking from experience, money that goes into disadvantaged schools is sometimes sitting still in their boxes and not unpacked. I just want to know if you follow that up?

Mr Alegounarias—Can I just point out that in the DSP, for instance, about 80 per cent of that money goes on professional development of teachers year by year.

Mrs ELSON—So each teacher at a disadvantaged school would have their skills upgraded on a regular basis?

Mr Alegounarias—The school would decide how best to maximise the effective use of resource. For instance, in one year it might be the whole school to begin a program; in a subsequent year it may be a group of teachers that are being created as experts that would then be an ongoing resource for that school, et cetera. I did not mean to interrupt George, but I just point out that gender is commonly an explicit element—along with literacy, as Eleanor has pointed out—that is addressed in that program. A key element in this state over the past years has been the full service schools program, which was a Commonwealth program which was having, according to DETYA and according to our evidence as well, substantial impact on the education of boys. The Commonwealth has discontinued that program this year.

CHAIR—This is an important point. I will express it another way: if you are a parent and you drop your kids off at school, or you choose a school and you put them on the bus or train, how can you have confidence in the quality of the teaching that is going on in the classroom. Would there be teachers in the education system who are not involved in professional development? We are talking about government schools here, obviously. Nowadays in the medical profession, for example, you have to be involved in continuing medical education and quality assurance in order to continue to attract Medicare benefits. Some people have said that there should be some external benchmarking that parents can look at so they can say: the

teacher of my son or my daughter is involved in professional development and is up to date, so to speak. Should there be a national registration system and should there be benchmarking? There is a series of questions there but they do go to the heart of not just boys, obviously, but the education of kids generally.

Dr McMorrow—You may want to talk on the specifics, but generally the New South Wales minister would share your questions and, in fact, gave some of them to the review which we expect to see tabled in the next month or so. It will come to issues about how you assure parents and the community of the quality of teachers in the public system, beyond the structures and processes we go through now, and whether some form of registration or accreditation—and not just a minimum level of accreditation—might be helpful in reassuring the community about the quality of teachers. At least within the public school system currently, there are significant processes.

CHAIR—You may not be prepared to answer the question, but could you have teachers teaching today that have not been participating in any professional development who are demoralised, burnt out and just going through the motions of turning up?

Mr Alegounarias—You could not have teachers that did not participate; you could have teachers that did not engage.

CHAIR—Yes. I am familiar with that.

Mr Alegounarias—But you could not have teachers that did not participate, because there have been some very substantial programs—I can think of Aboriginal education and the state literacy strategy—that have required the full participation of every teacher.

CHAIR—Yes. I would be the first to accept that if there was some sort of registration system and requirement for teachers to participate and engage that ought to be reflected in career structure and so on if we are going to get kids into teaching.

Dr McMorrow—All of that is on the agenda.

Mr SAWFORD—Ms Nielsen, I take your point when you said we should ask which boys and which girls were succeeding or failing. Even though I value that and that is an extremely important point to make, that reflects synthesis, which reflects a very feminine view of the world. All boys and all girls, which reflects the whole, is also an important part of the argument. Your comment?

Ms Nielsen—We have to be very careful about making assumptions about boys and girls.

Mr SAWFORD—No, you have missed the point. What I am saying to you is that, in terms of the argument between boys and girls—and I go back to Bloom's taxonomy—you have synthesis, and that is important; you are quite right. But what I am hearing coming across from you is a failure to acknowledge analysis. Synthesis is identifying all the parts and hoping they will make a whole. That is a very feminine way and reflects a way in which girls learn very effectively. A lot of boys learn the other way. They learn by analysis—that is, they identify the whole and then try and work out what the constituent parts are. What I am hearing from you—and I have heard from other people on this inquiry—is that, although they are quite prepared to

nd I have heard from other people on this inquiry—is that, although they are quite prepared to acknowledge the feminine style of learning, synthesis, they are not prepared to acknowledge the male strength in learning, which is analysis. And you are doing it again, so get into it, Joy!

Ms Nielsen—Systematic, explicit teaching recognises that analysis is an important part of it. We are doing that in our literacy strategy, and that has been very successful with boys. Boys like it when teachers come into the classroom and are very clear about what the expected outcomes are going to be, what they expect students to be doing and what outcomes they expect for students. I was talking before about the lesson I observed in the Mount Druitt area last week. There were boys and girls in that class. The teacher was very systematic and explicit in his teaching and allowed that analysis of boys. Both boys and girls were working very well together in that classroom, and the teacher was allowing for the skills. That teaching process that has been promoted by our state literacy strategy is working in addressing the different learning styles of all students.

CHAIR—It is always a risky business letting politicians into school, but could we perhaps go and have a look at that at some stage? You can take that on notice.

Mr Green—Can I just make one last point on this notion of different learning styles between boys and girls—and with due respect to Bloom, whom I think I studied some time ago.

Mr SAWFORD—We all did.

Mr Green—There has been a lot of debate around this issue, and I am sure you will hear a lot of it. I am strongly of the view from my 30-odd years experience and from studies in the area that what you are referring to as different learning styles of boys and girls are in fact different learning styles of people. People learn differently, and those that you generalise as being male styles and female styles are now thought almost certainly to be learned. This is a very important point. Whether, in fact, they are innate—that there is something wired into little baby boys' brains and something else wired into little baby girls' brains—I think has been largely discredited. What you are seeing and what you are describing are sociocultural artefacts; they are things that kids learn from birth. Little boys, because of the way they are conditioned as they are growing up and being educated, learn to learn in different ways. If that is in fact the case, we can do something about it, and we need to.

Mr SAWFORD—But for all your environmental socioconstructs, there are already plenty of people at this early stage in this inquiry who are telling us exactly the opposite to what you are saying. The information comes from practitioners in schools, parents and children themselves. I am not arguing; I am just saying that I think both arguments are valid. What I find a bit of a problem is that, from within the state education systems around this country, in two states already we have had a point of view put forward that favours one to almost the exclusion of the other, yet the people practising and actually teaching boys in the field are not totally supporting your arguments.

Mr Alegounarias—I have to say for the record that our position was that we do not know enough about the cause and the causal relationships. I think that is what you will find our paper says. One of the things we hoped would come out of this would be research that will establish

these things. We actually went looking for evidence of associations in this way and were unable to find something that had enough veracity for us to put to you in our submission.

CHAIR—We could talk to you for some time, but we do have to finish, I am sorry.

Dr McMorrow—I will just raise one thing: we did not have a chance to look at the links between schools and TAFE in vocational education and training. It is quite complex, but I think you need to take it into account. I will give you some figures on participation, just as background, and if you want to follow up on that issue in particular, I would be happy to help.

CHAIR—We would. In fact, I am fairly certain that we will be back in Sydney for more public hearings and perhaps an appropriate person from the department might come along to talk to us about that issue succinctly.

Dr McMorrow—We would be very happy to do that.

CHAIR—When do you expect the inquiry to be finished?

Dr McMorrow—By the end of the month, I think.

CHAIR—Obviously it will be a public document, so we would like a copy, and perhaps we can also have the author come and chat to us.

Dr McMorrow—We would be happy to arrange that.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for appearing, and thank you for your efforts in this regard.

[10.25 a.m.]

YATES, Professor Lyn, Professor of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney

CHAIR—Welcome, Professor Yates. Thank you very much for providing a submission to our inquiry.

Prof. Yates—I have recently moved to UTS from La Trobe University in Melbourne. My submission was on behalf of the UTS Faculty of Education. I am a Professor of Teacher Education, but the broader faculty has a large interest in vocational and adult learning. The submission reflects the links, in a way, between those aspects.

My own background in this area is that in some ways this has been my main area of research for over 20 years—a focus on gender, curriculum and inequalities in Australian education. I did my PhD in this area. I have written a lot on it. I have worked on it overseas. I have worked on a project of national databases on gender equity. I have worked on a project on what girls and boys get positively out of each other in the co-ed environment. I have been on the steering committee of the project that Faith Trent and others are doing in South Australia, and I have been listening to boys through that. I was a consultant on the project that Cherry Collins, Jane Kenway and Julie McLeod did on the gender equity research and evidence. The major research I have been doing myself for the last seven years is a qualitative longitudinal study with Julie McLeod—a sort of *7 Up* study, where we have been following boys and girls at four different schools in Victoria through every year of their secondary school and out the other end until they reach 18. It is a project that follows them from age 12 to 18. That is just a bit about my background.

I will just try to highlight and illustrate some of the main thrusts of the submission. I began with a little bit of trying to put the issue in context. I briefly made some points about boys not being a unified group, that some issues apply to all boys but some issues are different for different groups of boys. Also, on straight facts and figures, I would identify that the groups who most lose out from school would be boys and girls from poor backgrounds, from rural backgrounds and Aboriginal boys and girls. So I just make those general points. The other background issue that I think is worth talking about is thinking about how this relates to, and compares with, the past gender equity work on girls in school. I think in some ways there is a tendency to think about it in a way that slightly distorts what some of the specific issues related to boys are.

A couple of years ago I published an article on gender equity in the boys debate and said that I thought possibly one of the most common ways that people were thinking about the situation we are in now went something like this: ‘About 20 years ago, governments became aware that girls were being disadvantaged in schooling. They developed policies and funding to improve girls’ career aspirations, to make curriculum and pedagogy more girl friendly and to ensure equal spending on girls and boys. At the same time a huge amount of research and writing was carried out on girls, their development and their needs. Over this period we have seen a large increase in the proportion of girls completing school as compared with boys and their increase in participation in non-traditional subjects such as maths. Now it is time for more attention to the boys. Boys’ retention rates, learning difficulties, delinquency, suicide rates and general self-

esteem are all cause for concern. We do not want to take away from the girls programs, and more needs to be done in relation to issues such as sexual harassment in schools, but there is a real dearth of good research and professional support for boys. This is what should now occupy our urgent attention.'

It seemed to me that that was a fairly widespread feeling but, in fact, there are a number of myths behind that picture of what has happened and where we are. A number of things relating to the initial concerns about girls have not gone away and a number of things that we are now concerned with in relation to boys—suicide, retention, and things like that—have a longstanding history and are of concern. I am raising this not just because of the equal opportunity, gender equity sort of agenda, but also because of the issue of thinking more precisely about what the issues for boys are.

I want to take two examples from the girls area that I think are slightly different in relation to boys and that might be worth thinking about. Initial concerns about girls that were given a whole lot of attention were that women were invisible in the curriculum, girls were a bit invisible in schools and girls were being encouraged towards fairly restricted career outcomes. I do not think any of those things particularly apply to boys. I think teachers are not unaware of boys. They are not necessarily doing the right thing for boys, but it is not simply a matter of taking over the same solution and thinking, 'We'll just copy what was done in the girls area.' Another example, which is a quite interesting and difficult one, is their curriculum issue. There was a lot of effort put into persuading more girls to do maths for the vocational pay-off of that. In a lot of ways, that was not a hard thing to convince parents and girls to do—there was an advantage to be gained from doing maths, medicine, and so on.

In relation to boys, the issue of subject choice and where they should be going is more difficult and more subtle. I have been fairly convinced by Richard Teese's research which suggests that one of the reasons that boys do not do as well as they might in year 12 is that they overenrol in maths. One of the things that I am going to be talking about in relation to our submission is that there are issues where I think boys could do with more personal development or humanity subjects than they get or like doing. Persuading both boys and their parents that this is a good direction is not the same sort of issue as persuading girls that doing maths and medicine is a good thing. It is a more complex issue. We might come back to that later.

I will now talk about the things that we did think needed examination in relation to boys and education. The first thing is the changing forms of work and its impact. One of the things that there has been most agreement on in recent years is the changes in the labour market and forms of work, the disappearance of a lot of traditional areas of men's work—unskilled manual labour and so on—and the rise in importance of the service and knowledge economies. There is also widespread agreement that we are entering a period of ongoing change in relation to work. The people who do well in this are likely to be people who have some orientation to being flexible, are lifelong learners, are able to assess what new opportunities are, and are able to find ways of operating in relation to that.

I think these changes have affected boys' education in two ways. One is that it is more difficult for them to leave school early and to go into work and apprenticeships. A lot of those jobs have disappeared. The other issue is that the previous sense that we had—and that a lot of boys have—of what is vocational preparation is inappropriately narrow.

I will give two illustrations of that. Recently my nephew visited me in Sydney. He grew up in provincial Victoria, did very well at school, got a scholarship to a provincial university, did a computer studies degree and topped the degree, but he had some trouble getting a job at the end of the degree. When he came up and visited me I could see why. He was a shy lad and came across very much as a country lad. It seemed to me that this was an illustration of how, with most jobs these days—from the computer industry to academia to a whole lot of workplaces of various kinds—the issue is not just of the skills and knowledge people have but of a whole lot of other things about whether they will work well in teams, what sort of person they come across as. Those broader areas of schooling that boys have often seen as being fairly irrelevant—and I am talking more, I suppose, about working-class boys here—are not as irrelevant as people think, given the nature of the job changes that are going on.

Similarly, in my longitudinal project, at the poorest school in that project—a provincial school—we found something that is fairly common, that from the beginning the boys were not very keen on school. They really resented being treated as children rather than as adults. They really wanted to be out in the work force. That school arranged some dual accreditation and workplace learning for them, and they liked that a lot. In fact, they were the only subjects they really stuck to and passed; they did not pass their year 12. But when we interviewed those boys this year they were unemployed. Although they liked the workplace opportunities, they were not able to get work in those areas. What I am saying is that we have to take seriously both aspects of that. I think one of the big issues of boys in relation to secondary schooling is their resentment at not being treated as adults. On the other hand, there is a problem that, in order to get work, they possibly need a wider foundation and a more extensive preparation than they are aware of. This has potential implications for institutional arrangements, such as what opportunities are available for boys such as the ones I have just mentioned to re-enter education or to complete it in other forms, and for curriculum issues. The vocational situation is wider than boys may think.

I now wish to mention some other aspects of my submission. As well as changes in the forms of work in this longitudinal project, we have been interested in how broader social changes have affected boys. Of course, they partly relate to changes in the role of women, success of girls and family forms. In the project we have found that in the junior secondary years boys do seem less certain about their place in the future and less optimistic—but not pessimistic—than girls. In relation to girls' success they accept that there should be equality, but with some boys there is uneasiness about it. In the junior secondary years, if girls are clearly doing well, there is a tendency for boys to say, 'School work doesn't matter,' and to want to define their own identity somewhere else.

Through this project we found that there was, in a way, a tension, or almost a contradiction, in how a number of boys felt they wanted to be treated in school. There is a strong agenda that they wanted to be treated as adults and a strong resentment about a lot of the ways in which schools operate—the compulsoriness, the hours, the routines and all those sorts of things.

On the other hand, it came through strongly from a lot of the interviews that they felt that teachers did not care enough about them personally compared with primary school. They felt no-one was taking a specific interest in them. It does relate to issues of identity, and it is one that needs thinking about in the forms of schooling.

I mentioned a few issues in the submission relating to how schools are organised at present that might be affecting boys. Briefly, I was suggesting that the changes in recent years, that have seen much more public emphasis on testing and public debate about where people are, are probably feeding parents' anxieties and may be having a particularly difficult effect on boys in the primary school years. People start panicking before they would have done in the past because it is such a public debate. The second issue I raised, which I am not going to talk much about myself, is that violence and bullying is a major issue and has short-term and long-term effects, both on the bullies and the victims. The other issue I talked about, which a lot of research, including mine, has shown up, is that we need to do some new thinking about the middle school years, particularly years 8 to 10. A lot of students feel in those years that not much of interest is happening. They are not really learning new things, but they really feel the restrictions of schooling pressing down on them. I know a number of private schools, such as Geelong Grammar, have long reacted to that by taking kids away somewhere else and doing something completely different in year 9, for instance.

I will summarise the issues I have raised and possible issues for education. In thinking about this area, basing the agenda for boys either on narrowly listening to what boys say they need or on narrowly trying to copy what girls programs did I think is too limited an approach. Both of those have some place, but we need to think about these broader vocational changes and how they are impacting on boys. Secondly, in relation to the issue—this is for working-class and rural boys in particular—of wanting to be out working, we need to think about institutional arrangements for re-entry or for completing education in different ways, and we need to think about middle school programs. Thirdly, in terms of curriculum, personal and social understanding are important in relation to what work is today. Simply saying that boys do not want to deal with those aspects of life is not good enough if that is really going to harm them in the long term. Vocationally, we need to be thinking not just about the short-term result of schooling but about the fact that we are entering a period in which, when people leave school, they are going to have to redirect their lives and go on learning, and so on.

The other issue that really comes through all the research that has been done listening to boys, as well as research on bullying, is that we do need to give more attention to the interpersonal relations between teachers and boys in school. There is a feeling among many boys that no-one really cares about them as individuals or their particular style and outcomes.

Mrs MAY—One comment that you made was that teachers were not necessarily doing the right thing by the boys, and you teased that out by talking about personal development and the interpersonal skills between teachers and working with boys. I wonder about our counselling services. You went on to talk about choices regarding leaving school. You spoke about your own nephew—he has obviously done extremely well but there was no job there or he found it very difficult to get a job. So going back to secondary level and working with counsellors or teachers, how can we improve that or make those boys more aware of their choices, where they are going, where those jobs are and building on that relationship, either with the school counsellor or with their teachers?

Primary school is probably a little different in that you have the same teacher for everything you do, while at high school level you have got fragmentation and you may have six or eight different teachers. How can the education department look at improving that relationship for

boys so that they can go on and choose their career later on—a counselling process that they could go through? Could you comment on that?

Prof. Yates—Yes. In this longitudinal study, of the four different schools that we were studying, two of them seemed to be much better on this than the other two. It seemed to relate not just to whether they had a school counsellor in a certain role, because the two that were not so good certainly had that, but much more, in a sense, to the whole school ethos and whether there was some ongoing looking out for the students. It might be by a home room teacher or it might be through a counselling structure. I think it was partly to do with what the school saw as important, the tacit ways that teachers went about their work and the small interventions that they made with people. At one of the schools that seemed to do this well, it was not necessarily either the counsellor or the careers teacher that had made a difference; it might have been one of the subject teachers, depending on where their emphasis was placed.

Mrs MAY—Would you see a need for more professional development for individual teachers so that they are more aware of picking up problems as they are teaching?

Prof. Yates—Yes. I think that professional development of teachers would be a good thing. This has been an era when people have been very worried about outcomes. It has been a very competitive era for parents and schools. That issue of effective schooling is really important. I certainly think we should be doing things that help students to learn more and get good results, but I just have a feeling that that emphasis has been so overwhelming that it has been trampling over school sensitivity to students and social needs—they have got to be thinking about the individual kids in the school and how they feel all this pressure. In the South Australian projects, a lot of the boys feel that schools just do not have enough understanding of the fact that a lot of them have out-of-school work, yet they are treated very punitively if they do not hand in an assignment the next day.

Mrs MAY—Yet they are taking on outside responsibilities by holding down a job, and in a lot of cases probably supporting their own education.

Prof. Yates—Yes, that is right.

Mr SAWFORD—My questions revolve around balance or, in fact, the lack of balance. In this inquiry, we have had two days of public hearings in Canberra, two in Melbourne, and this is our first day in Sydney, so we are at the very early stages of this inquiry. I do not know whether you were here, Professor Yates, for the previous—

Prof. Yates—No, I was not.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the gentlemen from the education department basically rejected out of hand any biological factors dealing with the learning styles of boys. He basically said that they were discredited and that environmental factors or social constructs were all that they were interested in. Would you like to make a brief comment on that?

Prof. Yates—My own view is that children and people, and boys and girls, are not blank slates; that is, they do come into the world with some biological differences that they get genetically. What we have to think about is how schools relate to that. Certainly, the issue with

girls has shown that a lot of what we take as people's lack of capacity has been produced by the way schools taught maths, the way they assessed it, or whatever. My own view is that there needs to be more acceptance of diversity of learning styles than there has been.

Mr SAWFORD—May I pursue that point a little further? All attributes of human behaviour have positives and negatives. For example, competition and individualism are often regarded, particularly among boys, as undesirable behaviour; they do not have to be. Cooperation and teamwork are promoted as very positive behaviours and of course the negative part of cooperation and teamwork—operating according to the lowest common denominator—is hardly ever acknowledged. In other words, you accentuate the positive and forget about the negative. Would you like to comment on competition and cooperation in schools as they affect boys—and girls, for that matter?

Prof. Yates—I think your point is a very good one. Traditionally, competition has been extremely acceptable in relation to school sporting teams. There has been a huge amount of emphasis on that. Some of the downsides of sporting teams have sometimes not been acknowledged in that they have often been associated with bullying, harassment or whatever—they have been given special privileges. I do not think we should be trying to do away with competitiveness; but we should always be very alert as to who is losing out as a result of certain styles of doing things. One of the longstanding issues with things like streaming, prizes and so on is that it gives successful students a boost but it can really depress the results of those who are not successful.

Mr SAWFORD—Do boys respond more positively to diversity?

Prof. Yates—Diversity in what sense?

Mr SAWFORD—Teaching approach, style, pedagogy, activity or passivity in terms of learning styles?

Prof. Yates—I do not know that I would give a uniform answer to that question. If you looked at boys attending Sydney Grammar, for example, who are doing a humanities subject and you looked at boys in a western suburbs high school, you might draw a quite different conclusion as to what styles of pedagogy suited them. I do not think it is simply a biologically innate factor; I think it is shaped very much by family background and experiences as well.

Mr SAWFORD—You are saying that you accept both. I have one last question. In your submission—in fact, in a number of submissions—there are what I would regard as rather negative views about masculinity in sport, particularly for boys who do not measure up in terms of their size, sexuality or interests. That is certainly true of boys in some circumstances, but I find a lack of balance in that there are no statements about girls' obsessions with sportsmen and women, models, film and rock stars and the like. Do you think there is a little lack of balance? Why focus on one negative behaviour and completely ignore the other?

Prof. Yates—I did not intend to frame that as a negative at all. I think sport is really important. I think you are misinterpreting what I am saying there. I am simply making the point—and there has been plenty of research—

Mr SAWFORD—I am making the point that there is sometimes a lack of balance in the information that comes to us. Negative comments are made about boys but there is no reference to girls. I do not want to make a big deal about it.

Prof. Yates—I understood that the inquiry was asking us to make submissions on some of the problems that boys were experiencing in schools. It was in that context. I was not trying to give an overall view on how I thought sports should be structured in schools.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a question on violence, harassment and victimisation—that section that you wrote. Is bullying, homophobia and sexual harassment more prone to happen in middle-class schools? Is fighting, sexual ignorance and social inadequacy more likely to happen in working-class schools? Or is it a combination of both?

Prof. Yates—On bullying, violence and harassment, in my experience that is not restricted to just middle-class schools or to just working-class schools. It does differ between schools. There are different school climates. It is not that it is in one class area and not in the other. What was the second thing that you asked me about?

Mr SAWFORD—We talked about fighting and bullying. I am just trying to distinguish between fighting and bullying, and between sexual ignorance and sexual harassment. Some people have made the comment that in working-class schools there is a problem of sexual ignorance rather than sexual harassment—that sexual harassment seems to be more prone to happen in middle-class schools.

Prof. Yates—I do not particularly understand that concept.

Mr SAWFORD—The last one was that social inadequacy is a problem in some working-class schools—that often simple things, which could be reconciled in a very simple way, blow up into much bigger things than they ought to be.

Prof. Yates—I do think that there is certainly something in that. Problems can arise and boys or their parents do not have the resources to deal with them verbally. In our study, for instance, we had examples of boys who were having a hard time at school and who were being a bit isolated at two or three of the different schools. At the private school in the study, the boy's parents actually helped him move to a different school that suited him better. That is clearly a way that you can deal with it if parents have got the resources to understand what is available. In another of the schools, the boy was probably not in the best school for him in that area. It was a fairly informal school. He came from a different ethnic background and would have been better in a much more traditional form of school. Clearly, the parents did not know the ropes enough to move him. I think there are differences in what resources people have to handle those sorts of problems.

CHAIR—More than most submissions, you seem to touch on the sociological aspects affecting boys education, which is part of our inquiry's terms of reference. Is part of the problem the societal expectations that boys are facing? We have had this issue where girls, for example, are doing better at the HSC level, in particular, than boys but that the choice of subjects is not necessarily setting them up well for their post-school careers, whereas boys are choosing subjects which are perhaps overestimating their own abilities in some areas. I am just

over 40. When I was in the secondary education system, we were tethered to a value system that said that if you work hard and study hard you will do better than your parents, live in a better house, drive a better car and have a better job—all that sort of thing.

Today, if you are 13, 14 or 15, you look at your life ahead still very much having those pressures upon you—in fact, more so in terms of materialistic acquisition—and yet many boys see this as an unachievable outcome, that even if you do study hard at school you are not necessarily going to do well, that you have to do exceedingly well for education to perhaps deliver the sorts of expectations that your parents might have for you. I realise that they are all generalisations, but is that part of the problem—the social milieu in which boys are living? The girls seem to be more often trying to educate themselves for life, whereas the boys are trying to see education as a pathway to a job—a job still defining who you are, how we relate to one another and our place in our society. Boys, in particular, seem to still feel it acutely if they do not have any work. Is that a nonsense kind of proposition to put to you?

Prof. Yates—No. I think that is quite significant. Two aspects of it are worth noting. For a long time one of the things that researchers suggested about boys compared with girls is that boys' subject choices and directions are more strategic. They are prepared to do maths if it is vocationally important even if they do not like it, whereas girls tend to choose subjects they like. Previously that often stood boys in very good stead. One of the problems now with these changes in jobs and career paths is that the idea of choosing your objective and just going for it might not stand you in good stead in the same way if that career direction goes out of existence or something like that. It is even more apparent in relation to working-class boys in the apprenticeship area. A number of the boys we studied very much knew what sort of work they would like to be doing. The problem was that they were not able to get jobs in that area.

CHAIR—We could talk about that all day. If you have any supplementary thoughts or comments to make on things that are said to us by others, please feel free to send them on to us. Thank you for the great work that you do.

[11.09 a.m.]

PALLOTTA-CHIAROLLI, Dr Maria, Lecturer, School of Health Sciences, Deakin University, Melbourne

MARTINO, Dr Wayne, Lecturer, School of Education, Murdoch University, Western Australia

BECKETT, Dr Lori, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney

CHAIR—Firstly, welcome and thank you so much for providing a submission to us. We appreciate it very much. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—We are working on national projects and research together into boys education. I also work specifically in areas of cultural diversity, health, drugs, alcohol, bullying and harassment and also around issues of sexuality and gender.

Dr Martino—I am currently on leave at Sydney University. My area is literacy education plus, more broadly, gender and education. I am working with Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli on a series of international publications regarding the eduction and schooling of boys.

Dr Beckett—I work in the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney. I take responsibility for the PD, health, and PE student teachers. My area of research is on youth health and health education. I am contributing to the work that Wayne and Maria are doing with a publication coming soon in one of Wayne's books. I am currently doing some contract research work for the Department of Education and Training on drug eduction. One of the projects is on gender, drug use and young people. I was also a member of two committees. One was the national MCEETYA Gender Equity Task Force. One of my papers appears in here. I was also on the New South Wales Gender Equity Consultative Committee and made a contribution to this policy document.

CHAIR—Could you give us an overview of your submission and emphasise what you think are the most important points.

Dr Beckett—I would like to thank you for this opportunity. I was delighted to make a submission and also to come to the public hearings. I have three main points that I will elaborate on in a summary of my submission. The response to the inquiry is incredibly important. It needs to be considered because, as you well know, boys education is a volatile topic. It certainly stirs passions in the community, in universities and in schools. The response needs to take account of the parameters of a gender equity framework. I was pleased, Dr Nelson, that you noted that the findings of the inquiry would not adversely affect girls and young women. I think that is critical. This gender equity work should inform a program of personal and social development for boys and also for girls across the key learning areas. I take note of Professor Yates's comment in her presentation that personal and social development for boys, along with humanities, might not be as quickly taken up as maths and science was for girls. We need to tease open some of those reasons.

I have worked on the Gender Equity Task Force and the Gender Equity Consultative Committee. My research—my PhD in part looked at the development of gender equity policies over the last 15 years—plus my case story work with boys, which I have highlighted in my submission, boys education and biography work, plus my current work with the New South Wales Department of Education on the research contracts informs what I have had to say in my submission. Taken together, that informs my acknowledgment that boys are having difficulties. Some boys are experiencing learning difficulties and behaviour problems. Some boys experience difficulties with literacy and communication. Some boys have difficulties with academic performance and their self-esteem. Certainly some boys have problems in an area that I would put under the umbrella of health and welfare—things like drug use, alcohol use, problems around violence, problems around relationships.

I speak to that at length in my submission. I also talk about the program, and I come back to the comment that I made earlier about personal and social development, which needs to be informed, I believe, by a gender equity. I think this sort of work for boys in schools needs to address the concerns of boys as young people, as they are now. I think lots of boys have lots of concerns that need to be addressed. Certainly, in my research talking to boys, doing my fieldwork, it is more than apparent that we need to address the concerns they hold at the present time as boys and young men in schools.

We also need to develop a personal and social development program spinning around gender equity that looks at boys as future workers, as citizens, as partners and possibly as parents. As I talk about that, it is my intention to highlight the sorts of boys and young men they want to become and the sorts of boys and young men we would like them to become. But I think that those sorts of things have got to be negotiated with the boys in tandem with their teachers, their parents and others who are actually interested in boys and their future.

I made the comment in my submission that I think it is about considered ways of being—helping boys and young men actually develop considered ways of being in all those aspects of their lives. I suggested under the heading of ‘Social factors’ that I do not think boys and teachers—or enough boys and enough teachers, because I cannot just make a blanket statement—are familiar with gender. I do not think enough boys and teachers are actually familiar with the idea of masculinity, and I have certainly come across this in the course of my fieldwork with boys.

In many cases, it is not part of their education. I am well aware of what representatives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training panel have just put to you, and I fully support their work. Indeed, as I said, I have worked on the gender equity strategy. But I think we need to acknowledge the fact that not all boys and not all teachers are familiar with gender and masculinity, and this needs to be picked up and reinforced across the curriculum. I have cited my own case story work with three young fellows, Barnaby, Mitch and Joel, and their particular stories and how their struggles around the issues of gender and masculinity adversely affected their schooling and their learning outcomes.

CHAIR—Are you saying that teachers, amongst others, are not teaching boys about masculinity, or what it means to be a man?

Dr Beckett—Some teachers are. As I said, I certainly stand by the work that is being done by the Department of Education and Training, but there are some teachers who are not doing that.

CHAIR—I just want to be clear. I am sorry for having interrupted you. The majority of boys I have been talking to in my fieldwork are just not familiar with issues of gender and issues of masculinity. When you ask them questions like, 'What do you think about masculinity?' they stop and you can see by the look on their faces that they are actually struggling with the question. With a few prompts, they will start to talk to you about what it means to be a boy and a young man, but for the most part they are really struggling with that sort of idea.

Mrs MAY—What age group are these three boys?

Dr Beckett—At the time of my working with the three boys that I just cited, Barnaby and Mitch were in primary school and Joel was in year 10. He is currently in year 11 going into year 12. In fact, I would say that all the boys I have worked with, and whom I have cited here in my submission, struggle with those issues of gender and masculinity. I can take you further with work that I am doing on two other projects, one on youth health and one on gender and drug use for boys. The majority of boys in both of those projects have not been able to answer articulately about issues of gender and masculinity. At the same time they give me every indication that masculinity and gender are real issues for them. There are a number of issues around youth health.

Let me take alcohol as an example. They talk about what alcohol means to them and the ways that they are actually fashioning themselves to be young men. Alcohol is so very much a part of their life. It impacts on them socially, educationally and in their relationships, et cetera. They give me an indication of their bravado and their risk taking. Quite literally, they are using alcohol on the weekend to get drunk, and they have got all sorts of ways of describing it. I did not realise that boys referred to getting drunk as being 'maggoty', as in flies and maggots. They get maggoty every weekend and they talk about binge drinking in ways that speak to me about issues of gender and masculinity, but they are ways that are not clear and articulate to them.

Mr SAWFORD—How representative are those three boys of boys in schools—are you saying primary school kids?

Dr Beckett—I was not talking about alcohol in relation to those particular three boys—

Mr SAWFORD—All right. Sorry.

Dr Beckett—I was speaking about projects that I am doing and field work that I have done recently around youth health and the issue of alcohol.

Mrs MAY—Is the drinking like a badge of notoriety in a peer group?

Dr Beckett—Yes, I think so. It is very much a part of adolescent society, youth culture and manhood.

CHAIR—It is a rite of passage to contemporary male adolescence.

Mrs MAY—To become a man.

Dr Martino—It is also about acting cool and being cool. I can talk a bit more about that later.

Dr Beckett—It is not only about rites of passage; it is very much about male youth culture.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned concerns of boys. What were the majors concerns of those boys?

Dr Beckett—Over alcohol?

Mr SAWFORD—No. Before you got on to that little aside, you said that you were working with boys and you mentioned the three boys' names: Barnaby, Mitch and the other one. Then you went on to concerns of boys.

Dr Beckett—Barnaby, Mitch and Joel are boys that I cited in this particular submission. From the fieldwork that I have done recently on their concerns, these range across a number of issues: youth suicide, violence—both on the receiving end of violence and also being a part of gangs that perpetrate violence—and relationships both with each other and with girls. They are certainly concerned about establishing ongoing relationships with girls.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think these boys represent 90 per cent of the boys in our schools? Do they represent one per cent of the boys in our schools?

Dr Beckett—From the fieldwork I have done, I would say to you that these boys' concerns represent the majority of boys. I have interviewed boys across the state and certainly across the metropolitan area, and I would say—

Mr SAWFORD—They are not taking the mickey out of you, are they?

Dr Beckett—I would hope not. In the situation I have been in with those boys I have certainly established a rapport with them. You can tell, certainly as a teacher, whether or not kids are taking the mickey out of you. Some of those interviews were done over a period of time, where you do build up a rapport, a trust, with the boys so that they are able to disclose certain issues that they want to talk to you about. I can say to you that I do not think they have taken the mickey out of me because one of the ground rules for my working with boys and doing interviews is that we work respectfully. Those boys have, in fact, worked respectfully with me.

Mrs MAY—Is there a level of embarrassment about speaking to you on the sensitive issues—I mean when they talk about their sexuality or relationships?

CHAIR—Can we finish here? Otherwise we are not going to hear the whole thing.

Dr Beckett—Sure. I made that comment under the heading 'Social factors'. I felt that boys and some teachers are not familiar with the issue of gender and masculinity and, in some cases, it is not part of their education. Under the heading 'Cultural factors', I suggested that boys are not knowledgable about gender and masculinity. It is very much taken for granted and they are

not aware of the fact that there is more than one version. In many respects, boys—and I believe the majority of boys—subscribe to what Bob Connell calls a dominant version of masculinity.

I draw your attention to the research by Richard Teese that was mentioned earlier this morning. A number of very well-regarded researchers across the country have talked about what these sorts of issues mean, not only for individual boys but for different groups of boys. I suggest in my submission that the committee disaggregate the data when you are talking about issues for boys—in other words, I would ask you to look at what are the issues for what groups of boys.

Under the heading 'Educational Factors', I suggest that in our personal and social development programs for boys we need to look at gender as an educational issue. I wish very much that I could lay claim to that phrase, but I cannot: it was developed by Margaret Clark who was then working for the Department of Education and Training. She has developed this notion of gender as an educational issue. I have certainly picked it up, and I like to think that I have taken it a little further in relation to my work on youth health. It is incredibly important that boys—along with girls, teachers and parents—look at gender as an educational issue and learn about what it means to be a boy and a young man in schools, and in society more generally.

I draw the committee's attention to the constraints that are operating on any gender equity work and on any personal social development work that we might get under way under the heading of some of the strategies that work. I believe very much that the gender equity strategy in New South Wales, like the national framework, does work—I have seen it work. However, my greatest concerns are constraints such as the fact that there is never enough funding. The resources of the Department of Education and Training, at both state and district levels, are stretched to the limit. What they do is fantastic but there are financial constraints. Professional development is another thing that needs to be attended to because I do not think enough teachers do enough professional development. There is never enough time for teachers to develop gender equity projects in schools. The demands on teachers are huge and they need time to develop some of these programs and solutions to the problems that they identify. There needs to be timetable allocation.

At the same time, the commitment to gender equity needs to be better supported, and I think you are in the box seat because, if it comes from the top—from the national level—and filters down to the states and hopefully into schools, that commitment to gender equity will be underlined. At the moment, it is not necessarily widely shared, possibly because there is no in-depth understanding—or perhaps not enough in-depth understanding—of the relevance of gender equity work. The problems with boys are likely to be dealt with in the way that they have always been dealt with: boys are held solely responsible. Lingard and Douglas referred to this as 'psychologising' the boys' concerns.

My final point is that there is a sense that gender equity has been achieved, given early feminist arguments about equal opportunities. It has turned the full circle: this inquiry continues because there is a view that we have done girls and now it is time for boys. That is why I think it is really important that your response is considered and informed by good research that is well respected across the country.

Dr Martino—I want to take up some of Lori's research and your comment about how representative this is. Research being done overseas, including large-scale research being done in the UK, on boys schooling and masculinity is finding similar concerns amongst boys. What Lori is finding, and what we are finding about acting cool and what it means to be a 'proper boy', is emerging across studies internationally and globally—both in Australia and in the UK. I draw the committee's attention to a book written by Debbie Epstein from a group of researchers in the UK called, *Failing boys?* It is an informed and sophisticated account about the kinds of debates about boys that have been occurring in the UK.

Recently I have finished an edited collection, *What about the boys?*, about debates in the UK, the United States and Australia. A point that I want to make is that we need to be very wary about simplistic representations of boys in schools. What we find emerging often in the public media and in Australia is a moral panic about boys lower levels of literacy, for instance, and their lower levels of educational achievement. We are not saying that boys are not experiencing problems educationally, but we need to look at—as Lyn Yates was talking about—socioeconomic factors, issues of sexuality, a whole range of other factors coming into play to impact on boys relations and performance at school. I do agree that there needs to be a focus on personal and social development for boys, but one which draws attention to the ways in which masculinity is defined and constructed by boys.

Maria and I have just completed a large-scale study where we have interviewed about 250 boys across the country from a whole range of diverse locations. We also surveyed 600 boys and girls from about four different kinds of schools. That research is incredible in terms of what it is saying about the level of bullying and violence amongst boys. Boys are articulating, both in our interviews and in those surveys, the prevalence of homophobia in their lives. A whole range of boys are actually talking about how teachers are not doing anything about it, how schools are not explicitly addressing the issue, how homophobia is actually dismissed and ignored in their lives; yet it featured significantly in so many boys responses in our research. We would want to emphasise the need to start looking at the role that sexuality plays in the way that boys learn to define their masculinities. There is a devaluation of the feminine in how they learn to define what it means to be appropriately male. That also impacts on boys' literacy practices—as I have already demonstrated in some research in 1994 and in a paper that is about to be published in *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*—where some boys see English as a girls' subject and there is a devaluing of English as a girls kind of subject.

We need to look at how gender and gender regimes—Bob Connell calls them gender regimes—are implicated in the way that curriculum is perceived and defined and in boys and girls participation in curriculum. These are more sophisticated issues. The solutions that are being offered to addressing the solution of boys' literacy and boys' problems say, 'Let's separate boys in English. Let's provide more male teachers for boys in schools.' This whole idea of a gender balance is important, but it is still very unsophisticated. As if just providing all male teachers for boys is going to solve their problems! We need to start looking at the kinds of models of masculinity that we want to promote in schools. I know from some of the research we have done that boys have been very critical of male teachers and their approaches to discipline. Their bullying approaches have been spoken about. Their heavy-handed approaches to dealing with them in schools have been commented on very critically by a number of boys in our study. We need to look beyond simplistic solutions.

The point I want to make about the biological argument is that we need to look at this historically. In the 19th century, the very arguments which are being used to differentiate boys and girls now on the basis of their biology were used to establish as a truth that women were intellectually inferior to men. So historically we have an emergence again, in a backlash period, of certain biological deterministic discourses to explain the differences between boys and girls. The point is that biology is often used to reinforce the view that boys are just behaving as boys—that they are behaving 'naturally', whereas what we are finding is a lot of boys challenging and being very critical of the ways in which they are learning to relate in their peer groups. That is really the emphasis that we want to make—and also the need for professional development.

It seems to us that when we posed the question to boys about what it meant to be male and what they understand about masculinity, it was the same thing as Lori was saying: they were sometimes a bit overwhelmed by the question. They made comments that nobody had ever asked them that question in their 12 years of schooling. Nobody had asked them that question. It seems to me that we need to provide more knowledge about the way dominant masculinities get played out in boys' lives and how boys learn to define masculinity. In a lot of the discussion about boys, we do not hear any mention of homophobia, yet that seems to be a major factor impacting on boys' lives and on the bullying. This idea of being 'cool' means not to be gay, not to be a nerd. That featured very significantly in the large sample that we have been working with, and that work is just about to be published in the UK.

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—The points that Wayne has covered are the points that are coming through our research very clearly. One of the things that I would stress very strongly is the diversity of boys whom we are speaking to who attend Australian schools. We cannot constantly separate gender from a whole range of other factors, which I think is coming through very strongly. There are socioeconomic factors, cultural factors and rural and urban differences. I think we must get away from the simplistic understandings of boys and look at the way in which these multiple factors work together. It means that we will have to do some very difficult work, as classroom practitioners and educators, exploring this through texts and our own behaviours.

One of the other concerns I have is the constant binaries, or dichotomies, that are being set up, for example, between white boys and Aboriginal boys or gay boys and straight boys. We have to look at those kinds of diversities and work very closely within them. Even with the nature versus nurture argument—the biological determinists and the social constructionists—I think we are still falling into a whole range of problems. We begin to become reactive and think about annihilating the idea of biology altogether or propping it up as the only substantial thing there. I think we have to look at the way in which various factors interrelate.

I want to address issues of diversity. One of the concerns in the work that I am doing with boys from diverse cultural backgrounds is the idea of cultural heritage or the maintenance of cultural traditions and how that or multiculturalism in schools is sometimes used to justify not doing some very important work in terms of gender. We now have very complex diasporic communities in our schools, with second, third or fourth generation young people. We also have children who are refugees, exiles et cetera. We have to look at the way that cultural heritage is being used to perpetuate gender injustices. We have to look at the way racism is still being viewed in a very simplistic, binary way and consider the way that racism occurs on all sorts of

levels. For example, we now have students from Italian and Greek backgrounds who are wonderful at perpetuating certain racist discourses against Asian or indigenous boys. I do not think our policies, behaviours and actions in our schools and our curriculum are addressing the multiplicity within many of our schools. Racism is occurring on different levels.

Homophobia or heteronormativity is becoming very explicit in different ways. Schools need to take very firm stands and talk about basic frameworks in terms of social justice and student welfare and the fact that cultural heritage is not about maintaining or perpetuating the impressions that come with particular cultures. At the same time, it means that we must work very sensitively with parents and communities on a whole range of issues.

I would like to finish on this point—it is applicable to drug use, alcohol use et cetera. Certain models about the way that boys are meant to be are coming from our societies and communities. They are specifically contextualised according to where boys are living. I think our schools certainly need to have broad frameworks and provide professional development for teachers, principals and educators to allow them to work within their local communities and look at the kinds of populations in their schools and how these multiple factors interplay. Where do we go from there? We cannot allow ourselves to be pushed by certain public discourses about racism or about nasty feminists, such as me, for example.

Furthermore, we still need to look very carefully—as we have done—at the way that girls are speaking about their positioning in schools. Our research has found that some girls are doing very well despite the constant harassment—despite the fact that menstruation is still being used as a prime source of harassment, for example. Certain things are ongoing and certain behaviours have not necessarily shifted, yet we have to make sure that they are being addressed together. I will leave it at that.

Mr BARTLETT—On the issue of literacy, different views have been expressed about the relative success of boys and girls in early encounters with literacy. The predominant view seems to be that some styles of teaching literacy favour girls over boys—specifically, that the whole-of-language approach is a bit more difficult for boys to come to grips with. A structured phonics based approach—the Spalding approach or whatever—is a bit better for boys. What is your view on that?

Dr Martino—I mainly worked with boys in secondary school. My view is that there needs to be more research into the pedagogical implications, not only with regard to literacy but also more broadly—the kinds of pedagogics that are effective, what teachers are, how teachers actually teach and how students receive those pedagogics. My concern is that to work with the binary that there is boys learning and girls learning reinforces the dominant model of masculinity. I think there just needs to be more research done. I am not aware of any detailed research into the impact of literacy pedagogics on students' learning and acquisition of literacy.

Mr BARTLETT—What about at the secondary stage? Presumably you still come across students at secondary stage who have significant literacy problems—they are borderline illiterates.

Dr Martino—More broadly, a lot of the students were talking about the fact that they found that the texts being dealt with in schools were boring and not culturally relevant. But a lot of

them did not actually ask for more texts which necessarily fed their interest. They said stuff like, 'We would like to have more stuff that is relevant to us. Can't we deal with texts that talk about real life relationships?' We need to actually talk to students a lot more to find out about the kinds of literacy practices they are engaging in. Some boys have very high levels of literacy, particularly with regard to computer based literacy. We need to look at the broader notion of what actually constitutes literacy and the kinds of literacy practices that boys are actually engaging in. I also want to make the point that, even though boys have lower levels of literacy, it seems that they are still not disadvantaged post school in terms of gaining full-time employment. That is really important. It is not to say that literacy should not be addressed, but I think there—

Mr BARTLETT—Sure. That is certainly not a justification for taking it easier at the school level.

Dr Martino—No, definitely not, but there is a moral panic that seeps into the fact that boys have lower levels of literacy, yet it does not seem to impact upon their post-school employment opportunities in the same way as it still does for girls.

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—I will just add another point that is coming through our work very strongly. Some of the boys are saying that it is not necessarily that they are not literate but that, if they raise their hands to read something in class, write a poem or answer too many questions correctly, they will be called 'a fag', they will be put down, and they will get bullied and harassed. So some of the students actually monitor how they perform their literacy and how they show their sense of being literate. They are actually stopping themselves, because they are aware of the kinds of peer groups and constructions within the school and society. In our school of health sciences we are doing research on health and football playing. We are looking at trialling helmets for primary school football—it is another research project on helmets—and yet yesterday I came across a coaster which actually said 'real football players don't wear helmets'. Now we have certain social constructions that are going to impact on the way that even something such as health care for young men in playing a sport is going to be problematised, and it is going to be resisted by a lot of young men. It is the same with literacy. A lot of our boys are resisting reading and writing, being creative and displaying that, because they are so aware of this constant broader, social, but also classroom, monitoring.

Dr Beckett—I think those examples of the English classroom working with literacy and of kids playing football on the sporting fields provide a good example of how we could do this sort of work on gender across the curriculum with all sorts of teachers making a contribution to the sort of work that needs to be done with boys as we prepare them as young people—future workers, citizens, partners and parents.

Mrs ELSON—Lori, on page 10 of your submission you state there was little funding for teacher professional development. Do you have any information on the current availability of professional development for teachers and how it relates to how much there was, say, 10 to 15 years ago?

Dr Beckett—I know that school budgets for training and development have been cut right back. In fact, it is my understanding that each high school has approximately $2,000 to accommodate teachers' training and development. That would have to be checked; it is hearsay

but that is my understanding. That money has then got to accommodate teachers doing training and development on all sorts of issues, so you can imagine where gender equity might line up with all sorts of other things, and priority areas for schools and teachers.

Mrs ELSON—I asked that question because the bureaucrats who were here earlier this morning, when I took them on about that, said it was adequate and there was heaps of training money available for teachers to bring their skills up and so forth. That is why I asked that question because sometimes that is where the problem lies—teachers' skills are not brought up to date with current problems that children are suffering.

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—Can I ask a series of questions on balance, basically. Lori, you mentioned personal and social development being very important for boys and I do not think anyone here would disagree with that. But sometimes what people leave out is as important as what people put in. You did not mention anything about skills attainment. You did not mention anything about technological skills. Was there a reason for that? if I could go on a little further, all three of you have mentioned gender, race, socioeconomic status—I do not think we have actually gone into religion—but not one of you have mentioned the educational program that is offered. Laurie, you mentioned the synthesis part of disaggregating the data, which I agree with you is very important, but you did not mention aggregating the data, which is also just as important. In your introduction you made this statement:

A considered response to boys' education in the middle years need to be based on insightful analysis.

I thought: God forbid! Thank God for that! Then you went on to what actually happens to boys in schools. No, it is not. It is what is planned for boys in schools. It is what happens to boys in schools and it is the measurement of the success or failure of what happens to boys in schools—that is what is important. Would you like to respond to what I am seeing as a lack of balance and only part of the argument. I am not disagreeing with the importance of any of the argument you are putting forward, but I am a little concerned when it is only half the story.

Dr Beckett—Could you elaborate on what you think is missing?

ACTING CHAIR—Basically, you said, 'Don't get involved in aggregating the data.' You actually said that to us. You said, 'Disaggregate the data.' That is what you said; it is on the record. I understand the importance of disaggregating the data. I understand that, and it is important. I agree with you. But I do not agree with you when you say, 'Ignore aggregating the data,' which is also part of the way we all learn and which is important. Disaggregating the data is a skill called synthesis. Aggregating the data is a skill called analysis. Analysis, in many ways, some people would argue, favours boys' education and may be an example of what happened more than 20 years ago. Synthesis is a skill that favours girls. Everybody knows that. Most people in education know that.

Dr Beckett—First of all, I would like to reject your suggestion that I said, 'Aggregate the data.' I said it is really important to—

ACTING CHAIR—No, you said we should disaggregate the data.

Dr Beckett—Yes. That is not to discount the aggregation of the data.

ACTING CHAIR—That is the point I am making. You did not say that, when I think probably you should have.

Dr Beckett—I think it is important that we look at the comment that I made about disaggregating the data, which was under the heading of cultural factors. The point I was trying to make was about boys not being knowledgeable about masculinity and that there is more than one version of masculinity. So I was leading into a discussion about gender for different groups of boys and also picked up on issues of performance which need to be looked at in relation not only to boys but to different groups of boys. That was the comment I made about disaggregating the data.

As for your comment about synthesis and analysis, I heard you put that to the Department of Education and Training this morning. I must say that, like them, I disagree with what you are saying, because I think that you run the risk of looking at issues about learning in the light of that biological model—saying that boys and girls learn in particular ways, linking that back to their biology. I think you have got to be very careful about certain blanket statements.

ACTING CHAIR—No, don't put words in my mouth. I am saying that you seem to be rejecting out of hand any biological data about differences between boys and girls. I accept the environmental social constructs; I am not arguing with those. What I am finding hard to accept is your total refusal to acknowledge any biological differences.

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—I find that very problematic, because we are not refusing the biological perspectives: we are saying that they are interwoven with, and need to be addressed and interrogated alongside, a whole range of factors.

ACTING CHAIR—Not in this submission you don't.

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—I would like to address that point now.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not think you have done that at all in your comments to us.

Dr Martino—I did.

Dr Pallotta-Chiarolli—Could I finish my point? Thank you. I would like it to be pulled back to a basic framework: we are talking about diversification and specification when we are working with young people. We are talking about providing a range of options for teaching them skills about critical interrogation of the societies they come from and critical interrogation of themselves, their heritages and practices, the kinds of behaviours that they are engaging in, the reasons why they are undertaking certain behaviours and why they are learning in certain ways. We are not saying, 'Dismiss the biological' or 'Dismiss the social constructionists'. We are saying, 'Let's teach our young people to interrogate very critically and very carefully the kinds of worlds they are coming into and the kinds of worlds they are going to try to shift and move within.'

In terms of the educational programs, pull it back to that. It is about diversity and specification. I think what is happening in our educational programs is that there is still this homogeneity and simplicity—we still have the gender and equity policy over here and the

racism policy over there. We are not talking about the different kinds of capital that our young people are coming in with or do not have. We are not teaching young people about the kinds of debates that are going on about biology and how to interrogate those debates.

Dr Martino—I stress to the committee that there needs to be an historical analysis. We must look at how biological deterministic arguments have been used historically and how they are implicated always in political and power relations. It is crucial that you be informed about those kinds of debates.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much, Lori, Wayne and Maria. This subject brings out all our emotions and particular biases—and we are just as guilty of that as the people who come here. We thank you, Lori, for your submission and for your preparedness to appear before the committee. Wayne and Maria, we thank you for the coincidence of your coming from Melbourne and from Perth and for being with us today. Thank you very much indeed.

Brendan Nelson, our Chair, apologises for his non-appearance, but he has had to attend a funeral. That is the reason for his absence.

[11.53 a.m.]

WEST, Dr Peter, Research Group on Men and Families, University of Western Sydney

ACTING CHAIR—Would you like to make some introductory comments?

Dr West—Sure. I am doing a project on best practice in boys education—most of which I have done since I wrote my submission. If I have learned one thing, it is that people hate being talked at, so I might make a couple of quick points, assume that you have read the submission and then run the gamut of your savage investigation.

I will make a couple of quick comments, starting with some of the ideas I got when I was in the UK looking at schools and talking with academics. You will gather fairly quickly that I take a different view from some of the people to whom you have spoken today—and that is part of what we find in the gender debate. When I was writing my book *Fathers, sons and lovers*, I went to talk to my then head of school and I said, 'I'm doing some investigations on gender; I think I'm going to find it rather controversial and there might be some media around.' He threw his head back and laughed, and said, 'Peter, when we talk about gender, everyone has got their hand in the fire.'

If we look at the evidence confronting us of so many young men suiciding, that, by itself, would be a very long investigation and very difficult to disentangle. It is almost impossible to go anywhere in Sydney without being confronted with the fact of young men suiciding. I went for a walk on the beach at Bronte the other day, and there was someone being dragged out of the water right there in front of me. So, in looking at that evidence and the fact that boys are being suspended from schools—which is, again, another very complex and sticky business—that they are in trouble on the streets and that they are struggling to achieve at school, any sensible person would have to conclude that young males are in considerable difficulties. That is true if you look at London or Sydney or if you go to almost any country that the *Economist* looked at some years ago, except Japan. The exception, in itself, is interesting.

I was hoping Brendan Nelson would be here today, because I was going to talk about the links between men's health and boys education. If we look at the difficulties that men have with their health, they are very much linked to what happens with boys: boys will not go to see the school counsellor, adult males do not want to go to see the marriage counsellor; young men have difficulties expressing themselves and in saying what they think is in a poem, women tell us constantly that their husbands will not communicate with them—and so on. I do not want to oversimplify that, but the links between boys education and men's health are quite impressive.

If you look at what we are telling boys when they are growing up, we are constantly telling them a lot of 'don't's'—don't do that, don't be a girl, don't be gay, that's sissy stuff—and then we wonder why boys in school cannot express their feelings. It seems to me that lots of things we are doing with boys when we are raising them have to do with repressing them with a hard model of masculinity. I think the American Bill Pollack has written about that in *Real Boys* rather well.

Let us move on to my submission. I have talked about fathers and boys. I am doing a project with Burnside, an agency of the Uniting Church, and this is a pamphlet—I can leave some of

them with you—that they did some years ago that I want them to revise about emphasising the importance of fathers. If you are interested only in boys learning at school, if that is all you are interested in, there is a link between good fathering and boys achieving at school. If you are interested in men having good, sound, enjoyable lives, the men that I talked to were very much concerned about their fathers. When I wrote the book *Fathers, Sons, and Lovers*, the most dramatic and powerful parts of the book were when men were talking about the things their fathers did not do with them. Grown men today are still dealing with that issue in many ways. So we cannot disentangle that from boys education. Underfathered boys are coming up as a problem in the literature that I am doing for that review of best practice in boys education.

I have talked briefly about boys and discipline, and that is another issue that cannot be neglected. I think it was Bob MacCann from New South Wales who said that it is just much more difficult to discipline kids than it used to be. You cannot go into classrooms without some kid telling you, 'Get f'ed,' or 'You can't say that,' or 'You can't do that, sir,' and boys play up more than girls. It is easier to move them out of the classroom, and boys get on those suspension lists and so on. I have touched on men going into teaching, but I think Ed could cover that better than I could.

I have given some recommendations to the Commonwealth on page 7 at the end of my submission, but I now have an update on that. I am talking in Melbourne next week at a symposium that DETYA is offering to academics, and I am prepared to go a bit further and say that there are some things that teachers ought to be doing with boys which they are not. I will just run through three or four of those. One is to expect more of boys. It is a very old notion in academic literature. It is called the Pygmalion effect: if you expect people to be stupid, they will become stupid or more stupid; if you expect people to achieve, they will achieve. What we are finding, certainly in the UK, where I think better research is being done, is that teachers expect less of boys: they expect boys to misbehave, they expect them not to be interested in English and so on.

ACTING CHAIR—Why is that?

Dr West—That is a good question. I do not really know the answer, except that we say, 'Boys will be boys,' and we are a bit fatalistic about boys. There are many things encouraging girls to achieve. You cannot walk past a newsagency without seeing some women's magazine giving women and girls encouragement and the idea that the world is there for them. And the education system has certainly been taken by that idea.

If we talk about nothing else, teacher education has certainly been fired up with the idea of expecting a lot more from girls. We are not doing that with boys: there is almost no mention of boys in teacher education. As Brendan said last night on *60 Minutes*, masculinity used to be an opportunity for achievement but now it is a problem to be overcome. That is exactly what we are saying about boys.

ACTING CHAIR—You mentioned boys acting up. In terms of schooling, how much of that is because the education program or the quality of teaching offered is inadequate?

Dr West—I was reading *Harry Potter* on the train coming in. That is an example of the kind of literature that seems to fire boys up. I met a guy in the USA who is doing some very careful

and sensitive work with boys, which is focusing on their interests and what they want to do. Something in the subject matter is not firing boys. It is also true that teachers, as a whole, are not really being motivated to get into boys interests and I think they are very impatient with boys. It is very difficult knowing exactly what goes on in classrooms, but I have had scattered reports—they are unreliable, but they are reports nevertheless—that teachers ignore all the boys for a whole lesson because boys get too much attention anyway. I think boys are reacting against that in the only way they know how: by mucking up. We are back to that question of better behaviour linked with a curriculum that does not really suit not all boys, but many boys.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of curriculum content, I remember as a young teacher seeing two teachers operate. One was telling a group of boys the story of King Alaric coming down with 100,000 Visigoths and bronze battering rams and invading Rome, and the kids were rapt. Another teacher next door was teaching the kids about Jane Austin and an Australian book called *The Getting of Wisdom*, and the class was almost totally out of control. They are stark examples of content, and maybe teaching styles, getting two completely different reactions. How much is curriculum content an issue in boys education?

Dr West—I think it is part of the whole, but not the whole. You could not say, 'Let's just set *Harry Potter*', or 'Let's just set war stories and so on' and expect that to fix everything. However, I would not dismiss that argument altogether. If you talk to boys and ask them what they want to learn and how they want to learn it, you might learn a great deal. I am about to talk to boys at Kings school from year 7 to year 11, and I might follow that up with other work with some working-class boys. I want to ask them: 'Here are 17 ways of learning; which is the way you want to learn?' I do not think people are asking boys that question, which I think is mad. It is an obvious question.

Mr BARTLETT—On the issue of discipline and behaviour in class, obviously there is a combination of in-school and out-of-school problems. You mentioned underfathering, for instance, which I think is a real problem. You mention in your submission that a lot of teachers feel disempowered as well. To what extent are the problems a result of what is going on in school, and how can they be addressed? What sorts of suggestions can you make in terms of school organisation, discipline procedures and practices to perhaps address this issue?

Dr West—That is a big question. One of my colleagues, Steve Dinham, has done some work on teacher status and he finds that teachers generally feel that society does not think they are doing a good job. They do not feel that they are paid adequately. I believe there was a time when a teacher's salary was equivalent to that of a backbencher. If that was ever true, it is certainly not true now. Men who are going into teaching have particular problems that may or may not be the germ of what you are talking about.

Where would you start with teachers? They feel that they are locked in and that only certain things work. They have to be tough with the kids and it is hard for them to show that tough love—which is how someone expressed it to me. It is hard to show that they care about the kids—and I think it is particularly difficult with boys. A colleague in the UK gave a workshop and he said he had listened to the ways in which teachers talk to boys and to girls and the patterns are quite different. I will see if I can illustrate if off the top of my head: 'Mary, there is a green cupboard at the back of the teacher's room next door. Go into it and get the file, please,' versus 'John, go over there and get that for me.' That is perhaps an exaggeration. The patterns

of speech are different. Girls are given more words to play with in their heads. Girls are asked—invited—to learn and are drawn along, whereas with boys it is more the hammer on the desk: 'Look out, son, or you'll be out the door!'

Mr BARTLETT—On one hand we have the problems of underfathering and the lack of a strong male figure in many families and in society generally. That is creating behaviour and self-esteem problems for boys. Yet on the other hand in schools we find that teachers are disempowered because increasingly the sorts of methods of discipline are being taken from them: the removal of corporal punishment, problems with access to their peers if their detention is at lunchtime or recess and problems with suspension. There seem to be increasingly pressures to remove those methods that teachers would traditionally have used for discipline. It seems to me that we have problems both in and out of school that seem to be exacerbating the whole issue of discipline and behaviour and, therefore, attitudes to learning.

Dr West—Yes, although I sometimes start the morning at a school in Toongabbie, Penrith or Mount Druitt and go on to King's School in the afternoon, and there is no comparison. Some of those kids in the tougher schools have not had breakfast. They have had a bit of juice or a bit of anything they could scrounge and they are at school by eight because there is no-one at home. The kids at King's are well fed, well looked after: there are structures there. Someone mentioned something earlier about structure: it might have been your question, Rod. You cannot get away from the fact that the boys that I talk to want, overwhelmingly—not inevitably, but most of them do—to feel there is a structure there for them. I was very taken by something on Hitler Youth on SBS last week and the structures there. Many of the things we are talking about in boys education were provided by Hitler Youth. I do not think I like their ideals very much, but they had the knack of seizing boys' hearts and minds—for evil intent, of course. The activities were there; the mentoring was there, using boys' own liking of being liked and fear of being disliked.

I think we are losing a lot of boys—certainly working-class boys. Again, tagging on to the discussion you were just having about boys post-school, my colleague, Jack Zinn, is here today from the Council on the Ageing, and he knows better than I do that patterns of unemployment among working-class men are really quite severe. To say that boys are in work and therefore everything is fine with them at school is, I think, manifestly wrong. Apart from the fact that, as we are saying—it is from Bradford that I have quoted in the front of my submission—the consequences of having large numbers of young men who are undereducated, unemployable and hold little responsibility in society are 'potentially explosive'. If we cared nothing about boys, if we did not care about them suiciding, we would still be concerned that, for society's sake, there are some very dangerous trends going on there. The council of ministers for education in the Common Market when I was there was quite concerned about what was going to happen with boys who were not going to learn values of citizenship, fair play and being decent people.

Mrs ELSON—In your submissions you have a number of pilot programs you would like to see. One was a pilot scheme for local boys education projects and another was a pilot scheme to find ways of nurturing men into the teaching profession. The other one is a boys learning coordinator at school level. I would like to know a little more about those, especially about how you nurture men to take up teaching.

Dr West—With difficulty. That project did not run. We could not seem to get men in teaching to come forward.

Mrs ELSON—Could you tell us why they did not want to go into teaching? Was it the money, or was it the responsibility?

Dr West—That is more Ed's kettle of fish than mine. Money is one thing. Put it this way: if you were a man, would you want to go into something where you were being held up as a hero—you could become a firefighter or you would be feared as a policeman, or you might be someone who is exciting and play with equipment—fiddle with a camera or something like that: you would be someone important—versus going into teaching and having people saying, 'You're going into teaching?' You say, 'Yes; primary teaching.' 'Primary teaching?' Straightaway you have that stigma. 'What are you doing that for? Are you all right?' It is a big problem today.

Mr BARTLETT—We get the same.

Dr West—In parliament? You poor fellows!

Mrs ELSON—And a coordinator within a school of boys—

Dr West—Yes. There is a boys' coordinator at Doonside High School, for example, but he is doing about nine things. He is only a young fellow. He is overwhelmed and underworked.

Mrs ELSON—Is that targeting particular programs for boys along the lines of what Rod said before—that they think differently?

Dr West—They are. I think everyone is feeling their way a bit. People do not know what to do. I was going to talk some more about some of the things we ought to be doing with teachers. Brendan was sounding off about that last night. The evidence from Ken Rowe in Melbourne is very strong. Again I have to talk in generalisations, and you might shoot me down again, but if you took a class where there was a good teacher teaching the kids and getting them all to achieve, and you took that teacher out and put in a bad teacher who did not care, whose discipline was slap-dash, who was just wandering around and talking to the kids, most of the girls would continue to achieve but most of the boys would not, according to the research I have read.

When I was in Sweden a pro-rector at the university or whatever said, 'We have convinced girls that education is for them. If they want to spend their life as some kind of drudge working at the sink, then they can do that. If they do not want to do that they can go into schools. Schools are the place for them. That is where they have to achieve. Schools are the ladder for achievement.' Boys are not getting that message at all. The boys in the surveys in the UK were going out sometimes five nights a week. They were going out to sport, they were going out with girlfriends, they were going out with their mates, they were working. There were very high rates of part-time work amongst some boys in those surveys. Boys felt school was a waste of time. In a British survey, again, far more boys than girls found school a complete waste of time. When I did my boys in sport project some years ago I said to the boys, 'What do you come to school

for?' and they said, 'To be with our mates and play sport.' 'What about the rest?' 'Oh, just stuff. "Sit still, shut up, write this down".' There are a lot of boys in those categories—not all.

Putting more fire into teachers is something that I am talking about at Melbourne. This is a sneak preview of what I am saying there because the thinking has advanced since I wrote to you. I see a lot of lessons, because I go into classrooms and supervise the students. It is very common to see the teacher start talking, there will be a question, he will continue talking and 15 or 20 minutes might ensue. Then there will be an activity, then there will be more talking and so on. So most of that 50- or 40-minute lesson is teacher taught. The boys are not being hooked by that. They are losing it. Ken Rowe, I think, says the boys talk is the 'blah, blah, blah'—sport, football or what am I doing on the weekend. They are lost. So most of the boys are inactive most of the time. We have a lot to do in teacher education to fire up our teachers. Teachers are not learning ways of engaging kids and certainly are not learning ways of engaging boys. As I said, there is almost nothing taught about boys education in the teacher education subjects that I know and what there is, is negative.

I have talked about smartening up behaviour. I have talked briefly about a more active curriculum. That is kind of the reverse of what I am saying about teachers. If we want boys to learn more we have to get rid of this idea that they sit at desks the whole time. It is physiologically bad for them. They get inattentive. If boys are like me they want to fidget, they want to be active. That is why they like sport; they are doing things. The other thing I would not want you to overlook is checking assessment methods. Peter Downs at Hinchinbrook School in the UK is being employed as a consultant to an inquiry by the UK government—or he was when I last spoke to him. He said that you can predict by the questions in an exam how the boys are going to do.

ACTING CHAIR—Would you explain that?

Dr West—He used some examples. Mary was leaving Germany. Mary was going to miss her friend. She was going to say goodbye to her mother and visit someone else in England. 'What did Mary feel like and what would she have written to her mother?'—blah, blah. The boys thought this was just death. There was a question the following year about a spider. The spider lured insects into its web, bit their heads off and ripped their wings off and so on. Boys thought this was really great. There is an example.

If there is an emphasis on feelings, boys feel uncertain and insecure. When people ask, 'What do you feel, Pete?' I say, 'What do you mean by "feel"?' This is not safe territory for a man. I do not know what you are like when people quiz you about your feelings but most men I know feel very unsafe. Assessment questions in which I ask boys to analyse, discuss, critically analyse or account for have inadvertently disadvantaged boys. They do not know what to do. Again, the guy I spoke to in Tennessee at a boys conference was doing a lot of work with what he called rubrics, which was giving boys careful instructions on how to do assignments.

Mrs MAY—In your submission you actually make a statement that there is a flight of men from teaching. Representatives of the department said to us this morning that that is not so.

Dr West—That is their job, isn't it? They say everything is fine. The numbers I have looked at say that men have gone down from one in three to one in four.

ACTING CHAIR—One in five in primary schools.

Mrs MAY—One in five in primary.

Dr West—Yes, that would be right.

ACTING CHAIR—I think that Margaret put forward the point this morning that, in terms of teacher training, 83 per cent are female.

Mrs MAY—In 1999.

ACTING CHAIR—It could be even worse in the future.

Dr West—Yes. You feel you want to wrap the men who are coming into teaching in cotton wool and put them in a glass case, or do anything to preserve them and keep them. They have their own difficulties, which would be well worth a study of its own—for example, I find the men students that I know cannot use the support mechanisms, will not go to counsellors, certainly do not come and cry on my shoulder, because men do not cry, and they are very poor at asking for help. They say to me, 'Eff you,' 'This sucks' or they storm off.

ACTING CHAIR—Or that it is none of your business.

Dr West—It is very difficult to help them if they do that, but the girls' strategies for dealing with failure are more subtle and much more effective. Of course, there are mechanisms there which the girls use more successfully.

Mrs MAY—The other thing I was going to say is that one of our witnesses this morning was talking about negotiating with students about the curriculum. With regard to what you are touching on—sitting a boy in the classroom where he is spoken at for 40 or 50 minutes and then getting up to leave, and about the fidget—do you see some sort of negotiation or involving boys in what they would like to do or see?

Dr West—Exactly. That is what I am about to do at King's School—to say to the boys, 'Tell us how you want to learn something. I don't care if it's Alaric running down with the Visigoths. Whatever it is, tell us how you'd like to learn about it.' I went to the Powerhouse Museum and there was a wonderful exhibition there about the Greeks. The whole time you were entranced, enchanted and led, and there was a visual—I do not know what you call it—display. You can press buttons and you are taken into the gymnasium and you can see the Olympic Games. It grabs you. We have got television now. God help us, we have got the Internet. But what are we still doing in schools? We say, 'Sit down, shut up, do this and listen to what I am saying, son.' It is very medieval compared with the other ways of learning.

Mrs MAY—Would you see an importance then on professional development? You were talking about how a male teacher would speak to a female student as compared to a male student.

Dr West—Yes, I think they are different.

Mrs MAY—There is still need for professional development even at that level to teach them how to talk to students?

Dr West—Yes. I think the Baumgart report found that the teaching population in New South Wales is getting nine months older every year. At the last gasp they were 47 to 48. It is hard to teach old dogs new tricks when there is always that new curriculum—the new English syllabus and new texts to read and so on. So teaching them how to talk to kids is something they might find quite difficult to re-learn.

Mrs MAY—I know when I was working in schools you would get a teacher who had been in a school for 20 to 25 years teaching the same thing year after year.

Dr West—Yes, and some of those old teachers are good, but there is a resistance to having people come in and look at their teaching and make suggestions about it.

Mrs MAY—An assessment sort of process?

Dr West—Yes, it is difficult. It is difficult to do that honestly and sensibly and help the teachers along.

Mrs MAY—And also without intimidating the teacher.

Dr West—Indeed.

Mrs MAY—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—Peter, you said assessment methods need looking at. Have you done any work on assessment methods and compared them with what they were 20 years ago and what they are now?

Dr West—I think Ken Rowe has done that better than I have. I have skimmed and looked at other people's research, but I have not done the research myself, no. But, again, I think it is Ken Rowe who was looking at the maths syllabus and saying that what was a simple row of sums years ago is now much more complicated and there is much more reading in papers. People show me exam papers and they are huge things. It makes it difficult for boys to negotiate.

ACTING CHAIR—I hear, anecdotally, they are more verbal, which favours girls, of course, and the same in mathematics exams and even science exams.

Dr West—Indeed.

ACTING CHAIR—The visual spatial components of those examinations that I remember do not seem to be present anymore.

Dr West—Dr Nelson is not here today but the doctors I speak to find quite laughably the idea that males are not different from females. The biology is quite different; the brains are different.

If you are going to give them questions, they will tend to react in different ways. That is not to say everyone is going to react in different ways, but there will be a tendency with an overlap.

ACTING CHAIR—You were here, I assume, for other witnesses today. What is your view of this denial of biological factors?

Dr West—I suspect I am with you—and, as I said, there is an overlap. Listen to what my colleague says about England: if you give boys these questions, especially about girls and their feelings, the boys will tend to crash—not all of them, but most of them; if you give girls questions about feelings, they will tend to do well. We do raise boys and girls in different ways. I am talking about nurture, you are talking about nature. The review I read of biological differences was very subtle and was moving, but she said that, in the end, organisms which are made up differently tend to react differently.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of the last 20 years, it is interesting that skills like presentation skills are often very valued in a modern society. If I can make a generalisation, girls are much better at intuition than boys are, in my view; but boys are much better at insight. There is a subtle difference between the two. Boys are much better at conceptualisation. Girls are much better at translation, so they are much better, I think, in foreign languages and so on. Why is it that in our modern society we are valuing only half of the skills that ought to be valued and ignoring the others? Is there any evidence that you see that the language we are using in this debate about education of boys and girls is feminine rather than masculine?

Dr West—And the boys' misbehaviour and bad learning, so-called, is being measured by a feminine ruler. That was said by someone else—I think it was Cancian, and I cannot quite recall the full reference, but it was her idea, not mine. Would I be very odd if I thought that since 1963, when I was at university and people were then showing the works of feminism, education has had a lot of enthusiastic revolutionaries in it, and many of those revolutionaries are still there storming the barricades. It is difficult for people to be for something without being against something else, and I think it is difficult for some feminists to be not against something. What I am trying to say—this is treacherous territory—is that it is difficult for people to be universally insightful and universally generous, and there is a tendency amongst many educators to be rather negative about all things masculine.

Mr BARTLETT—Following on from your earlier comments that there are different approaches to learning that tend, though not totally, to suit boys better than girls, at the University of Western Sydney in the educational faculty and in the training of teachers—

Dr West—We do not have a faculty, which is part of the problem, Kerry.

Mr BARTLETT—In teacher training anyway.

Dr West—Yes.

Mr BARTLETT—Is enough recognition taken of different approaches on a gender basis in preparing teachers to look for the sorts of things where boys—

Dr West—No.

Mr BARTLETT—There is not?

Dr West—No, there is not. For example, my colleagues in maths would have a week on getting girls enthusiastic about maths, people teaching science would talk about girls in science, but people in English are not talking about getting boys enchanted in English.

Mr BARTLETT—So there is a problem at the training level?

Dr West—Absolutely—as far as I am aware. I am seen as a quite eccentric and peculiar person at my place; they kind of tolerate me.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you find you are fighting a losing battle or you are making some headway?

Dr West—I am making more headway with people out in the street, I think, and some of the people in the churches. Some of the Christian churches out in Western Sydney are very cued in to difficulties that men are having when they are dealing with the difficulties. Burnside would be one of the best. Hills Christian Life Centre is another. But when you are talking to people in the universities you are dealing with a different mind-set—when you talk about masculinity they start talking about constructions of gender and lurch into a kind of academic-speak.

Mr BARTLETT—Which we have had in a number of submissions.

Dr West—Yes. I wish I had written this, and I didn't. That stuff is saying, 'You are a dad, you are a really important person and you need to be in there with your boy and your girl.' That is the level of stuff that we need. We need it with the teacher trainees as much as with anyone else. They are not getting these messages.

Mr BARTLETT—Other witnesses have commented that it does not make any difference whether you have a male teacher or a female teacher; it is the quality of the teaching that matters. We would all agree that quality of teaching does matter. Is it your view that it is important that there are male teachers there for adolescent boys, and for younger boys, in particular?

Dr West—Yes, it is. I have had students leave me and tell me they are going from school to school to school and the headmasters are saying to them, 'I want you in my school. I do not have any men in my school. I want you there.' That sounds pretty categorical. There is the evidence in Berne—which I have cited—that people are saying, 'I need you to coach that rugby team' or 'We need a man to lift the heavy boxes' or whatever it is. It is a difficult but worthwhile assignment to ask someone to look very carefully at the work that men teachers do and the work that women teachers do. I wonder how different the jobs are, in fact. The people who graduate from our program and go out teaching are reporting particular kinds of things to me that do not sound like what the female teachers are reporting to us. It is the guys who come up to them and it is the guys who fight them. It is like it is the first dad they have ever encountered. This is nearly literally true.

ACTING CHAIR—This is interesting. A couple of the boys whom we spoke to in Melbourne had shifted from private and public to private. One was in year 4 and one was in

year 5 when they shifted. Throughout their whole school career they had not had one lesson in sport—not one. I thought that told a very big story in terms of how boys learn and in terms of their need for activity. The study you have done at King's—you said you had just completed that?

Dr West—And completing.

ACTING CHAIR—Will that be available to our committee? Are you intending to publish that?

Dr West—I am deliberating with King's about how we are going to publish it. I can talk to you later about that.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. You also mentioned in your introductory comments about, possibly, the need to do a comparative study with a working class school.

Dr West—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you intending to do that in the near future? Will that be done within the next 12 months?

Dr West—I could do lots of things if I had the money to do it, and I am sure you could say the same thing. The King's project was funded by King's and the university. Whatever I think of King's—many different things—that study was made possible by the two, and that is the difficulty.

ACTING CHAIR—That is a valid point. Dr Peter West, thank you very much.

Dr West—Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 12.28 p.m. to 1.42 p.m.

LEWIS, Mr Ed, Lecturer, Australian Catholic University

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. I invite you to make some introductory comments.

Mr Lewis—I am a former primary school teacher. As a result of my experiences in schools, I am particularly interested in the issue of men in teaching. I have spent the last 10 years as a teacher educator at the university. I thank you for the opportunity of appearing today. I think it is a very important issue. You have a monumental task in front of you in trying to glean some sense from the whole debate. I hope that I appear honest and open in terms of what I am going to say to you. A major reason for me being here is the fact that I am naturally interested—as we all are—in children's learning, development and socialisation, and also in bringing to bear quality teaching within all of that. My submission is based on some research that I have done with a colleague who is an equal partner in all of this—Associate Professor Jude Butcher from the Australian Catholic University—so what I am talking to will basically synthesise that. I will also probably throw in a few things in terms of my readings of the literature.

As I said in my submission, our basic work is in looking at the conflicts and tensions experienced by men in primary teaching. Naturally enough, as I am sure you would expect, there are some rather important implications for that in terms of the education of boys. As part of a total mosaic, there are lots of other factors there as well. It is certainly not as simplistic as some media reports have been in recent years, saying that the solution to all boys' problems is to have more men in schools. I think that is a very dangerous oversimplification.

We entered this whole domain about two years ago when we noticed that the number of male primary students at the Australian Catholic University was decreasing markedly. In the last five years, it has gone from approximately 20 per cent of males entering first year teacher training to about 10 per cent—that is just on the Strathfield campus. Interestingly, those figures are not reflected across our five federated campuses across Queensland, Victoria, ACT and Sydney. It is really only on one campus where we had the concerns.

We started looking into that and we became interested in the gender composition in primary schools of balance between female and male staff, and particularly the conflicts and tensions that beginning male primary teachers were experiencing. Our later work, which I will talk about later, looks at teaching as a career choice for year 12 students. We went to the Catholic Education Office and said, 'What's going on here?' They were aware of the problem as well. We said, 'Let's do something about it.' We are flagging a future project, probably next year or the year after, where we start recruiting in terms of trying to make teaching generally and primary teaching in particular a more attractive career choice for all people. That is one aspect.

The last thing is to answer the question whether we need more male primary school teachers. I think it has already been mentioned, either today or on other days, that the number of men in Australian schools has plummeted over the last two decades. I have not gone further back but I would suspect that if you went back to the postwar period, to the 1950s, it might even be more. In 1984 it was 30 per cent and in 1998 it was 23 per cent of men in all Australian primary schools. They are ABS figures.

There is anecdotal evidence that the trend is continuing. That was mentioned this morning. I visit schools, just as Peter West does. One religious head said to me, 'Ed, where can I get a good

man?' I said, 'Just a moment, I'll just digest that.' What she actually meant was, 'Could I have a good male teacher?' We find ourselves constantly being approached by staff saying, 'We want to even things up, we want a role model for the kids, is there anyone you can recommend?' These points I think you are aware of as well.

Men are leaving teaching at a greater rate than women currently. There are all kinds of reasons being advanced for that. In terms of the number of students who drop out of teacher training, men are over-represented. I am going to a school tomorrow to look at a male student teacher who is in difficulties. We probably have half a dozen over the recent period of practice teaching. I would say four of them are males and they only represent 10 per cent of the cohort. There are some interesting things there.

If I could just quickly go through some of the things in the paper I submitted to revise those. We talked to male teachers—there were eight of them in a focus group—who were finishing off their course at university and doing casual teaching; so they were entering the profession. They had a fair kind of presence in the schools and a fair bit of experience under their belts. In terms of the conflicts and tensions they felt, they had this 'personal efficacy', we called it. They were very capable of doing their work. They saw themselves as having something to offer. They had a sense of social justice, contribution to the greater good, a broader helping society kind of role. They saw themselves as father figures and role models to children, which was encouraging.

They believed that primary teaching was not perceived by society as a very masculine job. I heard that many of you have been teachers in the past. The story I always tell is of when I used to be a primary teacher. If I met someone at a BBQ and said I was a teacher they would say, 'Oh, secondary?' I would ask the women who were teachers, 'When the same thing happened to you, did they say, "Oh, primary?"' When I asked that at a recent conference all the women said, 'Yes, they did.' So society has very fixed gender roles there.

ACTING CHAIR—I used to reply, 'I'm a real teacher, I can actually teach.'

Mr Lewis—They believed that the job had low social status and that the salary was not in accord with the work performed. We have heard that before. They believed that job satisfaction was more important than money. Last but not least, something that was of great concern—and again not particularly mind-blowing in the current climate—was this business about physical contact with children and the possible allegations of child abuse. I thought the *Herald* covered that reasonably well on Saturday in the *Good Weekend*. I do not know if you are aware of the magazine associated with the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday. The whole issue of allegations of child abuse against teachers was canvassed. It was a well balanced sort of article.

This was something they said they carried around with them daily, all of the time. There are all kinds of informal regulations in schools about, 'Don't touch kids. Don't be alone in the room with them.' You have heard that, I guess. Another one I heard the other day was, 'Stay a metre away from children.' That was a maths educator. That one got me going. In the paper where I reported on the interview with the focus group, one of the guys said he felt he was under scrutiny. He came as a casual teacher to take kindergarten, and all the mums and dads were there waiting. The principal introduced him and built him up in a big way but he really felt that he was under scrutiny. He wondered whether a first-year out female teacher would feel the same thing. There are lots of things about that that you might like to ask.

The recent research is quite interesting. We have prepared a paper for a conference in Sydney, the AARE conference. We are in press at the moment, but we have our preliminary results. I would just like to run those by you. Generally, the study is significant. There were 1,420 kids surveyed with the permission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney—boys and girls. There was something like 18 high schools across the archdiocese included.

Mrs MAY—Were these all high school kids?

Mr Lewis—Yes, year 12 kids.

Mrs MAY—All year 12?

Mr Lewis—Yes, boys and girls. The socioeconomic areas were as follows. There was one school on the North Shore. There were schools out in the south-west, the Bankstown area. There were schools in the southern area near Menai. This is just off the top of my head. There were some schools in the Eastern Suburbs. So it is a reasonable sort of socioeconomic mix. We have to do a lot more analysis and a lot more correlation of some of the data, but some of the preliminary stuff is interesting.

Generally, the boys do not see teaching—especially primary teaching—as a worthwhile career. Those results are certainly not mind-blowing. We asked them mid year 12 whether they had ever considered teaching as a career or had decided they were going to do it. Sixteen per cent of the girls said they intended teaching, and, of those, the overwhelming majority indicated they wanted to do primary teaching. Five per cent of the boys intended teaching, and overwhelmingly the majority of them decided they wanted to do secondary teaching. Those figures are consistent with studies overseas, both in the UK and the US. The numbers are remarkably consistent. I looked at about 20 years of data.

ACTING CHAIR—In English-speaking countries?

Mr Lewis—English-speaking countries, certainly. In fact, the Catholic Education Office was delighted at those figures because their anecdotal evidence was that the situation was worse. Even though in some cohorts where there might be 100 kids, only one or zero kids were interested in teaching, when you put that across the board it was more. The interesting thing we have to go back and look at is the socioeconomic influence as a factor in all of this or maybe even the policy of a particular school, whether they are actually advocating it. As I say, some schools had no boys interested in teaching—full stop.

Just an anecdote again, at St Patricks, Strathfield—a boys school—which is on the campus of the Catholic University, at a year 12 careers night a colleague of mine, who is a maths educator, was very miffed because they had lined him up to talk to the parents and the kids about possible careers as teachers and then they rang him and said, ‘I am sorry, the session is cancelled. There is not one kid at St Pats who is interested in teaching as a career so we do not see any point having you on at the careers night.’

The next thing is interesting. We hypothesised whether there would be a match in the conflicts and tensions that those beginning teachers were experiencing with their view of teaching and the reasons those beginning teachers enter teaching and whether we could line that

up with anything that the year 12 kids said. When they responded to this survey, the only things they ranked highly—this is men and women—were the personal, the social and the working conditions issues.

They saw themselves as role models. Interestingly, the men regarded that more strongly, and that is in keeping with what the beginning teachers believe. They saw themselves as having rewarding careers working with children—again, there is a match. They saw themselves as able to influence children's early learning, and the females believe that more strongly than the males. Unsurprisingly again as well, their fourth reason for strongly favouring a career in teaching was the working conditions—the school hours and the holidays. I do not know whether they appreciated how hard their teachers worked in terms of how long their days were and how much they needed their holidays.

The next thing I thought was surprising was that they did not perceive teachers as having low status, poor salary or poor promotion and career opportunities. That, as an issue influencing their career choice, or not influencing their career choice, did not rank highly at all; it was not statistically significant. I do not quite know how I can explain that. It is certainly the accepted wisdom that there is no money in teaching.

They disagreed with the proposition that teaching was women's business or a woman's world, they disagreed with the proposition that teaching was not manly, and they disagreed with the proposition that teaching had low social status. Interestingly, they did not support the proposition that all this focus on child abuse was discouraging people entering a career in teaching.

I have come from a position of neutrality, I guess, where I have considered the evidence over the last two years, to a personal belief that we do need more male primary teachers in schools. I find this view that we need better teachers and not more male teachers rather unfortunate. I think we can do both. Certainly, gender can never be as important as the quality of teaching, but the physical presence of men in schools is required. I cannot see how you can argue otherwise.

There has been 100 years of debate about whether we need more men in schools, especially in the states. All the issues of child protection, et cetera, that are currently on the agenda have all happened before—in the forties in the United States; it is not new. I was talking before with Rod. Society sees it as a hot issue. One of the reasons we need more male primary teachers, I would advocate, is that it is seen as desirable by the people out there.

There has been discussion here this morning about kids expanding their ideas of masculinity. Everyone says it, but as you said before, nobody knows how to do it yet. I believe that there is such a thing as a male teaching style. It is a highly contentious issue, but from my experience in schools I think men and women teach in different ways. I think they are programmed biologically to do that, but I think they teach in different ways according to their experience. By the time I entered primary school teaching, I had worked in coalmines, metalliferous mines, I had driven taxis and had worked on a field crew. I thought I had a fair bit to offer when it came to studying a unit on mining in Australia. That is a biased personal example, I guess.

Professor Peter Cuttance from Sydney University has been reported in the media as saying that men and women teach in different ways and there has to be more research on that. I think

they interpret curriculum in different ways. I am a primary maths educator, and that is basically where I work. I visit schools, and the modern primary mathematics curriculum emphasises activity mathematics with equipment, kids getting out of their desks investigating things, building, manipulating and making. I see lots of women not taking it up because it is about risk taking behaviour. It is about letting kids go and hoping you can get them back. It is about unexpected outcomes from an investigation. My experience is that a lot of women like to keep control, like to keep the kids in their desks, like to keep them busy working from a textbook or worksheet. A lot of boys do not learn like that. I think they can be disadvantaged.

There is a New Zealand study that says having more men in primary schools encourages fathers into schools, which is an interesting factor. Having coached sports teams and running and swimming carnivals, I would fall in with that to some degree. Just to give a perspective on boys education, if there are men there, it is helpful as well. Issues like transition from primary to secondary might be another thing. If previous submissions talked about possible programs in terms of developing gender, the presence of men in schools surely has a role to offer in that regard. That is about all I would say. I am happy to be quizzed.

ACTING CHAIR—It all sounds sensible to me, but I might be biased. In choosing a teacher, you made the comment that the male primary teacher has been regarded as morally suspect and out of place. Where does that view come from? Could it be argued that that really is an overreaction? I remember my first day in 1964, as a 19-year-old, teaching in what was regarded as the toughest school in South Australia. The principal took me in and gave me that lesson, which was very pertinent because the year before a young teacher had committed suicide because they had been accused of a sexual misdemeanour with a child, which the girl confessed was a made-up story because she was doing something else at the time. That was the first lesson that principal gave to us—never, ever be alone with a child. That is something I have taught all my teachers. I would have thought that was a very commonsense attitude. But is it an over-reaction? There is a self-fulfilling prophesy in all of this, isn't there?

Mr Lewis—There is. I got it at teachers college in the mid-seventies, almost as an industrial issue from the Teachers Federation. Certainly, no-one at the college as it then was ever said anything about it. But I remember reading it in their magazine or something like that. That was just protection for their members. Certainly, the same climate then did not exist as it does now. I think it has gone in cycles. This is not necessarily a male issue either; this is an issue for all teachers, of course.

ACTING CHAIR—No, it was not just male teachers who were brought in; the young female teachers were brought in as well.

Mr Lewis—I think all teachers are always aware of it, but the situation is even more constrained at the moment, or there is more pressure on at the moment. So there are probably cycles. There have been episodes historically, I think.

ACTING CHAIR—We have had witnesses bring forward to this inquiry issues that I think divide people—gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status—and overlook issues that I think bring people together; that is, the educational program that is planned and offered to the children, both boys and girls. Would you like to make a comment on that?

Mr Lewis—I think we have to be very inclusive. The point was made earlier that people get threatened by ideas that are different from theirs or by people attempting to colonise their ground. Certainly, I have direct and indirect feedback from senior bureaucrats in the department of education that, 'We don't necessarily see boys education as a high priority.' My reading of the situation is that they have a vested interest in girls education and they are not going to let anything interfere with that. I do not see why there has to be any conflict. I do not see why we cannot encompass both.

In terms of what the trio said earlier in their submission, I had trouble understanding a lot of the latter part. But at least at the beginning the point was made about equity and inclusiveness. I agree with the proposition that it has to be under some umbrella and that the needs of girls must be looked at as well. Interestingly, I am the parent of two daughters who bring me into the real world as far as teaching a cohort that is largely 18- to 21-year-old women. I like to think that I am touch with them. They see themselves as being fairly advantaged. They are interested in the work that I am doing and they say, 'We've had a good run at school'—this is totally anecdotal—'and we've been encouraged all along.' I suppose there is the influence of the family as well, but they reckon the system has encouraged them pretty much.

ACTING CHAIR—During this inquiry, and again today, gender, socioeconomic status, race and religion—that one was not mentioned today—have all been put forward as basically reasons why boys are suffering. I have always felt that those reasons are put forward because the teachers and the programs are unsuitable. You measure good teachers not by their ability to teach kids who want to learn, but by their ability to teach kids who do not want to learn—who are disengaged. Would you like to comment on that point?

Mr Lewis—I think you are right. I think there is a risk in terms of just identifying those factors that you talk about and campaigning on behalf of them. In some of the other submissions people have mentioned oversimplification of racism or whatever; cross-cultural racism and stuff like that. The problems are interesting. I think we have to be inclusive, but as to how we achieve it—

ACTING CHAIR—Do we need more black teachers? Do we need more teachers from working-class backgrounds? Do we need more teachers from various ethnic backgrounds, particularly those who have recently arrived in Australia? Is that what we do with teacher training?

Mr Lewis—We do, and at the Catholic University—let us be clear here too—a quarter of our graduates are teaching in state and independent schools. We are not the Catholic teaching college any more: we are a public university. It is very refreshing to see second and third generation kids. I am not a Catholic, by the way, but the Catholic Church is a broad organisation in terms of its various components. It crosses many cultures, and that is reflected to some degree in the teacher graduates we are putting out at the moment. I would say that probably 50 per cent of our graduates this year are bilingual. Some of them are trilingual, and they are as Aussie as anybody. That is quite encouraging in terms of addressing those issues that you are talking about. They tend to go to areas—

ACTING CHAIR—But they are not male.

Mr Lewis—They are not male, that is right.

Mrs ELSON—We have heard throughout the inquiry about the low status of teachers in our community. Can you suggest any way that the system could raise their status?

Mr Lewis—I find that parents are prepared to rubbish teachers in public, but, if you ask them about the quality of education at their kids' school, they always speak very highly of the teachers there. So perhaps the answer is to campaign more on the local school level for schools to involve parents more somehow. Perhaps there could be an advertising campaign that says, 'Look at the good things that are happening at your local school'—and good things are happening. I am not prepared to write off education totally yet.

I am married to a classroom teacher. I have been out of the game for 10 years and I am quite glad that I am no longer there, in view of the things that are happening these days to teachers, who are working under all kinds of pressures. I really do not know how they do such a difficult job. I walk into schools these days and I wonder how I ever did the job. I guess it is an age thing as well, but I am full of admiration for them.

ACTING CHAIR—It is much harder, isn't it?

Mr Lewis—It is much harder; it really is. They are heroes. I simply say to anyone that I hear rubbishing teachers, 'Have you been down to your local school?' I actually dress people down. I say, 'Before you say anything else, why don't you go and sit in a classroom for half an hour and see what the average teacher in every system is dealing with these days?'

Mr BARTLETT—What do you think is harder?

Mr Lewis—I have to be a bit careful because I am one of your constituents in the lower Blue Mountains. My wife works in Penrith, so I suppose I have a fair amount of subjective experience. I worked in the school where she is currently working 10 years ago, so I can see a difference in terms of community. There are some wonderful families and some wonderful kids in the school—let us get that straight—but there is a larger percentage of dysfunctional families, parents with hard drug—not soft drug—problems and kids looking for affection than there was 10 years ago. As was mentioned earlier, boys are not content to sit in their place and engage in learning but just act out, wanting to get suspended or sent out because it is a way around their problems. I describe it as a cry for help basically. I think there are lots of cries for help. In lots of cases the system is too busy to deal with them—in terms of the counselling services, teachers and so on. It just gets worse. My experience is that, if they are in turmoil in year 6—which is the grade that my wife is working on—it will only get worse as they move through high school. They rarely settle down.

Mrs MAY—The teacher's role has really expanded: technology must have changed. Teachers must keep up with all those sorts of things as well as dealing with their personal problems with students.

Mr Lewis—Certainly. There is the issue of the breakdown of the family—all the current stuff. For example, the school must teach values. They have a value of the week and there is a banner in every classroom: 'The value for this week is kindness.'

Mr BARTLETT—Is it a state school?

Mr Lewis—Yes.

Mr BARTLETT—It is encouraging to see that happening.

Mr Lewis—It is Cambridge Gardens Primary School—a public school.

Mr BARTLETT—Many parents take their kids out of public schools because of a perceived lack of teaching of values, so it is heartening to see that that is happening in this particular school.

Mr Lewis—I worked for the Department of Education for 15 years before I came to work at the Catholic University so I have a foot in both camps. I go into state schools and Catholic schools. My reading of state and Catholic schools is that they are very similar. I would probably say that the Catholic system is a neck ahead on pastoral care, but there is some very good pastoral care going on in most state schools that I visit as well.

Mr BARTLETT—That is encouraging.

Mrs MAY—You talked about the survey that you conducted with 1,400-odd high school students, and their reaction to teaching was not what we thought it would be. Income and status were not of concern. Did you identify in your inquiry any strategies or ways that you could encourage those students—particularly males—into primary school teaching? They were still not picking it up, even though they did not have an adverse reaction to going into teaching. Why are they not picking it up?

Mr Lewis—I think they just do not know anything about teaching as a career. I think that is why they have not ranked status, salary and all those things as important: it does not matter to them. It is a good job because it has good holidays and hours and you can help kids. That is about where they are at. As far as getting the message across, we see possible initiatives in terms of working with career advisers in the system: the university and the Catholic Education Office working together to do a bit of recruiting. We could involve some of our emerging young male and female teachers in high schools to tell students what schools are about. It is no good having old fogies like me doing it; they want someone to talk about their particular motivations and some of the programs and other things they are approaching.

Mrs MAY—You said that they cancelled a career's information night on teaching through lack of interest.

Mr Lewis—Yes, at St Pat's in Strathfield.

Mrs MAY—So it comes back to the school career advisers to try—

Mr Lewis—Yes. We have evidence that a percentage of career advisers certainly do not actively promote teaching as a career. In fact, there is anecdotal evidence to say that they discourage kids from taking up teaching.

Mr BARTLETT—On the survey on the same issue, it keeps going into teaching. Have you noticed any difference between kids from working-class backgrounds and middle-class backgrounds—kids with parents who are professionals compared to those who are not in the professions, say who are in trades or in business for themselves?

Mr Lewis—We have some dangers in singling out these factors. If I think about class, culture and so on, and I think of those faces that sit before me in the tutorial room, I suppose we have not done any strong breakdown of our demographic but certainly we would draw a lot from south-western Sydney—not so much from the North Shore or the Eastern Suburbs. We probably have a fairly—whatever it means—working-class, or middle to lower middle socioeconomic cohort.

Mr BARTLETT—Teaching was always seen by a lot of people as the way out of the working class as opposed to lower middle class.

Mr Lewis—One of our schools was a North Shore school. I had a quick look at the data the other day. We have to run the analysis on this. It was a lower North Shore Catholic school—I cannot remember which one it was—but there were not many people there interested in teaching. That is a very isolated example. There were many more kids out in the Bankstown district and in Menai interested in teaching as a career.

Mr BARTLETT—We had two differing views on that, both from fairly middle-class private schools. One said no-one from year 12 was interested.

Mr SAWFORD—Scotch College—with 3,000 students.

Mr BARTLETT—Yes. In another one, Canberra Grammar, quite a few were interested. Both draw from areas of fairly similar socioeconomic background.

Mr Lewis—It would be very interesting to see the influence that staff careers advisers would be having on that too.

Mr BARTLETT—I dare say. Back to the issues of different learning styles and a gap in achievement in literacy, particularly in early years. You said that you have specialised in primary maths. Have you noticed any difference in ability or in approaches to teaching or mastering numeracy at early ages?

Mr Lewis—Thanks for introducing the topic because literacy always gets a guernsey. The differences in numeracy are less pronounced but I think they are there. We have to be careful because basic skills tests are only one item on a palette of assessment. If you look at basic skills tests results the girls are marginally ahead of the boys in maths. That is only one aspect of the testing. Certainly my experience of teaching numeracy in K to 6 is that it is a great vehicle for interesting and stimulating the boys. I worked on the current K to 6 maths syllabus. My springboard to a career in academia was working on the K to 6 syllabus, flying a desk in head office for five years and then going back to schools as an assistant principal and wanting to teach maths all the time. I found a way out after lots of frustration.

When I was doing a lot of work in schools—demonstration teaching and trying to develop new curriculum ideas, investigation and problem solving, using equipment, making maths active and real life in all of the descriptions—I would introduce some kids to an idea and I would say, 'Guys I want you work over here and here is the equipment' and there would always be a rush of boys to come out and get the equipment. So much so that I used to positively discriminate for the girls and say, 'Would the girls like to come out and choose the equipment they would like to work with?' The boys saw themselves as the owners of the equipment.

I think Peter West is right in terms of boys being bored out of their minds in passive learning situations. I have been visiting schools a lot this year, I have probably visited 40 schools, and yet I am still amazed, even in this day and age. We have gone so far in K to 6 in terms of trying to give kids variety in their experiences in teaching styles and so on in classrooms, yet I am still amazed at the amount of telling there is in classrooms. Even in mathematics, some teachers have not got the message. They will talk and talk, and then a quick activity, it might even just be a quick demonstration the teacher does, and then back to doing sums off the board, or in your books, or something like that.

Mr SAWFORD—My observations are there is very little mathematics in our primary schools throughout Australia. There is a lot of arithmetic, but not much mathematics. If you gave a question to a year 6 primary school kid that said, 'Predict the gradient and where the y axis is crossed by the graph $y=3x+1$,' and I gave you another question and I said to you, 'Use the base 10 blocks to solve the following quadratic equation, x^2+2x+1,' you do not see much of that in schools any more, nor in examinations. It is incredibly verbal. Have you noted a change, particularly in mathematics, in the way in which it is taught and it is assessed?

Mr Lewis—Since when?

Mr SAWFORD—In the last 10 or 20 years.

Mr Lewis—In the last 10 years there is no doubt there has been a return to traditional practice. In the 1980s in New South Wales my career path matched an era of a syllabus that was hopelessly out of date. It was written in 1967 and reviewed in 1972, so by the mid-1980s teachers cast around to other states looking for inspiration in curriculum and created quite novel programs for various kids. A syllabus came out that was written by virtue of the Basic Learning in Primary Schools Commonwealth grant from the Hawke government. There were millions of dollars pumped into numeracy. I think about one-fifth of all the teachers in New South Wales in the mid-1980s got in-service training, which was unprecedented in education history, but 15 years later they are back to their old habits.

Mr SAWFORD—What is literacy in mathematics: solving a quadratic equation or responding to a question about mathematics that is purely words?

Mr Lewis—That is a good one. I do not know whether I like the words 'literacy in mathematics'. What is competency in mathematics? Is that what you are getting at?

Mr SAWFORD—No, I think there is a literacy in music, I think there is a literacy in science, and there is a literacy in language.

Mr Lewis—Okay, I would prefer to talk about people who have number sense, who are numerate, as not just being able to handle arithmetic as you were talking about before, but have a feeling for the rules and the procedures, that know how the system works, who have some sort of insight in the processes you can go through, the shortcuts you can take and so on.

Mr SAWFORD—You started talking about the changes in the last 10 years and then we got on to something else. Do you want to go back to the changes?

Mr Lewis—It is not a 'blame the victim' kind of allegation.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I am not suggesting that.

Mr Lewis—I am not saying you are either, but I think lots of people are down on teachers, and I do not want to appear as that. Certainly, they are under more pressure in terms of having more to do in a limited day. I think it is a security blanket for them. I think it is just a failsafe that they have just defaulted to, 'Oh well, I have not really got time to do all that airy-fairy investigational stuff, I will just tell them. They can just repeat these exercises in their book and then we will get on to the next thing.' I do not know whether that answers your question.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think the organisational structure in primary schools with one teacher, 30 kids, 12 months, and the expectations of a modern curriculum in the sense of being expert enough in language skills, maybe even a foreign language, mathematics—not just arithmetic—science, expressive arts, music, sport, dance, gymnasium, craft, design, environmental studies, geography, history and so on, is too much? In all my career in a primary school I have never met a teacher on earth who can cope with a primary school curriculum.

Mr Lewis—That's right.

Mr SAWFORD—I have not met that teacher. That teacher does not exist, and yet that is the basic structure of the schools in this country.

Mr Lewis—That is why we have to support and admire them for doing their job so well, in that they manage to cope with so many areas.

Mr SAWFORD—Don't you think we ought to change that structure?

Mr Lewis—I think there is an argument towards specialised teachers, yes. And I think you will find that progressive principals and progressive leaders are utilising their talents in a similar vein. I went back to a school and was set upon by a principal who was a great guru of primary mathematics. I worked in a specialist role, almost like a consultant in the school: helping the other teachers, seeding ideas, setting up programs and then moving on to the next person. But the system doing it is another matter. Ultimately, in a more and more complex world, it is the amount of knowledge they learn. I looked at my daughter's HSC 2-unit maths paper the other night and thought, 'My godfather.' If I did it at all, I did it in about second year university. The same thing applies: we are asking them to do more and more, so literacy demands are higher, but they are across this huge number of domains, as well—and that is the challenge.

CHAIR—Others have said to us that literacy is obviously the core competency—that you actually need a fairly sophisticated level of literacy skill now to address a physics paper or a mathematics paper—and it was put to us, perhaps by Dr Rowe, that this in some way has disadvantaged boys, who seem to be less skilled in that area. Is that a proposition with which you agree?

Mr Lewis—I would agree with that, certainly. I have direct experience in basic skills testing with boys. Teachers are permitted to read the script of the test to year 3, but there is an expectation that by year 5 they can handle it themselves. The criticism of that test is that it is actually a literacy test—you have to be able to read. You can have kids who are not just good at arithmetic but also very good mathematicians, who show up as band 1. This is only an isolated incident, again, but my classic example of that is visiting a school where I was giving a demonstration lesson, about 10 years ago. We were talking about geometry and the kids were doing symmetry puzzles.

I was watching them work, and there was one fellow over on the right who could do anything that I threw at him. To keep him busy, I had some puzzles there that I had been using at an in-service course with teachers. It was taking me something like half an hour to work out each puzzle. I thought, as the educator, I had better at least try to solve some of them myself before I tried them with staff members. This kid was just working through them one by one. When I mentioned it to the teacher, she said, 'He's illiterate. He's the dunce of the school—he's good at maths, is he?' I said, 'He's one of the best spatial thinkers that I've ever seen in year 6.'

Mr SAWFORD—Bill Gates was a nerd, too, wasn't he.

Mr Lewis—It does not always show up. I do not know what is worse: kids doing well on tests—getting the right answer on a basic skills test—when they do not really understand the concept involved or kids who do know the right answer and are very good, not being picked up.

Mr SAWFORD—The kid who won the 1960 matriculation physics prize in South Australia got a G for every subject he did at matriculation except physics, and he got a credit for chemistry. Would someone please explain how he would survive today.

CHAIR—He went into politics, didn't he?

Mr SAWFORD—No, he did not. He became a missionary.

CHAIR—Thanks. I have not heard all of what you said today, but your submission is excellent and it covers one of the themes that are emerging from the inquiry. If you have any comments to make on anything else that you see put before us—whether it is another idea, a criticism or anything like that—please send them on.

Mr Lewis—Would you like us to forward to the committee the paper we are writing?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Lewis—It will be presented at the conference in Sydney in December. I will make sure you get a copy.

CHAIR—That would be good, thank you very much.

[2.31 p.m.]

O'HALLORAN, Ms Maree, Senior Vice-President, New South Wales Teachers Federation

ROSICKY, Ms Michelle, Women's Coordinator, New South Wales Teachers Federation

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming to speak to us today and giving us your submission. Please give us an overview of the Teachers Federation's view of this issue, particularly the things you think are most important.

Ms O'Halloran—Thank you very much for the opportunity to come and speak to you. As you all know, the Teachers Federation represents teachers in the public institutions in New South Wales from preschool through to TAFE. You have already heard from the Australian Education Union, which is our national body. We support the AEU submission and the oral submissions from the AEU. Our own submission is quite detailed. I will make some brief general comments and then perhaps ask Michelle to do the same. I might start with my own teaching experience. I have had nine years as a secondary teacher. All my secondary experience has been in coeducational schools, two in the country and one in the city. In 1998 and 1999 I was a teacher in corrective services, in the maximum security area at Long Bay, teaching literacy to males aged 18 to 35.

The general proposition that the teaching profession wants to put forward is that a successful school experience for all students is our aim. It is our professional responsibility and what we want to do. That includes strategies to cater for the individual needs of all students, including gender differences, noting that gender is one of a range of social factors that can affect student performance. We think that is very important. At a personal level my experience at corrective services would be that youth at risk, particularly boys at risk, is a very big issue for us in our schools. There is no doubt about that. While it is foolish to argue from the basis of your own anecdotal experience, in corrective services 65 per cent of the inmates who come to us are functionally illiterate. Eighty per cent have reached only year 10 or less, the vast majority of them having less than year 10. So there is that background to those students who have not been succeeding and who have not moved forward.

As well as that, as you would know, a high proportion of the inmates come from our lowest socioeconomic areas. The work of Tony Vincent from the New South Wales University shows that the six poorer suburbs in Sydney equate to a large proportion of the inmates. What I am saying about that—and I know it is the extreme end—is that it is too late by the time people end up in the criminal justice system to deal with the problem. We say that early intervention and resources at an earlier level have to be the way forward.

I know your committee would have heard that literacy appears to be the major problem for boys across the system at all socioeconomic levels. My experience in corrective services is that if you do not solve the problem much earlier you cannot solve it later in life. We support increased resources to deal with literacy at an early stage in schooling. There are a number of programs now that we think are successful and need to be further resourced, one of them being the reading recovery program currently in operation in New South Wales. I am not sure if your committee has heard about this program. It is an extremely successful program where individual tuition is given one to one. The problem is that there are insufficient resources for reading

recovery teachers to be available for all schools and all students. In our rural areas small schools cannot get access to that type of reading recovery.

It is also interesting to note that there are two boys for every one girl in the reading recovery program. It does seem to have a good success rate and should be built on. The other one is the full service schools program, which deals with the notion of youth at risk. Boys use this program to a greater extent than girls. A full range of services at the school level as well as mainstream schooling and a whole range of opportunities is available. I think it was in the DETYA submission. The Teachers Federation supports the notion that the school provides a full service for the student, a social and welfare background.

On the question of teacher effectiveness and quality, there is no doubt that good teachers are the way forward. The best outcomes come from good teachers. In saying that I am not suggesting for a moment that simply good teaching can take away some of the problems we have in society and schools, but certainly the Teachers Federation wants to maintain and increase the standard of the profession and the retention rates. We think that is crucial. Professional development is also an important issue for us. We have not in recent times had sufficient resources from state or federal governments for professional development. Not only on gender strategy issues but on a whole range of issues there has been a very limited amount of money for professional development. Clearly, for such a complex notion as gender and gender construction teachers need professional development, money and time so that the quality of the profession can continue to be enhanced.

Ms Rosicky—I support all that Maree has had to say. My role as the women's coordinator is a position that was created back in 1979. It had a range of responsibilities. It is important that the committee is aware of our history in the involvement with girls and boys education. In 1979 at an annual conference a recommendation was moved which set up this position and worked to deal with gender stereotypes inside the teaching materials and also girls post-school outcomes. We have been reasonably successful in stretching those gender stereotypes, particularly for girls. In terms of post-school destinations for girls, we still have a long way to go in reports from DETYA. They indicate that we still have problems around girls post-school destinations. In this state Virginia Chadwick was our minister for education and put up policies encouraging girls to step into non-traditional areas of study—that is, the maths and sciences. It was a particularly successful strategy and one that we thought did not go far enough in dealing with the question of boys' and girls' educational experiences.

In fact, the view that we put to Virginia Chadwick was that not only should we be encouraging girls to move to the maths and science areas but clearly we should be encouraging boys to move the other way, and investing in that social capital work and that cultural side of their life. The department of the day pushed for 'Girls can do anything' and there was a series of posters encouraging girls into trades and so forth. In 1994, in this state, Stephen O'Doherty—then the Minister for Education—set up an inquiry into the education of boys and again we indicated that our view for the best way forward was a gender equity strategy which stated clearly that boys and girls learn together and that we have to help them come to terms with the pressures on them to fit within a very narrow band of experiences, be it subject choices, peer relationships, the music they listen to, the cultures they take on and embrace, or post-school destinations. I have to salute and support Stephen O'Doherty's recommendations from that

inquiry, which actually set up the gender equity strategies in this state. We have been moving towards implementing those.

One of the strategies from that policy led to the creation of the New South Wales Gender Equity Consultative Committee, which is a very broad based committee that works not only with the department, the AECG, the Ethnic Communities Council, the Parents and Citizens Association and FOSCO, but also with us. We meet four times a year and develop material of a very high order. We get to vet and put meaningful comments to that. In the submission from the federation we indicated our ongoing support for that. But we do not support the training model—the fact that it relies on interested teachers picking up the material and carrying it through. As we indicated in our submission, it needs responsibility from both the state and the federal governments to ensure that that work that has started in schools across this state is continued. This is needed to ensure that the call is made for quality training and development that is current, academic and helps teachers embrace the work that needs to move forward.

CHAIR—Thank you. On the gender equity strategies and the resources for professional development, we were told this morning by Laurie Beckett that it is only about $2,000 per school. Is that about right?

Ms O'Halloran—That is about right. That is the whole professional training budget for a school and that could include 80 people.

Ms Rosicky—It could include VET priorities.

CHAIR—The people coming to this inquiry who seem to know what they are talking about place a lot of emphasis on professional development, which would apply to any profession. It seems like an extraordinarily inadequate amount of money, given the need.

Ms O'Halloran—There is no doubt that that is the case.

Mr BARTLETT—Just on professional development: what is the Teachers Federation view on encouraging personally funded professional development—higher degrees et cetera—in terms of the pay structure? My understanding is you do not support higher pay for people who have done extra degrees and so on.

Ms O'Halloran—In fact, our salary structure does. If you have a higher level of degree, you start at a higher rate on the incremental structure.

Mr BARTLETT—You start higher but you finish at the same level, though.

Ms O'Halloran—We have had a number of surveys done by both government and the unions to show that the rate of professional development that teachers undertake themselves is very high. They undertake postgraduate studies and so forth themselves. In terms of professional development, it is important that we also have money and skills targeted to specific areas, particularly, in this case, issues to do with boys' education and, indeed, boys and girls—gender equity issues.

Mr BARTLETT—I am not denying that. But wouldn't it be valuable to recognise extra degrees and privately financed professional development in the pay scales?

Ms O'Halloran—What you might look at is a form of teacher registration, where teachers are registered across the nation and professional development is built into the registration process. That may be a way of looking at enhancing the profession generally.

CHAIR—Are you supportive of that? I remember asking Denis when he came to see us about some sort of national registration system.

Ms O'Halloran—Certainly, the Teachers Federation does support that.

CHAIR—Obviously, the remuneration aspect would need to be built into that.

Ms O'Halloran—That may be difficult, given that industrially, the state governments deal with that. But certainly you could build in notions of professional development the way other professions do.

Mr BARTLETT—But don't you think the state government would support you if the Teachers Federation supported differential remuneration levels for a greater degree of participation in professional development?

Ms O'Halloran—I am not saying the Teachers Federation would support that. To date that has not been a part of our salary negotiations.

Ms Rosicky—There would have to be discussions on that before we could form an opinion.

Mr BARTLETT—But you are not necessarily opposed to it in principle?

Ms O'Halloran—We are not opposed to discussing it in principle; how it would apply, which particular studies would equate to which amount of money, is more difficult. I would prefer to see registration attached to professional development, but I am only expressing a personal view here, not a union view.

CHAIR—That makes a lot of sense, but it stands to reason, given that it could not be said that teachers are overpaid, that you cannot expect the teachers to pay for the professional development and that society is going to have to put some resources behind it.

Ms Rosicky—Clearly there is a system responsibility as well to ensure that teachers have access to those opportunities. In the public education system, which is used by 70 per cent of students, an accountability and a transparency has to be maintained, so the system has a responsibility to ensure professional development and training.

Ms O'Halloran—Particularly with boys education, but with education generally and gender equity, time to reflect on your own professional practice is difficult to build into a school day when there are so many pressures on teachers and not enough time to do everything. Thinking

about how people learn and what the best way forward is is not something teachers often have the luxury of doing.

Mr BARTLETT—You made the comment that attracting committed educators is the way to go and that talking about more male teachers is a distraction from the task. We would all agree that the quality of the teacher is really the critical issue. But wouldn't you agree that, given equality in quality of teachers, there is a need for more quality male teachers, particularly when a lot of boys are suffering from a lack of a positive male role model?

Ms O'Halloran—It is a serious issue. We do not resile from the fact that our teaching force is a quality teaching force and that, whether the person be male or female, it is the quality you want. The fact that 70 per cent of our teachers are female speaks to the whole question of gender construction, and how boys are looking at the teaching profession and whether or not they see it as an attraction profession, so it really goes to the heart of some of the things you are looking at in boys education. Is this the type of profession that boys are attracted into? Leave aside the industrial issues that go to that, and the salary, which is obvious, you always see a flight from a profession where there is not a high salary. Look also at the nature of teaching and whether or not within our schools we are pushing that as something for boys to think of, or whether they are looking at different types of professions.

Mr BARTLETT—And if you had more male teachers—

Ms O'Halloran—The issue is an important one, but perhaps in a different way from what you are saying. We certainly would not think—and I want to make this clear—that the high number of female teachers means that boys education is not being treated seriously. We would say that there is an issue generally about how we look at the profession.

Ms Rosicky—And let us be quite clear that we are not talking about all teaching, we are referring to the primary sector. In the secondary sector it is fairly balanced.

Ms O'Halloran—That is true. As you get to the senior years, it is not—

Mr BARTLETT—It is sixty-forty in secondary, isn't it?

Ms O'Halloran—There is a greater feminisation at the early years of childhood. As you get closer to the tertiary area, there are more men.

Mr BARTLETT—It is still predominantly female in secondary.

Ms O'Halloran—There is no doubt it is a predominantly female profession, and I am sure you have been told about the whole question of the promotion structure, which is the reverse of that.

Ms Rosicky—Currently, in total participation in the secondary area, there are 49.5 per cent males compared to 50.5 per cent females. That is from the most recent EEO report from the department. It is interesting that, when you then look at promotions, women currently hold 33.3 per cent of promotions positions compared to 66.7 per cent held by men.

Mr BARTLETT—In terms of new access to promotions positions—that is, those who have been promoted in, say, the last five years—that would more closely reflect the fifty-fifty breakdown, wouldn't it? A lot of the men in promotions positions would have been there for a long time. As the gender balance in teaching generally has changed that would start to be reflected in the newer accession to promotions positions, I would think.

Ms Rosicky—Enhancing women's opportunities has shown very slow progress. I am talking about the secondary sector, because I think the question of attracting quality male educators applies to the primary area. We have tried to address some of those questions in there. Going back to 1988, 24.7 per cent of promotions positions were held by women compared with 75 per cent held by men. So any growth has been very small over a long period of time, contrary to the way the total participation rate has played out over time.

Mr BARTLETT—Teacher promotions in the last five years would be pretty clear, even though—

Ms O'Halloran—We understand the point that you are making—there is a local selection process now. I do not, personally, have the figures. I am not sure whether Michelle does.

Mr BARTLETT—We would be very interested if you could find them for us.

Ms O'Halloran—We can certainly undertake to do that if we can. The difficulty is extracting the data from the department of school education.

Ms Rosicky—We have those annual EEO reports, and I do not think that we have indicated that it has been a marked improvement for women accessing promotions.

Ms O'Halloran—We will try to find the figures—post-local selection.

Ms Rosicky—Clearly we have to focus on the primary sector.

Mr BARTLETT—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of the way that that is actually written—

Ms O'Halloran—Sorry, could you tell us which part?

Mr SAWFORD—Page 10 of your submission says:

> Hence a call for the increase in the number of male teachers, particularly in primary, is a distraction from the quest to attract quality, committed educators.

I do not want you to go through all of the reply, but can't you do both? It seems to be a very defensive statement. Maybe I am adding my own subjective view to that, but can't you do both? Can't you have male teachers and quality teachers? What is so hard about that?

Ms O'Halloran—Of course you can. That is the whole point that I was making before. Of course you can—and should.

Mr SAWFORD—On page 11, you say that classroom teachers have little influence over policy. Why is this the case?

Ms Rosicky—It is the hierarchical structure of the educational processes. We are talking about state policies as compared to the school policies.

Ms O'Halloran—The profession used to be well represented on different policy making bodies—for example, on a whole range of syllabus committees and different professional committees like that. That has not been as noticeable over the last five to 10 years, and teachers have felt somewhat disempowered from the general decision making process.

Mr SAWFORD—I come from South Australia, and we used to have young teachers on building committees. These were committees that were looking at the planning of new school curriculums.

Ms O'Halloran—I was talking system wide.

Mr SAWFORD—So it has changed here, has it?

Ms O'Halloran—Certainly, a range of committee structures came in—welfare committees, finance committees and so forth. The question of how much input teachers can have into those sorts of committees—in addition to doing their face-to-face teaching—I think is one of the issues. Generally our teachers report to us that they find that they do not get enough of a say in how the school is run. On the other hand, I would have to say that there are many schools that run very good democratic, collegial processes that bring the profession in, and that is the best way forward. That is the model we support—where the teachers are involved in that.

Mr SAWFORD—On page 13 you make the comment that it is important to disaggregate the literacy results to see which boys and girls are or are not performing well. I agree with that. That is one way to do it—disaggregate information. Why would you aggregate information as well, and why don't you mention that? Isn't that a valid strategy as well?

Ms Rosicky—In my reading and having a look at data on this area, when you aggregate, you tend to make bold, bland statements. When we attempt to actually break up and dig beneath the surface, we come up with information that we find far more useful. So, if we just ask 'Why are boys failing?', we are not identifying where, who and under what circumstances. If we move to disaggregate those, we can look at those things that add to the complexity of the argument. So in our submission we looked at—with great trepidation, can I say—basic skills results, because there is only one way you can look at material and we went to the department's own annual school reports. Since the annual basic skills tests have been run in this state, they looked at boys and girls. There were various factors of concern around the rates of girls and boys. They had a more sophisticated look and broke it up into Aboriginality and then into NESB—whether it be first-generation speakers or second-generation speakers.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I just stop you. I do not disagree with what you are saying about the value of disaggregating information, but you are avoiding my question. Why do you not also see the value in aggregating information?

Ms Rosicky—I think I answered that.

Mr SAWFORD—No, you did not.

Ms Rosicky—I said that by aggregating it, you are just making it a general view. When boys are failing out of that, it is not really helping us find a solution to a complex problem.

Mr SAWFORD—Let me explain aggregation and disaggregation in another way. Disaggregation can also be described as synthesis, and aggregation can be argued as meaning analysis. I would have thought analysis of a problem—that is, taking the whole and then identifying the constituent parts—is an important way of looking at things. Equally, synthesis—identifying the constituent parts and then trying to make a whole—is important.

Ms O'Halloran—The fact that we have not mentioned aggregating data is not—

Mr SAWFORD—You are not the only one not to mention aggregating data. Everyone who has mentioned disaggregating data has never mentioned aggregating, which I find strange.

Ms O'Halloran—I was going to say it was not. We thought it was a conscious decision not to mention it. I would have thought there would be a range of ways of aggregating the data. One of the things I am sure the committee has been looking at is that within each socioeconomic group on literacy only as an indicator dealing with literacy, boys seem to be underperforming. But you would expect, of course, to look across the socioeconomic range as well as within each band to see how that is happening across the range. Surely the different types of aggregation and the different types of analysis are important.

Mr SAWFORD—I agree.

Ms O'Halloran—From the federation's point of view it was not a conscious decision to not mention aggregation. We have been trying to say that there is a range of factors. Obviously, one of the ones we were pushing here is the question of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Mr SAWFORD—You also say on page 14 that the majority of students in reading recovery are boys. Does the reading recovery program suit girls more than boys? Is the more explicit Spalding method used in some schools more suitable for boys?

Ms O'Halloran—I do not know that I can answer that, not ever having been engaged in the reading recovery program myself. It is the question of how people are identified to go into the program as to whether or not there are more boys or girls.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of the pedagogy that is involved in the reading recovery program.

Ms O'Halloran—Yes, it is one-on-one tuition. I can only speak from my own professional experience. I would have thought that worked particularly well with boys. That is all I can say on that.

Ms Rosicky—I am a high school teacher, so my exposure to reading recovery in primary is very limited, apart from my own children's experience. What I can clearly say is from a conversation that I had with a reading recovery consultant. I appreciate the support the department has giving us in providing this information for you. A testing process picks up the students. Any intensive program that is one-on-one will assist both boys and girls, in my view. They are given a period of 12 to 20 weeks where they have one-on-one support, so they can deal with those problems. I have been talking to teachers about our submission over the last few weeks. Particularly in rural New South Wales, access to trained reading recovery teachers would be a very positive step forward in dealing with the questions around literacy.

Mrs MAY—Does a specialist teacher in a school undertake reading recovery?

Ms Rosicky—Yes.

Mrs MAY—Will all schools in New South Wales have a reading recovery teacher?

Ms Rosicky—No.

Mrs MAY—So there is still a shortage.

Ms Rosicky—About 7,400-odd students have it. Each year schools have to put in a submission to retain their reading recovery. The department, quite rightly, indicates that nobody has been taken off, but it is very difficult to also get on it. In our submission we took Broken Hill, for example. There are 72 students in Broken Hill, whom you would assume, being relatively isolated, would have a great need for it out there in terms of educational experiences. We could say that it is probably only in the city because most of the schools that surround the City of Broken Hill and the district are all very small schools. There is a teaching principal, or a teaching principal and a couple of staff, who all teach the students. So they have no time to train a discrete reading recovery person.

Mrs MAY—Are we able to get any statistics on the outcomes from those? Are there some in there?

Ms Rosicky—It is all in the appendices I sent you.

Ms O'Halloran—I am sure the New South Wales department for school education would have put a submission in that would have dealt with that issue.

Mrs MAY—There is a comment in here: in talking about strategies for gender equity, you say that you do not support single-sex high schools and selective schools. You support more coeducational schools, do you?

Ms O'Halloran—The federation supports a comprehensive high school where all students can be educated together. Interestingly, just having a look at Dr Rowe's research, the type of school appears to be least important. It is about seven per cent in terms of educational outcomes. From my reading of him, it seems to be fairly evenly balanced between classroom programs, teacher quality and effectiveness, and the social characteristics that the student brings to the learning process. The answer is that we support comprehensive high schools. Certainly, we have

members in single-sex schools—there is no doubt about that—and we support their work in the schools. But, as a general policy position, no.

Mrs MAY—You do not support them.

Ms O'Halloran—In terms of curriculum, I taught in a boys school and it did not offer food technology and so on—parts of their curriculum offerings were reduced, the same as it would be in a girls school. We believe that the curriculum offerings should be—

Mrs MAY—It would be a broader curriculum whereby boys, if they wanted to study domestic science—I do not know what they call it these days—or food technology, that option probably would not be there in a single-sex boys school.

Ms O'Halloran—It tends to narrow the options.

Ms Rosicky—And the same would go for girls schools. But at the same time, schools do some interesting sharing of resources.

Ms O'Halloran—There has been some very good work in the single-sex schools in New South Wales. We are not denigrating that work at all.

Ms Rosicky—To deal with the questions around gender and gender equity, it is our view that girls and boys work on those together and understand themselves better because it is relational. You are told that if you are a boy you do this; you are told that if you are a girl you do that. If you are only getting that single message, it is difficult to develop a broader or wider understanding.

Mr SAWFORD—Why wouldn't you do both?

Ms Rosicky—You would hope to. I taught in a boys school and it is a very different environment from teaching in a coeducational school.

Mr SAWFORD—I have taught in boys schools and girls schools. I always found that boys and girls learnt in a different way, sometimes at different times.

Ms Rosicky—I say all students learn in different ways.

Mr SAWFORD—I get the impression that you are rejecting the arguments that suggest that boys and girls learn in different ways—not necessarily better or worse. That is the reality.

Ms O'Halloran—I think that we would say that some boys learn differently and some girls learn differently. I do not think you can say that all boys learn differently from all girls. I think you would not be suggesting that. Some boys learn in different ways from others. We know that some boys do very well in literacy and in a range of subjects.

Mr SAWFORD—Kids do well in spite of all that we put in front of them, regardless of all of that, I agree.

Ms O'Halloran—My view is that individuals learn differently and there may be ways of comparing—looking at gender, class or a range of issues.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you accept the fact that sometimes boys may be better off in a boys school? Parents are certainly starting to act that way. They are being very supportive of the diversity that they now see in private education. It was in public education prior to one Karmel report in the mid-seventies. You had diversity in the public education system of girls schools, boys schools, academic technical schools, academic high schools, specialist high schools, agricultural high schools, agricultural technical schools, area schools—you name it. You had this wide diversity and the public supported that. In the seventies, of course, Professor Karmel came out with his watershed report on education. One of those recommendations was the creation of the single comprehensive high school.

Ms O'Halloran—In New South Wales, the Wyndham scheme came in much earlier than that—comprehensive high schools came in in the fifties. We are talking, obviously, from the New South Wales point of view.

Mr SAWFORD—This was an Australia-wide inquiry. The diversity in the public system—not so much here in New South Wales, but certainly in other states—all disappeared. Parents—the clients—are now saying, 'I want diversity.'

Ms O'Halloran—Students and parents being the client, of course—students certainly are the service users. The Teachers Federation supports a comprehensive school for all students in the local community that provides a broad option for education and curriculum.

Mr SAWFORD—I have spoken to teachers who come from a vocational background, have been very successful teachers in the vocational background, and they will say that in a comprehensive high school when it comes to the expenditure of money and the emphasis on particular courses, they will lose every time to the faculties. They will always say that.

Ms O'Halloran—The manual subjects?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. They will lose because they do not have the numbers and in the end they give up. I have to say, in all the secondary schools I have seen in Australia—and I have seen a few in this state, too—I have never seen academic and vocational education programs coexisting successfully alongside each other. That is a big call, I know, but I am telling you that is what I believe, and if I talked to those teachers, they might not want to say it publicly, but they will tell you that is the truth.

Ms O'Halloran—I think is a pity if that is the case: because we have an elitist knowledge of education then that says that theoretical subjects are more important than applied.

Mr SAWFORD—Exactly.

Ms O'Halloran—Surely, if you looked at the applied subjects within their theoretical discipline, we would pursue it that way. You would see vocational education and training subjects in our selective schools and our private schools, as well as our schools in certain socioeconomic areas. One of the reasons we support the comprehensive nature of schooling is

so that the range of subjects, both applied and theoretical, are available to all and you do not stream people earlier than you need to.

Ms Rosicky—And so that boys and girls are better placed to make those leaps—girls into the non-traditional areas, boys into the creative and performing arts—and we would feel that that would be a holistic way of developing the student rather than streaming.

Mr SAWFORD—We are not talking streaming. That is another—

Ms Rosicky—I am not talking about streaming in the academic subjects. As a student who went to a domestic science high school I still remember learning dusting lessons and I still remember how to iron my shirt as I was taught in year 7, and I am pleased to see that those things are not so prevalent.

Mrs MAY—I was just interested in a couple of your comments at the beginning of your submission. You were concerned about our terms of reference not being broad enough, particularly focusing on the school life and not the community. Would you like to pass a comment?

Ms Rosicky—As I say, schools play an active but limited role in this process. There are outside factors that have input into an uncertainty that has been touched on in a number of submissions and reports that I have read. As I say, in my conversations with teachers, they tell me that they want their schools—along with their parents and their student community—to be safe and inclusive but challenging at the same time. But to think that schools can provide a panacea for social problems—as wonderful as our teachers are—is beyond our reach many times.

Change in the nature of employment has a major impact on post-school destinations, and we know that the world has shifted around the traditional areas that boys have gone into and that we need to encourage boys to develop a broader range of skills than they had in the past. So those ideas of talking about emotional literacy and working in groups is basically what the world of work is asking all of our students to move towards. It is a very challenging time.

Mrs MAY—It would be for the teachers, as well, I would think.

Ms Rosicky—For the teachers and for the girls.

Mrs MAY—Their roles have changed.

Ms Rosicky—Yes, their roles have changed and it is equally challenging for our girls in our schools.

Mrs MAY—I wonder at the women's coordinator—do we have a men's coordinator? You have been obviously in that role, or that role has been there for a long time. Has a men's coordinator not been recognised or needed?

Ms Rosicky—This is an affirmative action position from the union and it is to do with questions of the role of women within unions. I indicated when this position was set up that it was also to look at stereotypes in curriculum and post-school destinations. Also, when we have a workforce of 66 per cent women, but they represent around 30 per cent of our voices in our democratic decision making processes, the role of whoever holds this position is to encourage women to have a voice within their union, and we work towards doing that so that we can talk about being a truly democratic organisation.

Mr SAWFORD—But how do you measure that? That goes back to a question I asked before—is it by status or influence?

Ms Rosicky—It gets back to the brutal fact of numbers.

Mr SAWFORD—You have got the numbers.

Ms Rosicky—We have got the numbers.

Mr SAWFORD—In politics we say, 'Stuff the argument, give me the numbers.'

Ms Rosicky—We have not got the numbers where we make the decisions.

Ms O'Halloran—We have a representative decision making structure where a council meets once a month and makes the decisions of the union.

Mr SAWFORD—In 21 years, you are saying classroom teachers have little influence over policy?

Ms Rosicky—That is a quote from the Rosemary Crowley's Senate inquiry. The position I currently hold is to work with the women of our union to make sure that they have a democratic voice inside our structures.

CHAIR—You are doing a very good job.

Mrs ELSON—Have the ideas expressed in this gender equity document gone beyond the door into the classroom? Have any of them been implemented, or would financial restraints delay those implementations?

Ms Rosicky—That is just one of a range of documents. It is a pity that I did not bring one. A whole range of resources are in there which the Gender Equity Consultative Committee, which I mentioned in our report, works towards implementing. Unfortunately, it relies on teacher's good will and interest in this to pick the work up. We support the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings, but we do not support the training model that goes out as it relies on a teacher being au fait, confident and prepared to take the challenge of the school culture on and move towards creating some change.

Mrs ELSON—The New South Wales Department of Education and Training this morning seemed to base a lot of change on this as though it were being implemented.

Ms O'Halloran—The frameworks would, but it is ad hoc implementation.

CHAIR—I am a parent. I think most of us here are. How do you decide, or how can you know, as a parent that the quality of teaching that is going on at the school that your kids go to is any good? I have a medical background, and we have some external indicators now. But how do you know? Some people choose schools like choosing a car—they like the colour, or they like the emblem on the front or whatever you like. But how do you know what is going on, that it is any good?

Ms O'Halloran—Are you going to look at external indicators? You can look at test data. I do not know that that is a rounded way of looking at it. The first thing—and I am sure I am not telling anybody here anything new—is if the child feels safe and happy and secure in the school. The second thing would be to interact with the teacher. You will know immediately through that interaction whether you think what is happening in the classroom is good for your student—indeed all the students there. To be actively involved in the school seems to me to be the best way.

CHAIR—For example, in the medical world now you have to be involved in continuing medical education, quality assurance.

Ms O'Halloran—That is why we support the registration process for teachers. That gives you that leap through legislation, a professional accountability through a registration board. At the moment what I am saying to you is that the best way is to be involved in your school and with your teacher. I am not telling you something that you do not know. The problem with that is you can only know it once you start.

CHAIR—In the medical world, for example, to continue that analogy, we have doctors who seem like very nice people but who in fact are shocking doctors and vice versa. As a parent, I may certainly like my son's teacher and say what a lovely person he is, or caring or whatever you like, but he might be a very ordinary teacher. I need teachers or educationalists to say that to me. Do you know what I mean?

Ms O'Halloran—I do know what you mean. I have to keep going back to the registration board because that would be a group of teachers setting standards for teachers so that someone who is knowledgeable in the profession is able to say, 'This person meets the standards of the profession.'

CHAIR—As a lay person in education, if you like, I need teachers who are expert in all this to say to me—

Mr SAWFORD—You need to also be careful, because the most progressive teachers in our history were always disregarded in their own day.

Ms O'Halloran—I am so glad you said that, because we have a huge number of teachers compared to other professions. Of course, you will have some teachers who are not as good as others—no-one is denying that—and we want the best teaching force we can get. But some teachers can give more in some areas than others. I think that has to be recognised, too. What can you give to the school in a well-rounded way, using the talents of the teachers to their best

ability within the school? I want to pick up on what you are saying about that; that is true. You would not want to dismiss, because of some idea of conformity to a certain pattern, teachers who really give a lot. I have taught a lot in rural schools, country schools, and regularly bringing in people from outside the town in some ways breaks down that insularity and gives them new ideas and innovations as well.

Mrs ELSON—I have had many headmasters tell me that they know there are bad teachers in a school—they can pinpoint which ones are good and which ones are bad that they do not want there—but it is too hard to remove them out of the system.

Ms O'Halloran—I do not agree with that at all. There are very effective disciplinary processes available to the school, but they have to be implemented. They are in place now and can be implemented.

CHAIR—So what happens if a headmaster in New South Wales is not happy with one, or perhaps more than one, of the teachers?

Ms O'Halloran—There is a process where they put the person on a program of support and after a period of 10 weeks, if that is not sufficient, the person can be put on what is called a disciplinary process. There is a question about whether or not 10 weeks is a long enough period of time—some people might say it is too long. But those processes are certainly available and they have to be taken advantage of. But, in saying that, given that in New South Wales there are 66,000 teachers, it is a very minute number of teachers who do not give the best and the most attention.

Mr BARTLETT—Does the federation support teachers being put on that program of discipline?

Ms O'Halloran—Of course. The federation wants the best teachers in the schools. We certainly do.

Mrs ELSON—Do you know the figures of how many teachers actually get put on that program?

Ms O'Halloran—No, sorry, I do not have that information at my fingertips. We might be able to find it for you.

Mrs ELSON—I would be interested to know.

Ms Rosicky—We would probably be able to email you the data on the teachers at the end process, because that is at a school level.

Mr BARTLETT—Do we have cases where the teacher argues that it is not fair, that it is discrimination and they are being misjudged? Do they appeal to the federation to help them?

Ms O'Halloran—Certainly, in every case we have that—there is no doubt about that. Just as the legal profession turns to the Law Society, teachers turn to the union to support them. We

have welfare officers who help them through the process. But any teacher would say there are extenuating contextual circumstances.

Mr BARTLETT—So the federation helps them through the process, rather than siding with them against the principal?

Ms O'Halloran—The federation represents the profession as a whole as well as each individual. So what happens to the individual is a support process and, at the end of the day, if they are disciplined and they have a legal case, it would go to our legal solicitors who are retained to support that person.

Ms Rosicky—There can be a situation where the teacher might be put on a program and the head teacher who is supervising it might come to us as well. So we would actually have two separate welfare officers: one helping the teacher under the program and another helping the teacher who is actually implementing the program. So we are wedded to the process to make sure it is fair all the way through.

Ms O'Halloran—Remembering teaching is a very difficult profession, and the pressures on the teachers are great.

Ms Rosicky—And increasing.

Mr SAWFORD—Teaching is very difficult, and it has become more difficult. In primary schools we have had a structure of one teacher, 30 kids, 12 months, swap over and away we go. Do you think we might have reached the end of the line for that sort of structure in the school?

Ms Rosicky—I heard you ask that question earlier. I am sure Maree will supplement this, but I think primary schools have shifted. There are some principals that are wedded to that. But I went into a school and the principal took me for a tour. There was a period of time in the library with the teacher-librarian, so they did not have their classroom teacher for that. This school had a LOTE program—a Language Other Than English program—so they were doing satellite link-ups with that, and there was another teacher doing that. They then did sport, and they could be in different groups. There are some schools where it is one teacher, one class, but there are also schools that are breaking that model down and providing a range of teachers. When I was a casual teacher, my son's school had an enrichment program for gifted and talented students, and I did a creative arts class. Teachers would identify students who they thought were creative.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a normal practice at most primary schools in Australia with under 300 enrolments where you do not have the staffing formula to be able to have that degree of specialists that you do when your numbers get over 600.

Ms O'Halloran—The federation is always prepared to look forward and look at research that might give us better ways of schooling. To date, our information would be that our primary school structures are potentially our best structures in terms of safety and security, and that student-teacher relationship that is built up over a long period of time. But the lock step progression is something that you may well want to look at. Structural change also has to be put against cultural change. You do not necessarily need to change the structures to change the pedagogy and the cultural way the school operates. Certainly, if there is a better way forward,

we want the best way forward for public education, and proper debate about different types—middle school, for example—needs to be done.

Mr SAWFORD—A couple of boys spoke to us in one of the schools in Melbourne. They had come to a new boys school. One boy came from a public school; the other came from a Catholic school. One was in year 4; the other was in year 5. I cannot see why they would tell us an untruth, but they both said that they had never had sport in either of those schools. We asked them whether they had ovals and they said that they did, yet they had never had a sports lesson in year 4 and year 5. I would suggest that that is not unusual. You could apply a lot of other expressive arts to kids in our primary schools, and that might refer to music or to arts and craft—it might refer to a whole range of things. Basically, the expectations on a classroom teacher are so unrealistic that you cannot be an expert in all of those areas and deliver those curriculums. No person on earth can do it.

Ms O'Halloran—As to primary school curriculum, what is expected of primary school teachers is enormous. I would have to say that in New South Wales—and certainly I would expect you to be talking to the department officials—I would not believe it to be the case that our primary school students had not had sport or creative arts within their lessons. I am just saying that from the point of view of the Teachers Federation.

Mr SAWFORD—I am suggesting that it is a lot more common than people would want to admit.

CHAIR—As a matter of curiosity, are there 66,000 teachers in New South Wales?

Ms O'Halloran—I am actually going off our membership—

CHAIR—What percentage of the teachers in the government system are members of the federation?

Ms O'Halloran—About 92 per cent. The penetration rate is quite high, but remember that we cover TAFE as well. We also cover Corrective Services and Adult Migrant English, which are only small areas. Of the 66,000 teachers, we are looking at about 45,000 permanent employees in the department of school education and about 20,000 casual employees. We did not get a chance to touch on that, but the number of casual teachers working in the profession who do not get access to professional development is a big issue. It is something that we have not been able to touch on here.

Mr SAWFORD—That is an important point to bring up, Maree, and we might call you back to talk about that.

Mrs MAY—Is the $2,000 per school for professional development just—

Ms O'Halloran—I would have to say that that would be for the biggest high school, I would think.

Mrs MAY—That was my question. That would be the maximum amount for the biggest school. Is that pro rata to the number of students?

Ms O'Halloran—It goes down—not to the number of students. It would decrease as the level of the school got smaller in terms of students and teachers.

Mrs MAY—So that dollar value would decline?

Ms O'Halloran—You can achieve very little with that amount of money, as you would know.

Mrs MAY—It is not a lot of money at all.

Ms O'Halloran—Teachers work collegially; a lot of professional development is done collegially within the school. But you still need outside influences; otherwise you just look inward all the time.

Mrs MAY—Do schools still have tiered in-service programs?

Ms O'Halloran—It is very limited.

Ms Rosicky—It is mostly train the trainer.

Ms O'Halloran—We do have some in designated areas that the department has seen as mandatory and should be pushed at a particular point in time, but it is not particularly systematic.

Ms Rosicky—There is the production of materials, which becomes a train the trainer model.

CHAIR—Roughly, what percentage of the teachers in New South Wales are casual?

Mr SAWFORD—Thirty per cent.

Ms O'Halloran—It is high.

CHAIR—That is incredible.

Ms O'Halloran—I should say that they would not all be teaching in our schools at one time. We have got a lot of people on the books as casual employees for the department who are in other professions and are not teaching. But there are still a large number of casual teachers coming to our schools and colleges on any given day.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have those figures?

Ms O'Halloran—We could try and find them or we could try and get them from the department. We have got a number of other things that we will try and chase up for you.

CHAIR—We should go back to the Commonwealth department too and see whether we can get a national picture. Thank you very much. That was very helpful and very useful. We appreciate it very much. Our next witness is not coming—and I am sure you all are

disappointed—so we will just deal with some machinery issues. Firstly, it is resolved that the committee receive as evidence and include in its records as exhibits for the inquiry into the education of boys, the documents received from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training—*Girls and boys at school: gender equity strategy 1996-2001*; schedule 2—States Grants (Primary and Secondary Assistance) Bill; and Statistics on participation in education and training—and from Dr Peter West: *Kids needs dads who ...*; and Working paper No. 1—*What does research say about how boys achieve?*

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

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 3.25 p.m.