COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2000

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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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Committee met at 9.10 a.m.

MULLINS, Mr Andrew Peter Julian, Headmaster, Redfield College

CHAIR—I declare open the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education, Workplace Relations. This is the second day of public hearings in Sydney for the inquiry into the education of boys. 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. The committee also aims to identify successful educational strategies and ways to promote their wider adoption in schools. Today, in Sydney, we expect to hear evidence about the nature and extent of boys educational problems: 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.

I welcome Mr Andrew Mullins and others who have come to listen. I remind you that proceedings here today are proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself, possibly more. 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 there is anything you would like to say in camera, please indicate that that is the case and we would be happy to consider that.

Mr Mullins—First, I might start with a bit of biodata about myself. I started teaching in 1979 and taught in three government schools prior to moving to Redfield College when it commenced in 1986. Redfield College is an independent boys school in Dural, in the northern part of Sydney. My experience in government schools commenced at Mount Druitt in a disadvantaged school—Bidwill High School—which was in its third year. I moved to Pittwater High School, which was a coeducational school on the northern side of Sydney, on the beaches, and then moved to a boys selective high school—Sydney Technical High School. So I had a fairly broad range of experience and then moved into the independent sector. The school of which I am presently the headmaster—Redfield College—was set up by a board of parents. The intention was to create a school which could work very closely with parents—a school with strong communication and a personal mentoring system where the mentor of the boy meets with the parents very regularly.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that a religious base or a parent values base?

Mr Mullins—It was commenced by parents—a board of parents—but it certainly has a Catholic ethos. About 90 per cent of the boys in the school are Catholic. We are fairly unique in the sense that we and our sister school, Tangara, are probably the only two parent-initiated Catholic schools—certainly in New South Wales anyway.

Beneath my submission, I suppose there are a number of convictions. I might draw attention to two of the prominent problems that boys are facing at the moment: firstly, boys academic performance is below girls performance at the moment; and, secondly, we have serious concerns about self-harm and depression amongst boys. I would say that we are primarily dealing with issues of strength of character—habits of personal behaviour. So my submission looks very much at how we build strong habits of personal behaviour. I would say that the role

of schools here is to give support to parents to build those strong habits of behaviour. It is not possible to give an accurate percentage, but I think we are talking about 90 per cent in the home, 10 per cent in the school, or whatever, normally being the case.

On my first day of teaching at Bidwill High School, the headmaster of the school got all the new teachers together—there were a lot of new teachers—and gave us a pep talk, I suppose. He said, ‘One thing that you need to realise is that 80 per cent of the families in this school are in crisis, and this colours everything we do.’ I have never forgotten that. Last week, I went to a presentation about what is called the Gatehouse Project, which is a school-wide intervention program in Melbourne. One of the things that you notice is that the interventions are at school and at secondary level. The people who were making the presentation at an AHISA meeting were saying, ‘We would like to have better results but we have only a few percentage points increase over a year in terms of the value added from this program.’ Yet I would say that the issue really is that we are not getting to the kids early enough and we are not getting into the homes. That is where I am coming from.

I think we need to find better ways of delivering parenting support on the issue of boys, with a particular focus on helping fathers to be the best fathers that they can be. That can possibly sound a bit judgmental, but I would like to emphasise—and it is in my submission—that when we talk about fathers being good fathers or boys being good boys, we are not talking about a religious evaluation, we are talking about a moral evaluation. I would say that that is something which can be demonstrated rationally. I have drawn a lot of evidence together over the last few years on the way that children were raised in classical times. It is quite interesting to see that, well before Christian times, there is a tremendous emphasis on virtue, on moral behaviour, on good habits and so on.

Also, I would say that we must explore the ways that schools can deliver better parenting support. We can go the path of Sunday paper inserts, which we saw Australia-wide last year—very expensive—or we can possibly find a better way of delivering that input to families because I think it is very much hit or miss. It stays in the magazine rack for a week and then it is thrown out. It seems to me that schools have a permanent line into families for 10 years, sometimes longer. If we can mobilise that line to sometimes deliver the same parenting support—and, I would also say, it needs a virtue based approach as well—by using schools to deliver that parenting support, then I think we will have a very effective way of contributing to the education of children in their character.

I would go further. I would strongly suggest that the most widespread practices of parenting are falling short of potential. If you survey the major writers in classical times and then look at the major texts to civilisation over the last 2,000 years, up until the last 50 years the writers have been very comfortable writing about virtue—using the word ‘virtue’ and describing virtues. In fact, when you pick up a book like the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*, on every page you are finding references to specific virtues. Cicero wrote extensively about virtues. Other famous Romans, including Cato, described virtuous behaviour. Aristotle, Plato and Socrates all developed the doctrine of virtue. That really laid the foundation for the last 2,000 years of parenting, yet you go to a parenting bookshop these days and you will very rarely find a book that talks about virtue. There is a little bit of embarrassment that we seem to have in the secular world about talking about virtues because somehow it has become associated with something which is in the past. I think we have lost the vision that virtues are strengths of character. They

are habitual ways of behaving. It is not the same to talk about ideals. It is not the same to talk about good intentions. Good intentions are not enough. What we have to do is to help children develop strong habits of behaviour. That is exactly what virtues are if they are motivated by reasonable intention.

You look in the bookshops today and there is a great emphasis on microparenting, and on communicating with your teenager, coping with a child who is in tantrums. Keeping kids happy is an end in itself. One of the most widely selling books is called *The secret of happy children.* Yet the issue of depression and youth suicide puts in our face that we have to raise happy adults and not happy children. While there is a strong connection, it is not simply a matter of keeping children happy. There is some very interesting writing in Roman times about not spoiling children and about raising children with demands.

I would like to put on record here that I went to a very interesting talk from Don Edgar three years ago at a Newcastle conference. He said that in good parenting there are really two principles only: you have to have affection and you have to have limits, demands or challenges—whatever word we want to use. Provided you get both those parameters right, you have good parenting.

Mr SAWFORD—It is called consistency.

Mr Mullins—Consistency certainly, but also affection and demands. Yet this wisdom is somehow not getting out into the marketplace enough. Sunday paper inserts are not good enough.

Classically we speak of four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. I will make a little aside. I have looked fairly extensively into this issue of child depression. I went to a very interesting lecture from a visiting American academic called David Brent at North Shore Hospital a few months ago. That reinforced the fact that the most effective therapies for teenage depression are cognitive based therapies. They help young people have stronger habits of thought, of problem solving, of being objective about the problems that face them and so on, not 'catastrophising' in the words of Martin Seligman.

What are strong habits of thought? We are dealing with virtues here. We are dealing with the virtue of prudence, yet we do not call it by the name, and we bring it in as a bandaid at the end. Why aren't we raising children with strong habits of thought when they are much younger? While we can work through schools to achieve this, that is the five per cent approach. I think we have to reach parents much more effectively and the best way to reach parents in our country is through schools.

My school has a human virtues program where we try to focus on different virtues each week. It is creating a background noise where we are talking the same language. The kids have plenty of ideas in their minds about how to practise and reinforce these qualities of character. But that is not the most important thing. The most important thing is to reinforce the work of parents in building these strengths of character.

I might talk for a minute about the way we seek at Redfield College to support parents. First of all, our principle behind what we are doing is that we do not have the right to pursue a

different agenda to the parents. I was reading a history recently of Rugby School in England. There in black and white the headmaster of the school in the middle of last century was writing to the parent of a dissenting child of Unitarian religion explaining, 'I don't have a right to teach your child something different to what you are teaching your child.' When we look at our schools today, usually we do not have the sensitivity that we do not have a right to pursue a different moral agenda to that of the parents. That is not a criticism necessarily; it is just part of the fabric of the way we operate.

We run many programs to give parents support. In the additional submission that I have given you, you will notice an index at the first page. In the second half of the index I refer to other papers relating to the issues raised in this submission. 'Schools working with fathers' is an outline in my presentation in Newcastle but that does talk about some of the programs that we pursue at Redfield. In the last point, No. 3, I have included at the end of the selection, programs of talks for fathers that we give at Redfield such as typical handouts for parents to help them in their parenting. We run many father-son camps to help the fathers relate to their own sons, but also to learn from other fathers, simply seeing other fathers in action.

Each term, we run major parent functions and invite guest speakers. I have specifically put in some overheads from a parent function we had—Raising Resilient Children—which was aimed at our primary parents. The intention there was to help our primary parents be more effective in raising children who are less dependent on feelings and more able to give guidance to their emotions through their intelligence.

I will draw your attention to two books I have found very helpful, and then I will open it up for questions. The first book is *Building Character in Schools*, which has come out of the States recently. This does pursue a virtue based approach to raising children in schools, working with parents. It is interesting that at the back they have some golden rules that they suggest should be followed. The first rule is 'work closely with parents'. I would strongly recommend that book. I am seeking to bring out to Australia this woman, Karen Bohlin, next year as a guest speaker to my school. I will send you an invitation. The second book is also excellent. It is by Thomas Lickona, who is a professor at New York University. His book is entitled *Educating For Character*, and he has a number of books on raising children. I would recommend it. It also takes a virtue based approach but with many practical ideas for the curriculum in a school.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Andrew. It was refreshingly different from a lot of the other stuff that we have had. Yes, it seems that St Thomas Aquinas's seven deadly sins have been adopted as virtues by modern society in many ways and what he thought of as those things to be admired are seen as weaknesses by a lot of young people. What is the size of your school population?

Mr Mullins—We have 340 boys at the moment and we are in the process now of doubling, so we have a new primary building going up now. We are starting to double our primary numbers and we expect that within seven or eight years we will be at the 650 level.

CHAIR—You go to year 12, I gather.

Mr Mullins—We go from year 2 to year 12.

CHAIR—Is it coeducational?

Mr Mullins—No, it is all boys. The foundation which commenced my school commenced, three years prior to that, Tangara School for Girls, which is in Cherrybrook.

CHAIR—What is the gender ratio of the teachers?

Mr Mullins—It is predominantly male. We have 25 on staff, and six of those are ladies.

CHAIR—Is that a conscious decision?

Mr Mullins—That is a conscious decision. Obviously, we will interview and, if an outstanding lady presents herself, we will consider the application.

CHAIR—Yes. What about the parent population?

Mr Mullins—One little anecdote on that issue: one of our primary teachers left us to go to another school three or four years ago. He went to a school with a staff of 40 and he was the only male.

Mr SAWFORD—Did he come back?

Mr Mullins—No, but he rescued someone from the bottom of the swimming pool three weeks into the school year. That is ridiculous but it is amazing.

CHAIR—I presume the parent population is a self-selecting group.

Mr Mullins—We try to put out a lot of information about the school and make it clear where we are coming from in terms of values, yes.

CHAIR—What proportion of the parents would be sole parents?

Mr Mullins—It is a lower proportion than the average, for sure. We have a number of sole parents and we have had a number of cases during the last two or three years where families have reached crisis point. We are probably better equipped than most schools would be to address that, and certainly I have had numerous conversations with parents who are in difficulties.

CHAIR—How do you get fathers involved in the life of the school and the education of the boys?

Mr Mullins—First of all, on enrolment there is an expectation that fathers and mothers will both be involved. When we do enrolment interviews, we insist that mothers and fathers come to the interview and we say to them, ‘Listen, we expect you both to come to the parent functions. We expect you both to come to the meetings every term with the tutor of your son.’ We say to the father, ‘There are father-son camps, which you will enjoy,’ and the turnout for the father-son camps is probably 80 per cent, typically. So there is a very strong turnout. The attendance at

parent functions, which are a mix of curriculum and parenting information, would be somewhere averaging 75 per cent. It is stronger at the start of the year and it slips off in winter.

CHAIR—In your submission, you talk about the Spalding method. Can you tell us why you use it.

Mr Mullins—We are using it because it is very structured and there is a lot of input early in the piece for children. I do not have comparative figures from other schools in the area, but in the year 3 basic skills test this year 15 per cent of the state is represented, boys and girls, in the top band. In our school, 50 per cent of the boys were in the top band. They have had Spalding now for three years.

Mr SAWFORD—That is pretty good.

Mr Mullins—Yes, but I would like to know the figures for the comparative schools, to be honest.

Mr SAWFORD—Like Brendan, I found your submission very different. Your reference to the classics was interesting, but maybe not complete. Certainly, Cato, Cicero, Socrates and Aristotle wrote those things, but they also wrote them for an elite, and in those societies the majority of people did not participate. If you look at Greek history and the Periclean aristocracy, you will see that they also wrote at a time when they lost because they accentuated the rich-poor divide—they used just one moral principle. There is a whole range of others I could use. But they accentuated the rich—they gave to their colleagues more mistresses, more houses and more money—and the barbarians came down from the hills, took over and wiped them out.

I remember this one too: Honorius on 10 August 410 AD. King Alaric was up in the hills with 100,000 Visigoths, who all had those bronze battering rams, and what did Honorius do? He was playing with his prize poultry. He had also accentuated the rich-poor divide. Then you go to the Catholic popes and the Reformation. There would not have been a Reformation if they had bothered more about the complaints within the church at that time instead of dealing with mistresses, more houses and more money. Then we had Louis XVI in France. He did the same, didn't he? He had potted orange trees and antique clocks. Then we had Tsar Nicholas in Russia, who had 100,000 entertainers while millions of his people were going poor. Franz von Papen in Nazi Germany did the same—he gave over privileges.

So there is a positive and a negative about the classics. You have accentuated the positive and you have used examples like Rugby School, but that was for a very elite group of people. In our society today we have to deal with everybody. Although I do not argue with your concepts of virtues, I find it a very romantic view and not a realistic view of the world. You are in an independent school and you came from a government school—I would have thought the needs were in the other direction. It is very easy to teach kids whose parents want them to learn, but it is not very easy to teach those who do not want to learn. You have a 19 to six gender balance, yet in this state we know that 19 per cent of the teachers in primary schools are male, and that has fallen dramatically. Yesterday Margaret said that in the teacher training field it has gone down to 17 per cent. So the future of male teachers in primary schools and schools like yours is disappearing in front of your eyes.

Sorry it has been a long-winded introduction, but your study of the classics fascinated me. I have three questions. The first is in regard to the romanticised view of the classics. The second one is in regard to boys education—as an educationalist we should be involved with all of society, not just a part. You referred to Cato, Cicero, Confucius and whomever, and they all referred to not all of society but the elites. The last question is in terms of the future gender balance and boys schools that rely so much on male teaching. It is disappearing before your eyes. What are people in your organisations doing about it?

Mr Mullins—I suppose one reason I have devoted 15 years of my professional career to Redfield is that, when I was invited to join the school when it began, I could see that there was potential to create something which was a bit of a beacon. That sounds a little bit arrogant possibly, but I think the reason we put so much effort into this school is that we think that it can actually lead the way in some ways. I do not make any apologies that we are trying to do things in an ideal environment, or as close as possible to an ideal environment, because if we are to show that it can be done then we have to get it right and then hopefully we can create something which can be a beacon for others.

Mr SAWFORD—If it is right, you can do it in any environment.

Mr Mullins—Yes, there is a circular issue there. However, the reality is that in our state, in our nation, we have got horrific figures now of escalating depression, escalating youth suicide, escalating drop-out rates, escalating promiscuity amongst young people.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not dispute that.

Mr Mullins—We clearly need a new strategy. The way that we are raising kids with strengths of character at the moment is failing. So what are we going to do about it? We have to start to promote a different model of parenting, a different model of educating for character. If we do not change our model, we are going to continue the slide. In my little backyard we are trying to do it effectively, and how we do that across the nation is a tremendous challenge.

I produced a document for Stephen O'Doherty—it did not work in the end, because he did not get elected—when he visited Redfield. He did not ask me to, but I thought I would follow the visit up with a document. It is a fairly extensive document which I have drawn on in producing this submission. It is about how schools can, on a much wider basis, achieve this result. There is also an article which was published in the *Practising Administrator*, which is a very popular magazine among teachers, about how schools can work closely with parents. There is an action plan there for appointing parent school coordinators, for example, in every school across the nation. It is idealistic, but how do we change what we are doing? If we do not change what we are doing, we are not going to stop the slide. In order to fund that in schools across the nation, we would be talking about the equivalent of three or four extra teachers per school.

Mr SAWFORD—You say 'stopping the slide'. I would have thought that life 2,500 years ago in ancient Greece would have been pretty rough for most people, and ancient Rome was terrible. Louis XVI's France was just appalling, and then there was Tsar Nicholas. In other words, you are talking about a 'slide'. I think in terms of modern society, if you look at

Australia, for all our problems, more people participate in a positive nature in our society today than they ever have.

Mr Mullins—Our society is more democratic, but if you take what you are saying to its extension, you say we can't learn from the past.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I am not saying that at all; you can learn very much from the past. You can learn that, if you have a government that accentuates the rich at the exclusion of the poor, government does not last very long. That is a truism too and that is proved by history, isn't it?

Mr Mullins—I would like to have this discussion with you, but I do not want to draw attention to anything that Plato or Aristotle may have written about giving favour to the rich. I am really focusing on what they had to say about building virtue.

Mr SAWFORD—But they meant it for the rich.

Mr Mullins—I am not sure about that.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, they did. You are not answering my question. What I am saying is that there is a difference between what you say and the reality of the world. You use the classics, almost exclusively, as the basis for a whole philosophy of schooling. You do—it is all there in the submission.

Mr Mullins—No, the philosophy of schooling is not based on the classics. I find it very interesting that, if you turn to the classics, you find reinforcement for the philosophy we have adopted.

Mr SAWFORD—All right—the chicken and egg theory. I am just reading what you are saying. There is a reference in every paragraph to the classics. If that is not based on the classics, I do not know what is.

CHAIR—That is right. Jack Gibson—there is a classic.

Mr SAWFORD—He is. It reinforces his views of Confucianism, doesn't it? Read the rest of it too, not the other part. I read the rugby one too. I will stop.

Mr Mullins—It is all right; I am enjoying this.

CHAIR—On a more practical, if not mundane, point: what sort of role would you envisage for the parent coordinators?

Mr Mullins—First of all, it seems to me that they need to be very well versed in strong parenting practice. The inserts that went in the Sunday papers were very good. I am not denigrating them.

CHAIR—You said we should have three or four parent coordinators or a core point at each school. What are these people doing?

Mr Mullins—They would have a two-fold role. One would be to deliver programs for parents, particularly parents at the young end of the school. If we can reach the parents of infants—and the chances are they may have one or two other young children in the home as well, we will get a big bonus in terms of the effort we put in to raise the parenting skills of those younger parents. Secondly, there should be input to staff, so that there is a very conscious effort from the staff to work in step with the parents. I will give you a small example. Some time ago we had a meeting of the teachers of a particular class, and we thought, 'We've had a few requests from parents; we're going to give a little bit more work to this class.' Then the kids looked up at the board and saw this great list of homework and complained to the teacher. The teacher said, 'Don't blame me; one of the parents complained.' That is a no-no. You do not pass the buck to parents in any school, but nor should parents sit around the table criticising teachers or allowing their children to criticise teachers, but we know that happens sometimes if schools and parents do not work closely together. So what has a parent coordinator got to do with this? To build a culture whereby we work very closely with parents to increase communication between school and home and to somehow ensure that the attendance of parents at functions is greatly increased—the sky is the limit. There are many ideas there in terms of what we can do to reinforce the involvement of parents.

CHAIR—Can I just be a devil's advocate for you?

Mr Mullins—Yes.

CHAIR—You have a group of parents who have chosen the school for what I think are good reasons. But let's take your more typical school environment. When people are asked to get involved and put their hands up to be a parent coordinator, a lot of parents would say, 'I don't want that do-gooder Brendan Nelson ringing me up and getting into me. My business is going broke. I am trying to feed a mortgage. I think the wife is playing up with someone else'—this kind of business. So how does it work?

Mr Mullins—I see the parent coordinator being a member of staff, a teacher, not a parent. I believe we should mobilise the parents as well. In my school, for example, every form has a couple of class parents. They see their role as being not only to deliver practical support like casseroles if somebody is sick but also to create a forum where people can share parenting expertise. From the school's end, even to get a program like that running where every class has parent coordinators of that nature, you need somebody from the school end making it roll.

CHAIR—Rod made a comment earlier about parent participation. I have often found in the independent schools a lot of the parents just write the cheque, drop the kids in year K and pick them up in year 12 and think they have done their job.

Mr Mullins—It is an issue.

Mrs MAY—With respect to parent participation, do you have a percentage? How many of your parents would get involved regularly?

Mr Mullins—A very great percentage. We would be talking about maybe 85 per cent coming up every term for a one-to-one interview with the teacher who looks after their son plus maybe a 75 per cent attendance at the parent function once a term, which involves speakers and

workshops or whatever and is typically on a Saturday evening. But this is the expectation when parents come to the school.

Mrs MAY—To enrol their boys.

Mr Mullins—Yes. In the short term, okay, you would be clawing back ground in the broader spectrum of schools but, if we change the expectations, in the end we will change the result.

Mrs MAY—What is your school motto?

Mr Mullins—'The truth will set you free'. There is so much emphasis on mentoring in the school, and we see the mentor as a support and a reinforcement for the parents. There is much evidence now that one significant adult in the life of a young person can have a dramatic effect and so on. Because there is so much of an emphasis in the school on mentoring we wanted to put honesty and 'upfrontness' in our motto.

Mrs MAY—Are all your boys Catholics?

Mr Mullins—No—maybe 90 per cent to 95 per cent.

Mrs MAY—Your school is at Dural, so are you only drawing from that area?

CHAIR—What is your SES number for example, Andrew?

Mr Mullins—I think it is 113. I will have to check that. I know where it is in relation to our last funding; we were category 6.

CHAIR—Okay. It is the middle of the road for the independent sector.

Mrs MAY—In this article that I have looked through very briefly this morning you talk about some changes that you would like to see to the HSC and in literacy. Would you like to expand on that, particularly the HSC?

Mr Mullins—I am sorry; I wrote that several years ago. I think I was probably referring to stronger tuition in the infancy and primary levels. I am not sure if this is in keeping with what you were saying there.

Mrs MAY—Your next statement is:

> We seem to have little problem producing classrooms of reasonably happy primary kids, but something is coming unstuck too often at adolescence, just when the challenges of life should be confronted with the most idealism and energy.

So do you see intervention working at a younger age?

Mr Mullins—Yes, that is right. The younger the better, and there is plenty of classical—

Mr SAWFORD—I was the first one in federal parliament in 1988 to mention the words ‘early intervention’. It had not been mentioned since October 1975. So when I wrote my maiden speech—and I wrote on intervention as a part of it—I went back through the *Hansard* to find a reference to literacy and to early intervention, and I had to go back to October 1975 in the *Hansard* to find any reference to it. That tells a story in itself.

Mrs MAY—You would have some huge comparisons, then, being from the public system yourself and then going to work at your new school.

Mr Mullins—Very interesting, and not always in favour of the independent system in the sense that, when I was teaching in Mount Druitt, I still have not encountered since then children with bigger hearts or who are more responsive. When I left that school after nine months, every child in the school—it was only up to year 9—signed a card saying ‘Thank you’, and they all gave me presents. It was not because I was a great teacher; it was just that they could be absolute nightmares sometimes in the classroom but, outside of the classroom, these are wonderful kids. It is very interesting.

Mrs MAY—Mount Druitt would be a very difficult area to teach in. It was a number of years ago.

CHAIR—On that point, Andrew, we have had people who have more or less said to us, ‘You try to downplay the problems that boys are having.’ We get this mantra all the time that is, ‘Which boys?’ And there is some truth in that. Then they say, ‘It is poor SES, or Aboriginality, rurality, non-English-speaking background,’ and so on.

Mr SAWFORD—The segregation argument.

CHAIR—Yes, but basically some people seem to take a defeatist attitude. For example, if we are talking about Mount Druitt—and the *Daily Telegraph* has obviously had a view of this—then, ‘Look, you are going to get lousy outcomes.’ But others have said—Ken Rowe, for example, said, ‘Look, it is class teacher effect. If you get an enthusiastic, well-trained, professionally developed teacher who has got some resources behind him or her, you are going to get a much better result. It is not what kids bring to school; it is what goes on in the classroom that is going to determine where they are going to go.’ What is your view?

Mr Mullins—Certainly. In the two systems I have taught in, in the four schools I have taught at, there have been some marvellous teachers, for sure, in every case. But even in the scenario where you are able to put together a number of very good teachers in a school, if we are just looking at secondary, I think there is going to be a significant number. In my school we have a number of boys we are worried about. There are a number of boys whom we have got our eye on because we feel they are depressed. That is in our school, where we know the kids so well and are able to know them so well. It is not a boast; it is just the size of the school and so on.

Even when you can put together very good teachers in a school, I think there is going to be a really significant proportion of secondary boys who are still getting burned, and what are we going to do about it? I think early intervention is a real answer, and I think intervention through the families is something that we have to address. I think bolstering the work of fathers is the third plank in the platform because, in the end, the boys learn to be men from their fathers,

essentially. That is no reflection on their mums, who are doing a fantastic job, but they need a male role model; otherwise they are not going to get it right. They have got all these male hormones running around inside them that they have to channel in the right direction.

Mr SAWFORD—In your introduction, you used the words 'affection' and 'limits'. Of course, 'affection' can be defined in a whole range of different ways—it is not very tangible. 'Limits' you can actually spell out. 'Consistency' you can spell out—you are either consistent or you are not. You have limits or you do not; you uphold those limits or you do not. I agree with you; I think boys are much more comfortable in those sorts of circumstances. You use explicit teaching methods in literacy, like Spalding. Obviously, it comes across that you know a lot about the successful teaching of boys. In that context you have acknowledged that you also have difficulties in perhaps dealing with the social and personal development of boys in your school.

I want to ask a philosophical question—a modern one. A lot of modern philosophers argue that after World War II, which absolutely turned the world upside down, there was a re-establishment of the public good right around the developed world by all governments of all persuasions—centre, left, right; it does not matter. In those governments, there was also virtue. You keep mentioning virtue. There was a statement of virtue—not from a religious sense, but from a societal sense—in those times. A lot of modern philosophers say that we are now in a period of time where the public good is being replaced by the private good and that moral good is being replaced by the principle of user pays. How do you respond to that? Do you think that is an accurate version or a defeatist's version of what is going on in modern society? What would be your recommendations if you were the minister of education, federal or state? What sorts of principles would you be establishing for non-government schools and government schools?

Mr Mullins—I would agree that there has been a flight from objective principles of what is advisable and what is right and wrong in raising children. I am not sure if this is exactly getting at the private-public issue, but I think there has been a great fragmentation of people's aims in their own lives and in raising children. I am certainly arguing that we have to get back on some sort of objective thing that we are starting to run the flag up for and say, 'Everybody needs strengths of character, not just people who come from a Christian background, or who read the classics or whatever.' Strengths of character are built from the youngest years through repetition, routines and good, consistent practices of parenting. But it is not good enough just to have the process; you have to know what you are aiming for—otherwise you might miss your mark in the end. In terms of recommendations, I think we have to put some terminology back into the public domain.

Mr SAWFORD—Terminology or definition?

Mr Mullins—Both. We have to talk about strengths of character. We have to talk about ways to help parents be the best parents they can be, but effectively, because I do not think the Sunday paper insert, for all of its idealism, is going to go anywhere. There is a long process here of changing the culture in schools. If the average age of teachers is 45 or whatever, they have been teaching a long time. If children need habits, we have habits ourselves and we are not going to change our habits very easily. One problem parents have is that they take so long to change their parenting habits. Their kids are changing quickly and they are still treating their

kids as they were five or six years before; they have not changed their habits. So we have to work on the culture of schools with practical action plans.

Mrs MAY—What about professional development for your teachers within your school?

Mr Mullins—It is good.

Mrs MAY—Is it ongoing?

Mr Mullins—Yes. We have two weeks of professional development a year. We have a week at the start of the first semester and a week at the start of the second semester. The reason we can do that is our school year is shorter than the state school year.

CHAIR—And the school funds that out of the school fund grant?

Mr Mullins—Yes, or we bring in guest speakers. We run our own in-house workshops as well.

Mrs MAY—Does each teacher participate?

Mr Mullins—Yes, it is an expectation.

Mrs MAY—Is it a student-free week?

Mr Mullins—That is right. Not every hour of the day on those student-free weeks is taken up with workshops, but there would be several days of workshops and other curriculum working days and so on focused on this each year.

Mrs MAY—Is there any sort of mentoring for your teachers? It seems that the teachers are taking on a huge load themselves with what you are doing.

Mr Mullins—I think a lot of schools have programs now of professional follow-up. My executive staff and I have simply divided up the staff in the school and, by week three, we try to have a chat with each member of staff. It is just very informal. It is not even part of the management process of the school; it is just to talk out ideals and directions and areas for personal and professional development.

CHAIR—Andrew, what about vocational education and training? I think one of the problems we have had in the last perhaps 20 years is that we have sent messages to kids which have more or less said, 'If you don't get a university education, you're a failure'—all that kind of pressure. What happens in your school if a kid in year 9 basically says, 'University is not for me'?

Mr Mullins—There are a few issues here. We have had a lot of success with these joint TAFE programs where boys got out to study a TAFE course, maybe one afternoon a week. They have been a win. We have had a number of boys who have been more practically inclined and, as part of their year 11 studies, they have gone out to do a plumbing or an electrical trade or

whatever through TAFE. They have then picked up really nice apprenticeships and are sailing. It has been fantastic for them.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the principals we interviewed—I think in Canberra—made the point that you cannot be an academic high school or secondary school and a vocational school. You have got to make a decision to do one or the other; you cannot do both. I happen to agree with him. What is your view?

Mr Mullins—We find ourselves in a dilemma because we do push the kids reasonably hard in their studies early in the piece—even Spalding is an example of where there is a high expectation early on. It is clear. We try to make a big distinction between application and achievement. We will give a boy all the encouragement that we can, provided he is applying himself. We see application in studies as very much a character development issue. We see habits of character as an issue of virtue. I believe that is one reason why the boys in the end have performed very well as a group in their HSC. It does not mean that we have not had some really low performers, but the median in school has been very high.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you be an academic secondary school and a vocational school? Some people have said to us that does not work.

Mr Mullins—We are finding we can manage. We are a small school and we can manage.

CHAIR—You are basically outsourcing the VET stuff anyway. You are sending the kids out, but you are not discouraging them from an academic high school.

Mr Mullins—I know it is not a federal problem, but we are very cranky with the state government for raising the fees on the joint TAFE courses for independent schools.

Mr SAWFORD—They are expensive though, aren't they?

Mr Mullins—It was a very reasonable price before and, by a stroke of the pen a year ago, we are now paying hundreds and hundreds of dollars for a boy to go out and do these courses. We have passed that cost on to the parents; it is not right.

Mr SAWFORD—It is just the point you raise, though.

Mrs MAY—In relation to the size of your curriculum—you have a small teaching staff; it is a fairly small school—are you able to offer a wide range of subjects?

Mr Mullins—It is a challenge. We end up subsidising the top end of the school from the numbers in the lower end. As we grow and go to two streams, it will be less of a problem. At each moment of our senior timetable, there is a more academic subject and a subject which is more applicable to anybody who wishes to tackle it. So physics might be against geography or whatever.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I just pursue the point Brendan raised—I know we are running out of time—that you have outsourced vocational education.

Mr Mullins—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—How did you come to do that—I have not heard of another school actually doing that—and how have you set it up?

Mr Mullins—I understand that in the Hills district a number of the other schools are sending children out.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is part of that area? Part of New South Wales, more widely?

Mr Mullins—Yes, I would say so. We call it the Joint Secondary Schools TAFE, JSSTAFE.

CHAIR—We did a review of TAFE, and we recommended that schools should be given a budget which enables them to purchase VET services whether it be from TAFE or private providers.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, we did.

CHAIR—It means you can concentrate on your academic stuff and, instead of having all this duplication of kitchens, woodwork shops and stuff like that, you have the resources so you can buy VET services for your year 10s.

Mr Mullins—We do get a subsidy, and that may be related to what you are saying.

Mr SAWFORD—And you do not have your staff arguing about where the money is spent?

Mr Mullins—No, we are probably too small.

CHAIR—We need to finish. Whether it be through the classics or otherwise, you are obviously filling a need. You are doing an extremely good job for the students and the parents and in many ways responding to what is just the tip of an iceberg. I think our generation would probably be the most selfish, and we have created a society in which kids feel that the only thing they have to believe in is themselves. Focusing a bit more on responsibilities rather than on rights and the value of things is something to be encouraged. We will follow that with interest, and I will read this tonight when I go to bed.

It is interesting the things you remember. A teacher from Canberra Grammar said, in relation to reading, ‘Just have a look at your bedside. Your wife has books and is reading them; the blokes have magazines and photocopies of articles and journals.’ I thought, ‘Yes, that is right.’ So tonight I will be sitting in bed reading this and my wife will be reading a book. Thank you very much for appearing today.

[10.05 a.m.]

MAAKRUN, Ms Marie-Anne (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comment on the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Ms Maakrun—Yes. I am currently employed by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and I am the New South Wales project manager for the Machismo pilot project, currently being conducted in five areas around New South Wales.

CHAIR—Thank you. Would you now give us your presentation, which we will discuss, consider and tear apart until 10.45 a.m..

Ms Maakrun—It is just on 10 years ago now since I walked out of the University of Sydney's Institute of Education, a degree in one hand and a University Medal in the other. With head held high, I looked forward to my career ahead. I was awarded the Jones Medal for most outstanding female graduate. Just on two years ago I was applying for leave from the department and looking for a new career. It was not the students or the teaching—because I quite enjoyed both of them—it was simply everything else. As a social sciences teacher, I understood all too well how social, cultural and economic factors impacted on families and subsequently on their children. Over the years, I have witnessed first-hand the impacts of increasing family breakdowns; the change in the traditional family structure; the impact of workplace restructuring and unemployment; the effects of increased women in the workforce; the impact of technology; multiculturalism; and the widening gap of income inequality and resource allocation. Whether positive or negative, they all affected my job.

I witnessed daily the additional demands these impacts placed on my colleagues and on my school. It was ironic that, as a teacher, I was finding myself with very little time left in my day to teach. At an administration level, not only did my school lack the resources needed to address these changes, but structurally they lacked the flexibility as well. Add to this a deeply embedded institutionalised culture, characterised by a traditional top-down hierarchy where historical precedent determine decisions, where funding cutbacks led to workload intensification, and the gap between policymakers and those implementing the policies kept growing wider.

For subordinates such as myself, sitting at the bottom of such a large and bureaucratic chain of command, feeling unsupported, isolated, overworked or unappreciated was commonplace. But indeed, whether it be teachers in education, nurses in health, social workers or counsellors and those in juvenile justice, the police, youth or family services, the very same could be said. The significant factor here however, is that all these professions work directly with children and young people, so any structural change which has an impact on workplace performance and quality directly impacts on young people and children. Yes, social, cultural and educational factors do affect boys' learning—and girls', as well—but it is the economic and political ones which have just as large an impact on them too.

You could very well say that, for me, my current work has been 10 years in the making, finally leading me to where I am today. Machismo is the boys' education part of a much larger concept. The concept is based around the formation of collaborative community partnerships between schools and their local communities, so that schools can learn to help themselves. The aim of the concept is to allow schools, particularly those who are disadvantaged or in areas with below average socio-economic levels, to work collaboratively with their community to form partnerships with external support agencies, both government and non-government, and be assisted in their work to address the specific needs of their students. In Machismo, the focus is on how these partnerships can benefit boys. Likewise, these partnerships can be used to address the needs of girls or for non-gender specific initiatives.

My work this year has been to put this concept into practice in three areas: James Cook Boys High School in Sydney south, in Kogarah, Granville Boys High School out west in Granville and Picton High School down on the outskirts of Campbelltown. The three schools involve the education of boys and all three are completely different. Currently, independent evaluations are being conducted as to the success of the pilot project.

Overhead transparencies were then shown—

Ms Maakrun—This will give you an idea of the three areas and how they differ. James Cook Boys High School has just under 600 students, and 80 per cent of them are from non-English speaking backgrounds. Its predominant cultures are Macedonian, Arabic, Asian and Pacific Islander. It is located in the local government area of Rockdale. Forty per cent of the people there are born overseas and an astonishing 20 per cent of their families have either both parents or a lone parent unemployed, which is one in five children. Thirteen per cent of the households have an annual income of less than $15,600 and one in 10 families with children has a weekly income of under $300. Some of the major issues in the area can be seen when we look at the index of relative socioeconomic disadvantage for Rockdale, which summarises variables related to economic resources of households, education and occupation. Rockdale has a lower index than New South Wales, the Sydney statistical division and St George. This suggests that there are more lower income families and more people with little training and in unskilled occupations than in these other areas. Despite that, James Cook is considered to be in the district of St George and is ineligible for DSP funding, although it draws on students directly from this area.

Unemployment is a major concern, as is the lack of cultural awareness by policy makers. When a policy is created, it tends not to take into account individual cultural differences and how people respond in different ways. That issue and the issue of intergenerational gaps are probably social issues that go across the board. The gaps that exist between the youth, the elderly and the baby boomers in the middle tend to separate society and separate communities. That causes other problems, mainly through a lack of understanding, I believe, and a lack of exposure to other generations. These sorts of things come up through the report, *Juvenile crime in New South Wales*, which was produced in 1998 by Lawlink. The perceptions of young people by older members of the community in general tend to be negative ones, leading to the feeling that many young people lack respect, self-discipline or any sense of responsibility to their communities. That is the situation of James Cook Boys High School.

Granville Boys High School is a little different. Like James Cook Boys High School, they have just under 600 boys, although 95 per cent of their students are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The predominant cultures are Arabic, Turkish and Pacific Islander. At the start of this pilot project in May when I went into the school, the school had already experienced a staff turnover of 20 teachers since the start of the year and that number has continued to increase. The community has a lower than average labour force participation rate, a higher than average unemployment rate and almost 50 per cent of its population was born overseas. It has a very large refugee population with a high proportion of households with two or three families living under the one roof. Twelve per cent are single parent families, there is a high proportion employed in blue-collar work and 62 per cent of the population are without educational qualifications. Some of the specific needs of that area include the poor attitude of boys towards women, their families and schooling, in particular. There is a high incidence of harassment. The district has identified eight to 10 per cent of boys being alienated from both their school and their culture. There is an increasing incidence of domestic violence in the region. Because Granville is located on the Cabramatta train line, the use and sale of drugs is an increasing concern. There is also the issue of safety in the community—people do not feel safe walking the streets at night.

Picton High School, which is about 80 kilometres south-west of Sydney on the outskirts of Campbelltown, is different again. It is a coeducational high school. It has just under 1,200 students. Its cultural background is Anglo-Saxon and, even though it has over 100 extra curriculum activities for its students, most of them are dominated by girls, not boys. It is in the Wollondilly Shire Council local government area, it has a very large landmass but a very small population. In Picton there is a relative affluence that is visible in the township, but it does serve a number of disadvantaged communities on its fringe area. Some of those fringe communities do not value education at all. The Macarthur region itself accounts for one-third of Sydney's population. Forty per cent of its population is under the age of 19. It therefore has a high incidence of youth unemployment and it is socioeconomically contrasted. You can have affluence in areas such as Camden or Cobbity versus the disadvantage in Minto or Claymore. Claymore has been given the status of the most deprived community in the state because of the lack of resources. The schools in the district witness persistent overrepresentations of suspensions, poor attendance and violent behaviour as well as poor academic performance. There is an increasing number of single parent families led by a female or with no father figure at home, and there is a lack of positive male role models for youths. A disproportionate number of males in the community are unemployed, violent and do not value education.

Mrs MAY—What is the mix of boys and girls in that school?

Ms Maakrun—I am not too sure of the exact breakdown. I am sorry I cannot answer that question. The community based concept is based on the following: at the core of the model is school based management—it totally reverts the organisational hierarchy and puts the power back into the school and back into the hands of those people who are closest to the problems they are witnessing. That school based management team draws on the resources, the skills and the funding in their own local community. Things such as cultural awareness can be addressed by those who are closest to it, such as people from local area health services and local councils who all have the resources to assist their local communities. Traditionally, schools tend to have a fortress like attitude about them—they do not allow people in and they tend to operate on their own. This concept breaks that down and allows people into that particular school. With funding,

in particular, there is a lot of community money out there, as you know. Some of it is in education and some of it has been put in other pockets. This concept, through the partnerships that get created, allows for community money to start feeding into schools and helps schools to become self-sufficient. I will illustrate that in a moment. You are also going to find your male role models in the community. Yes, it is difficult to get them into primary schools. In fact, it is difficult to get them into teaching, full stop, as it is any quality teacher, whether male or female. I would also like to go on record as saying that not all male teachers are good role models. You will find male role models in your community: elderly men, for example, who have skills and who may be disconnected from society, are brought back in. When boys can work directly with elderly men it helps to close that intergenerational gap. We have a lot of artists and a lot of people taking part in the project.

One of the most important things it does is help the community educate the school about who their market is. It can help too, for example, Operation Roll Call, which is a New South Wales initiative to combat truancy. Police, for example, have the power to go out and pick up students if they are truanting and drop them back at a school. They are there to assist the school-home community liaison officers. If a student gets picked up and dropped back to the principal and asked, ‘Why were you truanting?’ a student may say, ‘I did not want to go to school’ and they are punished through detention or whatever it is. But the community worker who is working with that family may be able to tell the school that the real reason this student is truanting is because Dad bashes Mum every night and the student is too scared to leave Mum alone—he is staying at home to look after her or to look after the siblings. That student does not have enough confidence to stand up in front of a principal and say that. By bringing in the community, the schools get a tremendous amount of knowledge about their local environment and what is happening within it.

That, of course, is supported by the larger environment—the external one—which is the federal-state structure. Just last week we had one of our artists signed up in a Work for the Dole project through Machismo. He is a film maker and for two days a week he will be going out into schools and working with boys to make films. We have his services for 26 weeks. Of course, the boys themselves would not be able to afford his fee on their own. What it creates is a school-home community based interface which is what you need to support students. If they are not getting support in the family they have to get support in the school and community to support them. That is the basis of the whole concept which is currently being evaluated. It has a lot of benefits, for example, the more effective and efficient use of social capital which is out there currently being wasted. It draws it in and starts to create, if you like, partnerships which are proactive rather than reactive in relation to student issues. The specific needs of boys in particular areas, or girls for that matter, can be addressed or targeted by strategies through communities working in a collaborative fashion.

CHAIR—What sorts of results are you getting? Is it too early to know? How are you measuring the outcomes?

Ms Maakrun—All the outcomes are going to be measured by the evaluation itself. The teachers are seeing outcomes—and the students are seeing outcomes—in terms of changes in behaviour and things like that: boys who are more engaged in education and wanting to learn. But the quantitative outcomes will be left up to the evaluation. I will give you the example of James Cook Boys High School. They are currently in the second year of the project. The project

began there last year as an arts based project. We simply invited male artists in to workshop and perform with the boys, and it has expanded since then.

As for funding of the project, the school has not used any of their money so far. They received a $1,000 arts grant through Education. So far the Rotary Club of Rockdale has given them $3,000. This money would not have been given to them if it was not a community project, if everybody was not involved in working together. So Rockdale Rotary sponsor them for $3,000 and an ex-student who liked the whole idea of the project and what was happening at the school gave the school $1,000. Through an Attorney-General's Beat Graffiti grant they got $2,500 to employ an artist to work with 12 boys at risk, to construct a mural in the school. As well, Rockdale council has a current application for $3,000 to assist the school in community development and, because of the school's links with the council, it would be quite favourable, I would assume.

A number of in-kind sponsorships have occurred. One of the biggest successes in the project has been the beginning of the Breakfast Club. As a teacher—I worked there for 10 years as a social science teacher—I used to wonder why boys would be falling asleep in my class and I would think maybe it was my boring teaching style. They were not paying attention and they lacked motivation. So I simply asked them, 'What have you eaten?' 'Nothing'—and it was a quarter to 11 in the morning. 'Did you have breakfast?' 'No, I didn't have breakfast.' 'Why not?' 'I never have breakfast.' By the afternoon someone else was falling asleep at 2 o'clock. 'What have you eaten today?' 'I've had three cans of Coke and a doughnut.' 'What else?' 'No, that is it.' Having started to question the dietary patterns of the kids at school, I was amazed at just what they were consuming in their day.

It is not helped by the school canteen and what is sold there. A lot of school canteens are privately run by individuals, so they are profit centres for a school. They sell very poor quality foods at prices to obtain profits. The cost-benefit analysis is a huge one: the school gets the benefit of the profits. As for the costs, I would be very interested to see if educational research was ever conducted into the link with the increasing amounts of child obesity, child diabetes or, indeed, the increasing incidence of ADHD amongst students because of their reaction to the preservatives and the sugar that they are consuming daily.

The food in the canteen has not changed but what has changed is the spending power of the students. When I was at school, I was spending 50c a week. Boys are now quite commonly cashing $20, $50 and $100 notes over the counter. Their parents are working. Their parents give them money and say, 'Go and feed yourself.' They are buying fast foods on the way to school et cetera.

School canteens are largely untouchable and they are unregulated. As for us as a society, if McDonald's suddenly turned around and said, 'We are going to set up in every school,' there would be a huge public outcry, but that is basically what is happening in a lot of our schools. We have policies such as the healthy canteens policy for New South Wales. It is put together by the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Canteen Association, the Catholic Education Commission, the independent schools, TAFE and the food industry. A lot of people have put a lot of thought into this, but that is at a policy level. At a practical level, it is not happening, and there are a lot of examples of that in schools.

The Breakfast Club was an initiative that basically stemmed directly from the fact that boys were not coming to school with good nutritional intake and; therefore, they were not at their best to start learning. We asked for volunteers in year 10 to come out and assist with breakfast. These boys thought they were getting out of school for a period to pour cereal. Eight boys stepped forward. We took them into a room where Red Cross addressed them about the Breakfast Club and how it is run. We gave them the option of leaving if they wanted to—none of them did leave. They were all quite motivated and keen.

Within a week, they had cleared out an area near the canteen and set it up for the breakfast room. They had gone out and sought sponsorship through their local community. As a school, they wrote letters to Sanitarium, Kellogg's, Uncle Toby's, et cetera. They were knocked back by all of them but, because of the supply link Franklins has with those main suppliers, they got all that food anyway. They had lots of cereal, fruit and milk which they bought through Dairy Farmers at cost price. Basically, what the boys do now is set up a free breakfast two mornings a week, and kids can come in and use the service. It has proved to be a huge success. An average of 50 boys each morning come in to access that service. There is a regular group of boys who come in every morning. There are also boys who have come in and said, 'I need only a hot chocolate this morning because I actually had breakfast at home today.' They were boys who traditionally would never have eaten breakfast at all. So good nutrition is taught through the PE syllabus but, at a practical level, it is very hard to enforce.

We also have radio broadcasts set up at the school. That was only possible through the assistance of Rotary with funding. Boys write their own scripts. This is literacy in action to suit the boys. They can work with a professional artist to help them write a script, read stories or whatever it may be. They then get a chance to put those on to a radio broadcast and produce their own show with music at mornings and lunchtimes. Because of the connection with the St George youth workers network, we have lunchtime visits by those workers. The kids get to see a different face from that of the schoolteacher, which is a huge benefit. Within one week, we had a referral because a boy did not want to tell the school counsellor his problem. He told the youth worker and, within a week, he was referred to an external support service.

Within the second week, we had a boy go up to one of the workers and say, 'I want to be a drug dealer.' He was quite adamant about that. His circle of friends outside the school was dealing drugs. He saw the whole fact—the lifestyle, the car and the mobile phone. He did not have any academic ability. He saw that as his way out for the future. Because of that link, he would never have gone up to a teacher and said that. The very next day, Matt was able to bring in the local police youth liaison officer who could chat to that boy about what happens when you get caught, what happens to your parents and what happens to all your family assets—things that that boy did not know. That finally planted a seed in his head and he has started to think, 'Maybe there is something here that I shouldn't be doing.'

Kogarah Meals on Wheels was a little experiment that we tried for community service, where all of the year 9 students went out and helped to deliver meals on wheels. The school has been a little surprised with the response. Teachers said, 'Boys aren't going to do that. They don't do this; they don't do that. They're not going to go out and help in that particular area.' The kids absolutely love it. There are two boys a day going out. They miss 1½ hours of school, but they are out there in the community, interacting one on one with elderly people. The elderly people absolutely love seeing those kids and get a huge kick out of it. The people down at Kogarah

Meals on Wheels are so impressed that they have taken some of the school's IM students in to work placements in the kitchen one day a week. The IM kids have specialist programs at the school but, as soon as they leave—

Mr SAWFORD—What are IMs?

Ms Maakrun—Mildly intellectual students. So it might be a student with a partial hearing loss, autism—those sorts of things. They do have specialist programs, but they tend to lack the link between community and school. So when they leave year 10, they have a gap: what do they do? Lots of artists come in to the school and paint murals to make the school a lot more attractive. It is a typical state boys high school—not overly attractive—so they are putting up friezes and murals around the school. Kogarah council has supported them by donating plants—boys are conducting planting projects. One particular boy is working with designers on the council's urban redesign streetscape project, giving the youth opinion.

Because of the community links as well, there is AIDS and HIV awareness, which are normally taught in one or two lessons through a PE class. Because of that link with the upcoming World AIDS Day, the theme for which this year is 'Men make a difference', the boys are actually going to have a touch football day. They will play touch football not only against the staff but also against the local police and community workers. There will be stalls set up for AIDS education and safe sex practices to help educate them on that. There will be people coming in, as well as a barbecue. So it is a little bit different, a little bit more creative to get the message across.

Students have also started up their own student newspaper to report on issues. It had not been done in the school previously. So you are starting to empower them and give them more responsibility. If you lift your expectations of them, they will achieve. Some of the biggest successes are coming out of the art workshops. These boys nominate what workshop they want to go to and they basically select them. Film-making and cartooning are two very popular ones we have, as is the hip-hop culture and street dance. Dance is being introduced as a sport into James Cook Boys High School. It is a traditional male sporting high school, with football, soccer and cricket. They are your options. That was interesting to see that being introduced.

Comedy writing involves getting boys writing and bringing in a comedian to work with them to help them write scripts and become creative. There are puppet workshops, puppetry, acrobatics, the leaping loonies, writers and storytellers—anything basically to engage boys back into schooling, with the assistance of the community. Communities are essential because teachers cannot do it on their own; they need support. The schools cannot do it on their own; they also need support. I should keep quiet now and wait for some questions.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you just put that last overhead back up and leave it on, please?

Ms Maakrun—Sure. I also have one for Granville and Picton on what has happened there.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay. Let's go down to the bottom dot point. This all looks very much like what happened in priority projects. In fact, it looks like a priority projects submission. In terms of those schools getting that funding, how do they get it? Do they write a very simple letter, or do they write a complicated submission?

Ms Maakrun—In terms of the community funding?

Mr SAWFORD—The money, yes.

Ms Maakrun—It is written in accordance with the help of community representatives. So they are not writing it on their own; they and the community people who are working with them are writing it together.

Mr SAWFORD—How long would it take to put in the application for the arts grant?

Ms Maakrun—The art’s grant took about three hour work to put together.

Mr SAWFORD—And how many people were involved?

Ms Maakrun—One. I wrote it myself.

Mrs MAY—One community person?

Ms Maakrun—No, the arts grant was an education one through the education department, so I wrote that one myself.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay. Going down to the bottom, in terms of James Cook Boys High School, they are basically all expressive arts areas?

Ms Maakrun—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Does James Cook Boys High School have a strong expressive arts program?

Ms Maakrun—No.

Mr SAWFORD—My next question is: what the devil are you doing building on nothing?

Ms Maakrun—It is not building on nothing, because what you are doing is building on the strengths within the school.

Mr SAWFORD—No, you said there was no strength. You said the expressive arts program did not exist.

Ms Maakrun—The creative arts faculty within the school is not a strength. These things, for example sport, come through the PE faculty.

Mr SAWFORD—That is still in the expressive arts area.

Ms Maakrun—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What I am arguing is that, in terms of the priority projects, the disadvantaged schools programs, in which I was a principal and also a teacher, one of the criticisms of that program is that it liked to see progressive new ideas and initiatives taken in schools. What it failed to do was to have an appreciation of what actually was happening in the school. If you are going to build, you have to build on something. If you are building on little, often it just falls away. I think they are all excellent ideas that you have got up there—absolutely fantastic. But, in my view, educationally they are useless unless you have a strong educational program, because nothing continues. So my question basically is: there is not a strong expressive arts program; they are fantastic ideas, but what happens next?

Ms Maakrun—This is actually stage 2 of the project. The project started last year as a creative arts project. I thought the reason why it failed is that the strengths were not within the school. Even though we had a lot of successes out of it, you could not pick up the project as it was and transport it halfway across the state and have them do the same. You have to build on the strengths within that particular school. The strengths started to be developed around creative arts. We started to have teachers outside the arts faculty. For example, English—comedy writing, writing and storytelling, the creative arts areas but they can be taken up by English teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—Language.

Ms Maakrun—That is right. Other teachers started to take on bits and pieces to assist, because they saw the outcomes that were happening in the students themselves. It has to be a whole school focus. If it is not, it is not going to work. This project is not for every school. The school develops the project to suit themselves based on their strengths and based on their community strengths. That is why it develops in different ways in different areas. That is the only way you are going to keep it sustainable.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one other question—about breakfast clubs. It is not new.

Ms Maakrun—I know it is not new.

Mr SAWFORD—And not always successful. A few kids once spoke to me about a breakfast club that was in a school. It was not my school but I went there and asked them about it. It was very well run and very similar to what you have just suggested. One of the kids said, ‘It takes my dignity away from me.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ Basically what he was arguing—and it took a long time to get this out—was that he thought it would be a better idea if they were taught how to be independent in the sense of being able to organise that themselves. He found that humiliating.

Ms Maakrun—It is in the marketing.

Mr SAWFORD—I know.

CHAIR—Isn’t that what they are doing here?

Mr SAWFORD—I know exactly what you are doing. Not all kids respond positively to this, do they?

Ms Maakrun—Not all kids.

Mr SAWFORD—And if you had children who obviously need breakfast but have responded negatively to that, have you asked them why they have done that?

Ms Maakrun—As yet, no, we have not.

CHAIR—I think you mentioned something like 50 kids turning up, which in one sense is good, but are you actually taking kids away from the limited amount of time they spend with their parents or their siblings instead of having breakfast at home. Obviously there is a subset here who are not getting any breakfast or parental contact but is there also a group of kids who would otherwise at least have five-minute conversations with their mother or their father for the day, or two minutes with their five-year-old sister. Do you know what I mean? Is it in some ways perhaps undermining, unwittingly, some kind of family relationship?

Ms Maakrun—I see your point. A lot of these boys come to school and sit in the playground. By quarter to eight or 8 o'clock they are sitting there. Whether it is because their parents are working or whether it is because their parents are still at home and they do not wish to stay at home with parents, they just get up and leave. We have not looked at that particular factor or had a chance to evaluate that. It may be something that the evaluation will bring forward.

CHAIR—Have you had any complaints from parents?

Ms Maakrun—Not at all.

Mr SAWFORD—My last question is really on the same sort of pattern: what happens, what happens afterwards and what is the purpose? If you do not know where you are and you do not know where you are going then no matter what you do it is going to fail. The Meals on Wheels thing has been tried with a whole range of things too, and I think it is an excellent idea in terms of relationships, particularly with boys, with elderly people—mentors and so on. The kids would love the Meals on Wheels thing because they would get out of school and it is active. They are in and out of cars; they are delivering. And you are quite right: the elderly people are delighted to see the children coming in, so that is a reinforcement of what they are doing, and so on. The question I am asking is: where does that lead?

Ms Maakrun—It has come forward because of the need—because of where boys are at. They are lacking active citizenship and responsibility. The community perception, which you saw earlier, is how—

Mr SAWFORD—You are not answering my question.

Ms Maakrun—Yes, I am getting the needs analysis before I get to where it leads. That is why community service was trialled at the school. Where does it lead? That is up to the school to then have a look at and evaluate. Was it successful? Are we seeing a change in these boys? They then have to go back and evaluate. You cannot have an evaluation until you know what your strategy is, that it has taken place, and what has taken place.

CHAIR—That is what we need to know: is it having an impact and indeed is it a positive one?

Ms Maakrun—It has only just started. The trial started in May. That was planning. That was going in cold to a lot of these other schools. It was the middle of the industrial dispute for teachers. Teachers were not keen on any more work, yet they still were prepared to take this project on because they saw it as supporting themselves.

Mr SAWFORD—This is your project.

Ms Maakrun—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Where did you want the kids to go: what did you want them to have after they have done this Meals on Wheels bit? What did you have in your consciousness in terms of where that would lead?

Ms Maakrun—Meals on Wheels is one piece of the bigger picture. What I basically wanted was for boys to be able to leave school at the end of the day, to go into a job market and be prepared to meet the needs of that job market, whatever it may be; if they failed academically, to not think, 'I'm a failure; therefore I have to join the unemployment queue, and all my mates have to do the same'; to be self-confident and self-assured of themselves; to think, 'I've got a number of different experiences here; I could do a number of different things.'

Mr SAWFORD—It is a laudable aim in terms of labour market. I want to ask a hard question. By being associated with the local Meals on Wheels, where will their contacts be? The rich go to the golf course to make their networks—or males do, more than females probably. But, in terms of the purpose associated to the labour market, who in the Meals on Wheels will assist them in terms of links? Basically, many employment opportunities often come purely by accident; for example, people say: 'Marie-Anne, you want to be a butcher. He's a butcher,' or, 'I know a friend who's a butcher.' Often it comes through those sorts of circumstances. In the Meals on Wheels circumstances, if the labour market is the aim, how realistic are the retired people out of the work force who are normally working in those Meals on Wheels kitchens and also in doing the deliveries? How does that help the labour market?

Ms Maakrun—The example that comes into my mind is one particular student at the school who is mildly autistic and has a number of disabilities; he does not speak to teachers or students and basically spends his day just walking the school quad in a circle. A couple of weeks ago he went up to the coordinator who was looking at Meals on Wheels for the school and said to the coordinator, 'I did Meals on Wheels. It was fun.' That was the first time he had uttered a sentence to anybody. From that, this boy is now, one day a week, placed down in the kitchen at Meals on Wheels and is absolutely loving it. Apart from that, that boy had nothing to connect himself to the school environment—no friends, no teachers, nothing. The curriculum did not do anything for him, but just through that one experience of going out and doing that he found something that he could enjoy and take part in.

Mr SAWFORD—That is valuable. A lot of things we plan in education have some unintended benefits, as in the example that you gave. But that is not connected to the purpose that you just spelled out in terms of the labour market. That is a plus, a bonus, another plus.

Ms Maakrun—Education is holistic, though. Education is not just academics.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you understand what I am trying to say? Maybe what I am suggesting is: if your purpose is stated as that these experiences will lead to greater opportunities within the labour market, and that is not really what the aim is, maybe the evaluation needs to go back and look at another purpose. A great criticism of priority projects was that there were laudable aims put forward but in many circumstances they were never met. In that way you are disadvantaging those disadvantaged children even more, because you are saying and believing and deluding yourself that you are creating programs that do not actually bring the result. I think kids are much more important than that. If you are going to do something you have got to be dinkum about it. Kids, as you know, can pick up whether you are dinkum or not very quickly. That is what I am saying. When does this evaluation take place?

Ms Maakrun—It is currently taking place.

Mr SAWFORD—When will that be completed?

Ms Maakrun—By the end of December, I believe.

CHAIR—When it is finished can we have a copy of that?

Ms Maakrun—Certainly.

CHAIR—In terms of Meals on Wheels, we obviously appreciate it is one part of a much broader package. I must say I would agree with Rod: in terms of it achieving some sort of vocational outcome, I think the chances there are probably pretty slim but, in terms of life education for kids that often do not have extended families and so on, to go into homes and see faded war photos and faded wedding photos and see how many older people live lives of quiet desperation is better than six months at school in many cases. In your letter you said:

In 1991, I was awarded the University of Sydney’s Jones Medal for most outstanding graduate in the Faculty of Education.

Congratulations. Your letter continues:

After almost ten years teaching boys at a state high school, it was the frustration and increasing sense of disenchantment with the “system” that led me to take leave and seek another area of employment (like many around me).

Can you tell us what is wrong with the system that has someone who is clearly intelligent and highly motivated who wants to get out of teaching when, in fact, you are the kind of person that I would like teaching my kids?

Ms Maakrun—I think one of the main issues with it is that, for good teachers in particular, there is no recognition of their achievements, no reward system, nothing to motivate them apart from doing a good job. Things such as their innovations and things like that tend to, I guess, get suppressed because they are not encouraged. Any profession needs a reward system in there. People need recognition for the work that they do, more than just ‘good job’. In the teaching profession, if you are good at what you do you tend to get more and more work put on you to cover the people who are not good at what they do. Good teachers are overworked and they are

tired and they are frustrated. I think they pretty much carry the load of those around them who are not pulling their weight.

CHAIR—When you say 'not encouraged', obviously teaching could not be described as an overpaid career, so finance is one aspect of it, but I presume you are referring to other sorts of rewards. Is it in terms of career path—that if you teach well you are not likely to become a deputy or a principal? What is the problem? Are you given a curriculum from head office and you are told you have got to teach this? Can you elaborate on this?

Ms Maakrun—It also depends on the individual school itself and the management of that particular school. I am speaking not just from my experience; this is from all my colleagues in other schools, private schools included. It has a very large impact on them, and what level of support they get in that particular school determines what they can or cannot do as individuals in their own classrooms.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it leadership, or is it management?

Ms Maakrun—Both, I believe.

Mrs MAY—Is encouragement to have input important? Another witness was saying yesterday or I read in one of the submissions that people like you—who obviously have some wonderful ideas to implement—were not encouraged or there was no room for them to have input into education policy.

Ms Maakrun—That is true. I also think teacher expectation from other colleagues is important. It tends to be, 'Why are you doing that?' If you do start to excel, there is a type of mediocrity that exists, where you are frowned upon for excelling and for doing things like that. That is another lack of support area, which comes from your colleagues.

Mrs MAY—Would you have any comment on professional development in state schools?

Ms Maakrun—Yes, I do. I think the teachers need more than just professional development. They need support more so than professional development. For example, current research conducted by TAFE New South Wales is looking at the competency of those people receiving training. It is just not the training package, it is the people who are receiving that training package which accounts for its success. I believe that a lot of the way training is conducted in the education system is not best practice and does not really meet the needs of teachers in the classroom.

CHAIR—I asked the department this yesterday: is it possible to be a teacher in New South Wales and not be involved in professional development?

Ms Maakrun—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—So we would have teachers out there, presumably still a minority, who are plodding along. They are turning up; they are going through the motions of teaching the kids; they are disillusioned or whatever; they get a pay cheque at the end of the fortnight, and they are just rolling along.

Ms Maakrun—Absolutely.

CHAIR—This is not specifically relating to this excellent project, but it does go to the heart of what a lot of the problems are. Would you support a national registration system for teachers?

Ms Maakrun—Yes, I would.

CHAIR—Do you think that there is a place for requiring teachers to participate in professional development, assuming that it is adequately financed by governments and that built into the requirement for PD there are aspects of remuneration which support that?

Ms Maakrun—Yes; but I also believe you have to look at the quality of professional development that is being delivered.

CHAIR—Unquestionably. We all have crises in our lives, it does not matter what age we are, or what field we work in, or whatever. You made a comment earlier about professional development: you said it is not just professional development; it is also something else. Are you talking about personal development or emotional development of teachers? What happens in teaching in the schools you have been at, for example, if you are having a major kind of emotional personal crisis, whatever form it is taking? What sort of support is available to you, or do you just go off sick? Do teachers have counsel? Is there counselling available for teachers? Do you understand what I mean?

Ms Maakrun—There is staff welfare available for teachers who do wish to have it, and I believe the department offers that at the department level for teachers as well. But when you are looking at a working environment, it is a lot of factors. It is your working conditions. For example, I spent six years filling a bucket of water to carry to the urn to make a cup of tea, and getting that water from out in the corridor because there was no tap in my staffroom. I spent almost 10 years sharing a toilet with male teachers because we had our quota of toilets. It is those sorts of things as well. Teachers are incredibly tolerant. They put up with that when a lot of people would not put up with that. I believe it is a lot more factors than just personal development.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the strong characteristics of the program you have set up at James Cook Boys High is that it is basically active, active learning. Did you consciously plan it that way? If you did, what were the attributes that made you do it that way, or was it just purely by accident that these things just happened to become available?

Ms Maakrun—Basically, the initial concept when it first started was: schools need help; teachers need help; things are not working. That then got me started on thinking: the community needs to provide that—all those resources, all that money, is out in the community; there should be a way for the community to access schools, and vice versa. It began from that. When I went into Granville and when I went into Picton, I left it up to their communities and up to the schools to create what they created. I did not say, ‘You have to do this, this and this.’ And they did create it themselves. I just basically created those networks for them and got them in touch with the people that they needed to speak to.

Mr SAWFORD—You did not say to them, ‘Look, we are dealing with boys here at James Cook Boys High. Let us make sure that they are all active programs’? You did not say that at all?

Ms Maakrun—No, I did not.

CHAIR—Thank you, Marie-Anne, for what you are doing. It is great, and we really would be interested in seeing the results. In fact, I was sitting here thinking I would not mind going out and visiting one or two of these schools. I do not know how the rest of you feel.

Mr SAWFORD—I think it is probably a much better idea.

CHAIR—We will ask Mr Rees to see if he can arrange something. Obviously, people get anxious about politicians visiting schools, but we will see if Mr Rees can liaise with you and at least we might be able to visit at least one of the schools involved and talk to the kids and that kind of stuff.

Ms Maakrun—Sure.

CHAIR—And please do not give up; we need you.

Ms Maakrun—That is refreshing. I have hit a lot of brick walls, but I am still going.

CHAIR—You ought to try politics. Thank you, it was great.

Proceedings suspended from 10.54 a.m. to 11.02 a.m.

LePAGE, Dr Eric Lindsay, Senior Research Scientist and Physiologist, Australian Hearing

MURRAY, Dr Narelle Maree, Research Scientist, Australian Hearing

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you very much for you coming this morning and providing us with an interesting, but nonetheless important, submission. Could you give us a precis of the submission that is relevant to the inquiry and then we will discuss it.

Dr LePage—Together with a couple of other staff we form the Hearing Loss Prevention Research Group. Our research science is concerned historically with hearing loss and about the effects of loud noise. One of the prominent facts that we have produced in the last 12 years is that the hearing of males is worse than the hearing of females. This not only applies to older men. We have found that the difference is statistically significant right back to the first decade of life. This fact has not really come to light previously because the methods of testing hearing in the past have not been sensitive enough. Traditional audiometry, which is the most widely practised form of hearing testing, has only shown a difference once there is a measurable hearing loss, which only occurs in reasonable numbers after 50 years of age in men and 65 years of age in women.

In the past, due to the poor sensitivity of hearing tests to detect hidden ear damage, we have only been able to judge the size of the hearing problem in the whole population according to the numbers of people exhibiting a hearing loss to the point where they cannot cope and need help. The prevalence of hearing loss in a South Australian study is only seven per cent of the population for ages 15 right through to 50. But even for this group, hearing loss for males is double that for females.

Dr Murray—We have been researching a new method of testing hearing performance. It does not depend on taking an audiogram—that is, that the person being tested has to judge subjectively the presence of sounds by pressing a button. Obtaining an audiogram is, by modern standards, slow and imprecise. The new method that we employ actually makes a physical measurement of the performance of the ear. We fit a small probe into the ear canal, play a sound into the ear and a microphone in the probe measures the response of the ear. Following that a computer analyses the result. This method of testing hearing is really in the process of revolutionising hearing clinical practices. It is called an otoacoustic emission test. Literally, it measures the strength of sounds which are re-emitted from the ear. It is objective, fast, non-invasive and painless, and it gives us vastly more information about how our ears perform. This new test has revealed that the severe problems that we are learning boys suffer is really just the tip of an iceberg. Under the new test we feel the rest of the iceberg can now really be clearly seen and the result is therefore an Australian first.

With this new test there is really no sharp division between normal and impaired hearing. It is a continuous scale between very high performance and very low performance. Many boys may have impaired hearing ability, yet may not test as having an official hearing loss which requires help through hearing aids or other devices. We have actually been able to determine the ageing characteristics of the Australian population in terms of this ‘ear performance’, as we call it. We

have now collected otoacoustic emissions on over 3,000 people while, at the same time, we ask them to complete a questionnaire on their lifestyle.

It is interesting that, on average, the emission scores for male babies are not significantly different from those for female babies or really for children up to the age of four. But, on average, males score significantly lower than females in primary school and then remain like that for the rest of their lives. Our data show unambiguously that boys' hearing is less acute than girls' hearing because of noise. What is very significant is that those boys who engage in noisier activities can age their hearing much more rapidly on average than girls and those boys who do not engage in noisy activities.

Dr LePage—The click evoked emission test may be interpreted as a test of auditory processing power. We have described the characteristics of ear emissions from birth to old age. Babies are born with strong emissions and senior citizens, particularly males, tend to have no emissions left. We have shown that, as the ear ages and the emissions become weak, there is a critically low value at which people start to report hearing problems. For any test record we can now see how close this critical value is—what the value is for their hearing. What is new here is the idea of a pre-clinical phase followed by the full-blown condition, namely, what audiologists call a 'mild' hearing loss. For those who think in terms of percentage hearing loss, we are talking about a pre-clinical phase of decline in processing power which goes near exhaustion even before there is a one per cent hearing loss.

Our data can be used to make a stronger statement. One way of interpreting the otoacoustic emission test is that it effectively measures the reaction time of an ear; how quickly the ear can respond to a stream of sounds such as speech. This difference in hearing performance may account for the differences in rates of learning in every curricular activity which depends upon good hearing. We are suggesting, although we have not yet shown it, that our measure of ear reaction time is in some way a measure of the ability of the ear to process speech. We strongly suspect that if you put somebody with really good hearing in the same class as somebody with poor hearing, the poor hearing person, because of slower reaction time, will be relatively a slow learner because his or her ears are much slower in their ability to analyse sounds. Our data certainly show that fewer frequencies are delivered to the brain by the slower ear.

We can even estimate how old an ear is and compare it with a person's chronological age. The lower the score on our scale—the strength of the emission—the older the ear is. The overwhelming fact which we come to present is that from about the first decade of life the ears of boys are effectively older than the ears of girls. They process sounds more slowly, they provide less information to the brain to be analysed. Expressed in terms of ear age, the average of boys' ears we have tested is not just one or two years behind the girls; the curves only line up if we shift the boys 15 years, at least, in relation to the girls.

Dr Murray—Some of these findings really will not be of great surprise to a lot of people. While vision is obviously important in learning to read, recent research has also shown that hearing is also very important. The act of actually hearing syllables, separating them and then repeating them is vital to the process of learning to read. The ability to analyse sounds quickly, particularly speech, may be the most significant component of comprehension and apparent intellect. While boys and girls alike can develop their visual abilities and become proficient at

spatial tasks, the more a person can take in in verbal communication the higher will be the verbal intellect they will appear to display.

If you are trying to learn language, having difficulty processing the basic information is going to mean that there is less you can do with that information in the same time period than someone whose sound analysis is fast and can do more with that information before the next lot comes along. For example, if you take a typical boy and a typical girl, we are suggesting that if the teacher is speaking normally the girl and the boy will be able to hear the first sentence but the boy may still be figuring out what was said when the second sentence comes along, whereas the girl will have taken it all in, thought about the mental connections and be ready for the next sentence.

This may account for why good teaching adjusts to the rate of assimilation of individual students. Our predominant message is that the reason boys are floundering is that their hearing is far less acute and this may be why so many are less articulate than girls. Given equal treatment in the class the learning process snowballs in both directions. Over years, the better hearers of either sex will get relatively better scores right across the curriculum; the poor hearers will get relatively poorer scores.

Dr LePage—An important question is—as somebody once commented in this hearing—was it ever thus? Did boys always do worse on literacy? Is there anything new? A lot of changes have happened over the last 20 years, so have any changes occurred to hearing? The core of our concern is, yes, we think a major change has occurred to boys' hearing over this same period. We can look at the average score of teenage boys right throughout our sample, and it is actually less than people who are older.

Mr SAWFORD—For people who are older, or for females who are older?

Dr LePage—Both. There is an ageing curve. We have figures to show you. Basically, the first graph here that we are showing is that, instead of there being a steady decline in ear scores, there is a very rapid decline in the scores of both females and males—the females are on the very first plot there. Females are red and boys are blue, and what we are seeing here is that, instead of a fairly nice decline, there is a great dip around the teenagers and young adults. In fact, there is a fairly rapid decline in ear emission scores. Indeed the first thing that makes us think that something has changed in the last 20 years is that these scores are actually lower in value than for people who are older. In fact, you can have some boys with older ears than their parents.

It has been an area of concern for a lot of hearing professionals for a long time. There was a United States House of Representatives inquiry into noise back in 1991, leisure noise in boys, or in young people, and an enormous number of concerns were expressed. What we did was get people to fill out questionnaires. We have a questionnaire answer pretty much for every test that we have ever done, so we were able to partition our data according to lifestyle. We were able to classify whether people had been to nightclubs, pubs or concerts, whether they had been shooters or had been going drag-racing or trail bike riding. But the factor of greater significance that showed up in our data was walkman radios.

Dr Murray—Personal stereos; we must keep away from brand names, but everyone talks about a walkman.

Dr LePage—Basically, people like to play them loud. They play them at 95 dB SPL. Most hearing professionals are concerned about the level at which they play them. Why can people play things so loud and not be aware that they are doing any damage? Basically because the ear, the inner ear, does not have any pain reception so there is nothing to tell you that this is a bad thing to do. On the next plot here, we see the normals for females as a function of age group, and we see that the females against the curve as a function of age are always above the males, whether they have got registered exposure or not. We partitioned a group according to industrial or occupational hearing loss and, notably, these people dropped markedly on our score between the 20-year-old group to the 30-year-old group, but in our group the walkman users particularly were dominated by males. Three-quarters of the walkman users were males. These come down at the same rate or at an even faster rate than the industrials, but a decade earlier.

CHAIR—So, Eric and Narelle, are you saying to us that this is more environmental rather than biological; or, is it both? I understand there is a difference in terms of sensory neural processing of information that is biologically different in males and females, but you are also saying that this is compounded by environmental issues which disproportionately affect boys. Is that a fair summary?

Dr LePage—That is a fair statement. We are not pointing only to noise. Other things that have changed in the last 20 years are—

Dr Murray—Things like prescription of antibiotics, particularly to children. Whereas once we would have seen/had referred to us for hearing assessment only a few children who had had relatively few courses of antibiotics, it is now not unusual to see four- and five-year-olds who have had upwards of 10 courses of antibiotics. In fact, there is one here who has 18.

The ototoxic action of certain antibiotics, particularly the aminoglycosides, has been well documented for many years and well described in the literature. However, we are suspecting that, with the sensitivity of these tests that we are using to assess ear performance to register a pre-clinical change in hearing, even some of the common preparations prescribed to children may have an accelerated ageing effect. We have seen enough cases to worry about a significant loss of emissions by the age of five to the point where the children have already at the very least a mild sensorineural hearing loss and have to be prescribed hearing aids. There seems to be no other reason other than the numbers of—

CHAIR—What about infections?

Dr Murray—Middle ear infections, but it is the prescription of the antibiotics for the middle ear infection that concerns us. I know that more and more medicos are going to grommets. I know that is because they are concerned as well.

CHAIR—But aminoglycosides would rarely be prescribed for children now?

Dr Murray—That is right. I am just commenting that they are the known ototoxic ones.

Dr LePage—They have been shown to cause massive damage which shows up in a regular hearing test.

CHAIR—Sure.

Dr LePage—What we are saying is that with the sensitivity of our test some of the more common childhood antibiotics might actually be showing up in our data.

Dr Murray—This child, whom we have the data on here, has had Augmentin, Ceclor, Septrin and Amoxil, which would not be considered to be ototoxic as such and yet we are concerned. We have no quarrel with antibiotics for life and death situations, et cetera. It is just that we have to show our concern—

CHAIR—But if you look at the conditions, you had—reportedly, at least—three episodes of otitis media before age one, then another four episodes in the fourth year of life. You would assume there was some sort of a fusion hanging around. Perhaps the best question I should put to you is: has this been published and, if so, where?

Dr LePage—No. We have not been able to crank up a study to do it properly.

Dr Murray—We need a larger study.

Dr LePage—It is a difficult study to get support to do and yet we feel it could be an important factor.

CHAIR—Notwithstanding recurrent infections and the prescription of drugs, there is clearly a problem in terms of hearing and boys are adversely affected?

Dr Murray—Yes.

CHAIR—I read your letter that you sent to the NH&MRC Strategic Research Development Committee. What has happened there? Have they said, 'Yes, this is a good piece of work'?

Dr LePage—We are here because they have not responded.

CHAIR—They have not responded. It has not been filed in the circular filing cabinet, has it?

Dr Murray—You have responded much more positively than they have.

CHAIR—We are free thinking, open-minded individuals.

Dr LePage—Another thing that we mentioned in there, and I think it is relevant to this inquiry, is the prison study.

Dr Murray—We have done a study with the New South Wales Department of Health. They have conducted a huge study on the physical and mental health of prisoners in New South Wales corrective institutions. We were fortunate enough to be invited to participate in the

hearing side of it. There were 26 prisons involved and there were 675 prisoners in the survey. The inmates were overwhelmingly male. About one-fifth of them were female. The major finding as far as we were concerned was that the hearing of prisoners in general is lower than the general population. Again, the males definitely scored lower than the females. Some of this hearing disability may have arisen since these people were institutionalised. I do not believe that there is much there because a number of them had only been in prison for a relatively short time.

There seems to be some basis for concern that the reason for their being there in the first place—and this what we wanted to get to—is that they may have belonged to the troublemakers at school. So if you have got the slow learners who are not articulate and are not able to communicate, either with other males or with females, their lack of communication—and you would know this far better than I would—expresses itself more in physical, outgoing behaviours rather than in verbal sparring like girls can do. Then you grow from physical outpouring to physical abuse, et cetera and possibly end up in the crime scene. Maybe it is a hypothesis, but it certainly seems—

Dr LePage—It is a very significant effect. We are talking about prisoners having our hearing scores, which are five times greater than the ageing effect for every 10 years. The male-female ratio is twice the ageing effect, being Aboriginal is four times the effect, and being a prisoner is five times the effect.

Dr Murray—If you are an Aboriginal prisoner, as we all know, that is the bottom of the pit really.

Mr SAWFORD—If you are a disabled Aboriginal, that would be the bottom of the pit.

Dr Murray—Yes, I guess. Maybe the disability is hearing.

CHAIR—It is probably better to describe it as having the worst indicators.

Dr Murray—Yes, they have.

Dr LePage—What we are saying is that there is not just a small biological reason. There is a basic biological reason that does show up in other studies. There is a small inherent effect, but we are saying that environmental effects—the things that have long been regarded as preventable, namely noise—are a big factor. We are saying that, given our findings, it is not reasonable to expect that boys, on average, will absorb class teaching material as readily as girls.

CHAIR—Dr Ken Rowe, when he spoke to us, said that there is a 'blah, blah' effect. You have got the teacher standing in front of the students with a conventional teaching method, talking at kids—the way we were probably all taught, basically. He said that the girls process and retain a higher percentage of what is being said than do the boys. That seems consistent with what you are saying.

Dr Murray—Absolutely, yes. Because of our interests, we are relating it to auditory processing and slower processing of the ear, which is slower to process than the message through to the brain, I suppose.

Dr LePage—We are saying that much of what it is to be male, currently, may be tied rather deeply to very subtle aspects of hearing, which limit male literacy, development and linguistic ability—like the marginally intellectual that Marie-Anne talked about.

Dr Murray—Mildly intellectual.

Dr LePage—Even the quality of teaching materials may not be as important as hearing. Class troublemakers may simply be unable to hear well enough to string the information into a meaningful stream, thereby holding their attention. We have got some recommendations that we would like to put forward.

Many factors have been raised in this inquiry to do with emotional issues, self-esteem and quality of teaching. We have introduced a new factor, which is really a very old factor; however, while the biological difference exists and is demonstrably important, it is not yet obvious what such an inquiry should do with this information. Firstly, we think that the teaching of boys should be treated with regard to their hearing ability. Good teaching for boys equates to delivering class material at a slower pace—the same techniques which are used for teaching hearing impaired children, perhaps not as extreme. There is no need to call for hearing aids and no need for a teacher to raise their voice. Just be more patient, speak more slowly, and arrange to improve listening conditions for the slower students, either through seating arrangements, acoustic treatments of classrooms and/or the provision of classroom amplification.

Secondly, we strongly suspect that the selection of children for special attention to literacy development does not have to be made on the basis of gender. It can be made on the basis of hearing performance with standard speech tests or, in the not too distant future, through the otoacoustic emission test. All primary and secondary students with poorer hearing could be relatively inexpensively identified, their teachers advised accordingly, and other cost-effective measures implemented.

Thirdly, there does appear to have been a significant change over recent decades in the capacity of boys to learn. There needs to be a general education program in schools, highlighting the severe consequences of allowing them to expose themselves to loud noise unchecked. This includes all forms of loud noise and loud leisure activities. Fourthly, there is a need for more research on the topic, such as the study of the comparison of our scores with speech discrimination ability, memory retention of class information, rates of note taking possible and indeed measures of academic performance. Fifthly, noise is not the only factor tending to disable hearing. There are many other factors in addition to inherited factors, and we need to do research to quantify this.

CHAIR—You are obviously totally committed to this field—you are enthusiasts. I seem to remember when I was a kid that we all got tested for hearing or we at least had a screening test of some sort.

Dr Murray—Holding a watch out here and hearing if it can tick?

CHAIR—No, it must have been a bit later because we actually had the headphones. Is that something that we should be doing routinely? Should we be going back to some of that sort of stuff, or is that just a waste of time?

Dr Murray—It is not a waste of time. We would probably advocate it to be done on entry into primary school.

Dr LePage—And again in high school, I would think.

Dr Murray—And again in high school. We are advocating that the headphone test is a very subjective test. You put the headphones on and you are told to listen for sounds and press the button and to take as long as you like to press the button and you are then asked, ‘Do you or don’t you hear it?’ It is very confusing. It does not really pick up any hearing problems or ear damage problems until you detect a hearing loss. We are saying that that is too late—far too late. We need to pick up any problems that children are going to have, before they need amplification, either classroom amplification or personal amplification. As you said, we are enthusiasts, but we believe the test we are using picks that up far ahead and detects the damage before it turns into something that needs to be aided.

CHAIR—You are two experts in this field. Is this the view of the National Acoustic Laboratories of Australian Hearing?

Dr Murray—They are introducing those otoacoustic emission tests as quickly as funds allow.

CHAIR—Is the view you are putting to us today an institutional view or is it the view of two highly respected and committed individuals who work for the organisation?

Dr LePage—It is certainly the institutional view that it is an upcoming thing—that we should do this.

CHAIR—Hang on, we’re the politicians.

Dr LePage—The institution itself is taking its time to get there—let me put it that way.

Mr SAWFORD—Very diplomatically put. I remember that testing in New South Wales—I remember as a child, like Brendan did—was a relatively regular thing. You had hearing, sight and some other hygiene and health tests in schools.

CHAIR—Two testicles.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, all that stuff. I also remember that those tests were carried out in schools when I was a teacher. Then they disappeared off the face of the earth and there was no testing. We used to have a card. Along with the child’s academic and social reporting from year to year, up would go a health card. It would have little graphs drawn up: 1942, 1944 and 1946. Are those tests still done in New South Wales? Are they done for everybody or are tests only requested for those who suspect the hearing loss?

Dr Murray—Mostly they are on request and mostly they are teachers, from kindergarten right through primary—

Dr LePage—So there is no mass examination of schools.

Dr Murray—There is no mass screening. There is a community nurse. As far as I am aware, there are some programs run by the community nurse system but it is not in every single school.

Mr SAWFORD—Were the 3,000 you had in your study just a random sample, or were they identified with hearing losses?

Dr Murray—No.

Dr LePage—These are largely normal hearing people. It was a random sample and then it got people with all levels of score.

Dr Murray—But it does include a primary school, two secondary schools, a group of coal miners, the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra and anyone who has been referred to us over the last 12 years—it is all comers. Yes, it is fairly random—

Mr SAWFORD—But not quite.

Dr Murray—Not quite—the prisoners.

Dr LePage—We are also running two longitudinal studies, so we are tracking individuals.

Mr SAWFORD—We do not do that in Australia. My colleagues just about choked on that. I am one of these people who resent the fact that in this country we cannot do longitudinal, comparative studies with anything. Right at the very beginning you said you have information for the last 12 years. I assume by omission that we do not have a great deal prior to that.

Dr LePage—Not with the new test.

Dr Murray—One very big reason is that Eric introduced this into Australia when he came to the National Acoustic Laboratories in 1989. The fact that the ear emits sounds was only really discovered by Dr David Kemp in England in 1978 and then, as you know, with the slowness of research and science it takes a while. It took 10 to 11 years for it to arrive in Australia, in effect, although Eric had been working on it prior to then. He actually brought it into Australia and introduced it to NAL where we have been working.

Mr SAWFORD—Brendan mentioned in an earlier question to you Dr Ken Rowe's example of the 'blah, blah' and its impact on boys. You said that there is a lot of evidence that when girls receive an instruction they take it in, and boys take time to consider that. I want to put that to you in another way.

Dr Murray—Actually, we did not say we have evidence; we suspect.

Mr SAWFORD—I think it is a reasonable hypothesis on your part. I wonder whether that has more to do with the instructions themselves. For example, there is an old teaching axiom, ‘If I hear something, I learn nothing. If I see something, I learn a little. If I do something, I learn everything.’ With the bulk of teachers being female, with young boys often their instructions will be in synthesis. To distinguish between synthesis and analysis, girls are far more comfortable with a synthesis approach, that is, identifying the part and then trying to connect that to a whole, because that is much easier to remember—a bit rather than the lot. Boys more often learn by analysis—that is, they like to look at the whole first and then identify the constituent parts. Obviously, if you are given an instruction that basically requires an analytical answer, you favour the boys unintentionally. If you are given an instruction in the form of synthesis, you favour the girls. Now I would not have thought there was anything unusual about that. That could have, in a sense, given what you were saying, some impact on how you draw conclusions.

Dr LePage—Historically, males’ hearing may have been that much reduced so that they end up doing more spatial, analytical kinds of tasks, rather than being very highly verbal..

Mr SAWFORD—Or it could be the other way around: that boys are more likely to be stronger than girls in visual spatial skills, so they do it not in a reduced way but in a different way. Girls are far better at verbalisation skills—you do not need to be an expert or a teacher to know that—but they are not so crash hot, as a generalisation, in visual spatial areas. That does not make one better or worse than the other. Boys and girls need both of those things. They need verbalisation skills and they need visual spatial skills. Can you see that it can be seen as a reduction when in fact it might be a difference?

Dr Murray—It may be. I am not positive. We did not bring any figures with us today, but in the last week I have been analysing more data on infants. A lot of neonatal work has been done. I have just forgotten how many. Was it 700 that David gave us? Anyway, it is immaterial. But it is looking more like right from birth boys’ hearing is worse than girls’.

Dr LePage—To answer your question: it is beyond what we have a mandate to talk about, but really I agree with you that boys have a very different way of approaching something. They are much more likely to be analytical. They are more likely to look at a problem with a totally different approach. So if the teaching that they are receiving is only coming from one approach I would see this as being a higher disadvantage for boys, but that is only my personal view.

Dr Murray—I am starting to be concerned about the neonates, infants and toddlers. It is not a statistically significant difference—and therefore we should not really bring it out—but you can see that right from birth boys’ hearing in our terms seems to be just slightly below the girls’ right through to when they start school. It still could go with what you are saying, because you still have the predominant female nurturing the infant and, therefore, their instructions could be quite different. So, yes, there is good stuff in that.

Mr SAWFORD—I think you have provided something of value and you are reinforcing—as far as I am concerned, anyway—that the teaching of boys needs to be different, or at least that this is something that people certainly need to be aware of, even in terms of instructions. Even though I have taken a different view from what you intended, I think you are correct in identifying the area of concern.

Dr LePage—It is a general problem right across OECD countries.

Mr SAWFORD—Whether my conclusion or your conclusion is correct or not is probably irrelevant in some ways—it is recognising the problem that you need to behave differently, give instructions differently and maybe plan the learning differently. You are in fact in an indirect way reinforcing to all of us here that boys require active learning.

Dr LePage—What we are actually saying is something a bit stronger—that a lot of these things that you are observing may be effects. If you are looking for causes you might have to go a bit deeper than just looking at emotional, touchy-feely stuff; you might actually have to take into account that something like this can build up over generations. So family breakdown might be due to poor communication between the parents, which again could be due to the fact that the father has to ask for everything to be repeated. It comes down to a long-term thing.

Mrs MAY—The data you are getting from the 700-odd bubs could be of interest too. If that clearly shows there is a biological difference, then the environmental impacts are going to accelerate and compound the problem with the males if they are already starting out behind.

Dr LePage—Yes.

Dr Murray—As I said, it is not a statistically significant difference.

Dr LePage—This is a study by Fenson. It basically shows—

Dr LePage—This is not otoacoustical, this is not regular hearing; this is comprehension. Basically it shows females' comprehension between eight months and 16 months. Females always sit above males as well.

Dr Murray—We have not put that in for you.

CHAIR—Can you send us a copy of that?

Dr Murray—Yes. It is a monograph. There is a very interesting section, D and E—the difference between what girls do and how boys understand playthings. The whole monograph is good, but that one is on gender and social differences.

Dr LePage—Gender, social class and birth order to variation in early language and communication.

Mrs MAY—Would you say that, with these Walkmans, noise is by far the biggest impact?

Dr Murray—It seems to be the biggest impact of anything.

Dr LePage—The second reason we think something has changed in the last 20 years is that Walkmans were first introduced in 1979 and we do not see any difference in ages above 40. They drop off. The differential effect has dropped off quite suddenly above the 30 year age group.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think the hearing has dropped off recently?

Dr LePage—We are talking about the differential.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I accept what you are saying—that they were in widespread use in that period.

Dr Murray—No, they came into use in 1979.

Mr SAWFORD—Are they still in widespread use?

Dr Murray—More so than ever.

Dr LePage—We are talking about multimillion dollars of sales.

Dr Murray—Multimillion units being sold each year. Not just in Australia; that is a US figure. There are multimillion units being sold every year in America. Sony has put a governor on one of their products which limits the output and limits how much sound is delivered to the ear but, of course, it is on the most expensive of their units. It is not on the department store unit.

Dr LePage—The really damaging aspect of it is that people wear them in noisy background situations like riding in a car or in trains or when they are actually jogging. There is a lot of background noise and they turn them up. You can turn these up to 126 dB.

CHAIR—The problem you have as a parent is that you have listen to Powderfinger and Metallica or whatever else. You are trying to listen to Van Morrison or something decent and the kids have got the things in their ears playing this stuff. You say to your son, ‘Can you turn that down?’ because you are hearing this nonsense coming out of the ears and it is a war of attrition. In the end, as a parent, you put the earplugs in yourself and listen on the main stereo.

Dr LePage—Basically our critical value is somewhere around zero. Between zero and minus two people start to report hearing problems. So you can see the overall model is that of a fuel tank. We are saying that you start off at birth with a full fuel tank, you use up your fuel, effectively, and at some point you run out of fuel and the engine starts to play up. What we are saying is that Walkman users are coming down at a much faster rate than the overall ageing effect should suggest. So these people can expect to be having hearing problems.

What we are basically saying to this inquiry is that this is an official hearing loss: this is where somebody is so desperate that they have to go and get help. This is the region that we ought to be targeting for special community awareness of the damaging effects of loud sound. It is not showing up.

CHAIR—I am sorry to say this, but we have to finish.

Mr SAWFORD—You also see female usage of things like the Walkman, too, but there is much more male usage?

Dr Murray—Yes.

Dr LePage—Three-quarters of it.

Mr SAWFORD—It has always been my observation that young people, including my own children, were bored when they used it. If they were not so bored, maybe the use would fall off. It is an interesting hypothesis to throw into your next project.

Dr Murray—There are also some who use them while they are studying, or supposedly studying.

Mr SAWFORD—That just reinforces what I said.

Dr Murray—They are bored, yes. But do you realise that, if you are using them while you are jogging, that compounds the effect as well. We do not have figures on that, but we have seen an overseas study that it compounds the effect.

CHAIR—Perhaps that is more among the older people.

Dr LePage—There are parents that send their kids to bed at night with their Walkmans in and they go to sleep with them on.

CHAIR—It is a real battle trying to keep telling the kids not to have them in and to turn them down.

Dr Murray—It is not a matter of not having them in. I do not believe that you really have to ban the use of them. I think you would need to encourage lower sound output. When we see anyone, we always say that they should not have them turned up more than halfway and I think that is better than saying you cannot use them.

CHAIR—Perhaps they should be rate limited, like trucks.

Dr Murray—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you for coming in. It has been very interesting. We had television cameras crawling all over the place yesterday. It is a pity they were not here today to listen to some of that.

Dr Murray—Thank you for listening to us.

[11.51 a.m.]

BUCKINGHAM, Ms Jennifer, Policy Analyst, Centre for Independent Studies

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comment on the capacity in which you appear before the committee? If you would give us a precis of your research, that would be great.

Ms Buckingham—I am a policy analyst with a program of research called Taking Children Seriously. Last year I was compiling a book of statistics which we called *State of the Nation* and, in that process, I noticed that a lot of the statistics to do with education, crime and health were showing that boys were at a disadvantage. In education, in particular, I felt that there were not really any good explanations as to why that might be the case. I looked at a lot of the empirical research that was around and tried to work out what the strengths and weaknesses were of the various theories and exactly how much of the problem they explained—if indeed there was one when you started to pull apart the statistics a little more.

Essentially, when I was looking at the performance data it showed that in pretty much all states and territories and at all levels of schooling on average girls were outperforming boys and that the gender gap had increased markedly, particularly in the last decade. Three related developments during this period seemed to have combined to produce the disadvantaged status that seemed to be afforded to boys fairly regularly. The first one was boys' relatively poor performance in literacy and English. That is evident as early as year 3 and continues through their schooling to their final exams in year 12. If anything, the gender gap seems to get bigger throughout that period.

The second was that girls' performance in maths and science was improving. Up until the early 1990s, the gender gap in overall school performance was pretty small, but the boys' comparatively poor performance in English was offset by their stronger performance in maths and science. When girls started to improve in maths and science, you saw that gender gap pretty much blow out; and that occurred in 1992 especially, when changes to the curriculum assessment in the HSC in particular made English more important. Whereas before boys could rely on their maths and science skills to carry them through, when English became more important they then lost that advantage; and that is where we saw the big gender gap in the TER scores.

It is becoming clear as we unravel the performance statistics that not all boys are experiencing problems to any great degree. I think that that is something there is a fair degree of consensus about amongst researchers: we are not talking about all boys and all girls. There is a particular group of boys who are doing particularly badly and it is this growing number of boys who are at the bottom of the performance range who are the major cause for concern, rather than looking at all boys as a disadvantaged group on the whole.

At the top end of the performance range there does not seem to be the great gender gap that is down the bottom. The worst boys are doing much worse than the worst girls. There are four main theories when we talk about the differences between the performances of boys and girls in English and literacy. The first is that there are biological differences between the sexes which

affect their capacities and interests. The second is that there are gender biases which define certain activities or skills as being not masculine or which underplay the role of masculine models in encouraging certain skills and activities. The third is teaching curricula and assessment. The fourth is socioeconomic factors, including family income, family structure and parental education.

I will not go into details about the research findings but I will point out why none of these theories explains the problem in full. Biological differences, if they do exist, might explain an enduring difference in literacy performance but they do not really explain an increasing gender gap. Gender biases might explain reasons for gender differences in performances but they do not explain the deterioration of the relative performance of boys nor do they shed any light on the genesis of such biases. Methods of teaching and assessment might well affect the literacy skills and English performance of boys but this does not explain why boys learn differently.

Socioeconomic status seems to mediate English performance specifically, and hence school performance generally, by either enlarging or reducing the gender gap. The gender gap is smallest at high levels of socioeconomic status and is larger where socioeconomic status is lower. Therefore, there must be some aspect of socioeconomic status that adversely affects boys more than it does girls. Socioeconomic status has two related aspects. One is family income and the other is features of the home environment such as family structure which are associated with family income. When we look at the research, it seems that both are important for children's educational performance, not necessarily just income. Exactly why this might be is less clear. There is suspicion, and some evidence, that father absence might be a factor, but why this is more salient for boys is yet to be objectively demonstrated or explained.

Basically, all of these different theories do explain part of the problem but none of them can really explain the increasing gender difference or how it came about in the first place. A lot of research has been released in the last 12 months. A lot of it is really explaining why we should not be looking at boys as a general group. We should be looking at specific groups of boys rather than relying on averages.

CHAIR—You just said quite rightly that at the bottom end—whether that is the bottom quintile or whatever—the boys are doing much worse than girls and are overrepresented. In the way that you present a lot of the data, you are actually talking about the top end of the HSC and the gender variation there. That, to me at least, is another part of the big picture building process. Are you suggesting that we should be less concerned about what is happening at the top and more concerned about what is happening at the bottom?

Ms Buckingham—I think so. When you look at the performance of the top performers, there is very little difference between boys and girls. For example, when you look at four unit maths and physics, the girls are outperforming boys now in that group but it is only by one per cent. When you look at some of the other subjects where girls are doing better than boys, for example in the lower English classes—whether it is contemporary English or general English—girls are outperforming boys by up to 11 to 12 per cent. It is around the average to lower group that the big gender differences are occurring.

Mr SAWFORD—Are we asking the right questions? Right at the very beginning of your submission, you gave an example of the difference between the average tertiary entrance scores

of boys and girls. In 1981 for year 12 in New South Wales it was about 0.6 to less than one percentage point. New South Wales and every state in Australia has a similar pattern to every English-speaking country in the world. Shouldn't we be asking: what was happening in 1981 or in the period 20 years prior to 1981, because it is not 1981 exactly, that has changed?

I can think of a lot of changes. In the 20 years from 1961 to 1979, in fact, unemployment in this country was relatively less than two per cent. The state education department of every state was not an amalgamated whole; it was a separated group of bureaucracies. If you worked in junior primary schools, you had access to your own directors. If you worked in primary schools, the same thing happened. If you worked in technical schools, the same thing happened. In academic high schools, the same thing happened. In public education, you had a diversity of structures of schools: single-sex schools, agricultural high schools, area schools, specialist curriculum schools, academic technical schools, academic high schools, selective high schools and selective technical schools. There was a huge variety. That has now all changed to a single comprehensive high school right across Australia, right across the UK, right across Canada and right across New Zealand. That is different. The administration is different, the school structure is different and teacher training has changed dramatically.

I wonder if those are some of the things we should be asking the questions about—those changes that have happened—because, in that world, the differences were minimal. In this world, they are quite substantive. You indicated the way we assess. You have only to look at the examinations in 1964 and look at them in the year 2000. They are incredibly verbal now, aren't they? I would have thought an obvious assumption was that they would favour girls more than they would boys. That may be an unfair assumption on my part, but I have looked at them and they are different.

Ms Buckingham—It is difficult to compare back very far because, as you say, the rates of participation in schooling have changed a great deal due to things like the unemployment rate, apprenticeship availabilities, VET being available in schools, TAFE colleges and also the amalgamation of colleges of advanced education with universities. All of those really big changes affect the participation rates of the different genders in schooling. So it is hard to go back very far, in the same way that it is difficult to compare literacy rates 40 years ago with literacy rates now because the testing is so incredibly different. It is not comparing like with like.

Mr SAWFORD—But if I were controlling curriculum in Australia—God help the world if I were—I could bias it to get the results back the other way, very easily. I would make sure that the examination system was biased towards analysis and visual spatial skills rather than verbalisation skills, and analysis rather than synthesis. I would balance it so that comprehension was in there rather than translation. You can do these things. You do not have to be terribly clever to do that. Have a lot of those things happened in the last 20 years that have just been out of kilter? For example, we are seeing differences in what you are saying: low socioeconomic boys and girls are doing very badly. Were they always doing badly? Or have they done worse in the current 20 years? Is that because of pedagogical styles in terms of teachers? Is it basically because from 1961 to 1981 more of the teachers came from working-class backgrounds than they do today?

Ms Buckingham—Again, I think it comes back to participation rates. Whereas before a lot of the, say, working-class kids would have left school after the school certificate or before and had a job to go to, now they need to stay in school. They are being confronted with academic subjects. Due to the levels of parental education, the value of education in the home and all those kinds of things, and the type of school they attend, they might not be predisposed to do as well as kids who come from a more advantaged background. I am not saying that it is necessarily a fait accompli that those kids cannot do as well, but I think there are a number of factors involved, which means that there are kids who are now in school who probably would not have been 20 years ago. I do not think we have quite caught up with how to engage them or how to best educate them in the school environment.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think that has happened at a primary school level? Or has it happened at junior secondary level? Where has that started to happen?

Ms Buckingham—Probably more in secondary than in primary school. Primary school is learning to read and to do basic maths and a bit of geography and preparing you to start to diversify your skills once you get into high school.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you agree that there is among the public a little lack of faith or loss of faith in the public secondary school system?

Ms Buckingham—Certainly; you can see that in the enrolment rates

Mr SAWFORD—Why do you think that is?

Ms Buckingham—I think it has a lot to do with the fact that the public schools are trying to cater for everybody: every school is trying to cater for everybody and therefore they cater for nobody. Trying to make themselves completely secular and able to look after all different kinds of students means that they do not really specialise in any particular area.

Mr SAWFORD—Have we asked them, unintentionally, to do the impossible?

Ms Buckingham—I think so, by insisting on every school being comprehensive. As you were saying before, there used to be more technical schools, more diversification in the school system.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you recommend more diversity in the public system?

Ms Buckingham—Certainly.

Mr SAWFORD—What sort of diversity would you recommend?

Ms Buckingham—I would like to see the option of single-sex schooling available to more public school students. I think that is what a lot of people are looking for when they switch school systems.

Mr SAWFORD—Were you here when we had a principal of a school, Redfields, here this morning and I asked him what sort of school he is running—an academic high school, or a bit of both? He basically answered, ‘An academic high school, but I outsource the vocational education.’ Were you here when he said that?

Ms Buckingham—No; but that makes sense.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view about that?

Ms Buckingham—I do not think that, if you have in one suburb or in adjacent suburbs an academic high school and a more technical high school and a child chooses one or the other, it means they have shut off their options. Those schools can work together to offer alternatives which meet the needs of the different students.

Mr SAWFORD—When we put this problem to the current bureaucracies involved in public education—whether it be the bureaucrats in Victoria or here—and also to the Australian Teacher’s Union in Melbourne and the New South Wales Teacher’s Union here, there is an enormous defence of the single comprehensive high school. Why is that?

Ms Buckingham—I could not tell you.

CHAIR—It is an ideological stranglehold. A number of people who have come to us, who are in the education system, who administer education, who represent allegedly the interests of teachers, seem to have this idea that everybody should be the same and the education system basically ought to be the same for everybody. Yet parents’ expectations, apart from the needs of kids, suggests something other than that. I think that it is fair thing to say, isn’t it?

Ms Buckingham—I think it is especially important in a high school. In primary school, there are basic skills that you are learning that allow you to take up any opportunity according to your interests. So, if you have got a good grounding in the basic skills, then you can go ahead to do anything.

CHAIR—But what we have learned, of course, is that by the time they get to year 5, that is when the boys, especially, start to drift in terms of literacy, which is the core competency. So they come to secondary school already disadvantaged. That is a generalisation.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a couple of specific questions on your submission. Under ‘Teaching curricula’, right at the introduction there, you referred to the way that reading and writing are taught. What did you mean by that? A lot of teaching can be implicit and explicit, and you can favour a gender by doing whatever.

Ms Buckingham—I was talking about the distinction between the recognition method of teaching—

Mr SAWFORD—The whole word method.

Ms Buckingham—and phonic structure method, where you learn to sound out words. When you combine that—especially with what the people who were here before me were talking about, with hearing problems et cetera—with things like developmental delays in boys, if they do not learn to read at that initial point when everyone else does, especially with the recognition or whole word method, then they have nothing to fall back on. When it gets to a year or so later, they still do not know how to and they do not know how to sound words out. So, if they do not know how to recognise the word, then they have no structured learning process that they can use to keep trying, and that can result in frustration and basically giving up.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think boys have been disadvantaged by implicit teaching methods like the whole language approach?

Ms Buckingham—Yes; I do.

Mr SAWFORD—You raised a matter in your submission:

Alloway and Gilbert (1997) found comparable results in Year 3 students in New South Wales.

... ...

At the bottom of the socio-economic scale, both boys and girls exhibited the worst results for their gender, with boys performing worst of all.

Here is a loaded question: have affirmative action programs in our schools damaged boys and also girls from low socioeconomic areas?

Ms Buckingham—I do not know.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not saying they have done it deliberately. I am not saying that at all.

Ms Buckingham—Of course not. It is very difficult to measure exactly how someone might have been affected by a particular policy that went into a school.

Mr SAWFORD—All policies have positive and negative results. Everything we do in this world—there is no such thing as all right and all wrong—everything has positive and negative.

Ms Buckingham—That is right; but it is difficult to know whether it is direct or indirect. I think that boys have been considered as being able to look after themselves. We were worried about girls for a long time, and policies were put in place which have clearly been very successful. It was assumed that boys would be okay, that they would hold their own while all of that was going on. It is only now that we have started to see these huge gender discrepancies that it has been a signpost that we need to look at things a little more clearly, and that it might not necessarily be the case that boys can hold their own—especially in a changing world. I think there has been a real combination of changes in schooling and also in families, which have combined to exacerbate each other.

Mr SAWFORD—On that issue, you also said before your summary that one of the strongest predictors of low socioeconomic status was sole parenthood; and you indicate that mothers are

heading those families in the main, for the overwhelming majority. Would you like to expand on or comment on that?

Ms Buckingham—There is some research that shows that boys are disadvantaged by not having a strong or even a constant male presence in the home. At this stage, that research is still really inconclusive, but it is one of those situations where the research is backed up by anecdotal evidence overwhelmingly, when you speak to teachers and to families. They find that a lot of the boys who are in remedial classes and who are causing problems in school—it might be that their behavioural problems are affecting their ability to learn—are from homes where there is not a stable, intact family structure.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one last question, on research. It is interesting that on the page where you talk about those particular issues you list the research done: 1986, 1988, 1985 and only one study in 1991, by Amato and Keith. Does that tell a story that the research is inadequate?

Ms Buckingham—It tells a story that we have got to a certain point. I myself know, from bringing this subject to light, that you get yourself in a lot of hot water; and I can understand that research—

Mr SAWFORD—Why do you get into hot water?

CHAIR—Well, we have been attacked by Lyn Allison already.

Ms Buckingham—Exactly. I think it is not taken well when you—

Mr SAWFORD—Why is it not taken well?

Ms Buckingham—I think there is an element of defensiveness, and everybody knows an example of a boy who is in a single parent home who has done exceptionally well. Everybody knows that on the average the risks are greater but, when you start to bring those things to light you are not welcomed, let us say; so I can understand why—and research takes money, as well.

Mr SAWFORD—But it is interesting, isn’t it? You have done a lot of research in this particular area, and yet, unlike other people who have presented information and who have given us a lot of research in recent times—1997, 1998, 1999—you go to 1991 and, almost 10 years later, and you cannot refer on that particular issue to any part of research. That rings a little bit strange, doesn’t it?

Ms Buckingham—I try to stick to Australian research. It is very difficult especially to find Australian research. There is a little bit of US research, which is more recent, but I try not to make generalisations between countries if possible. As you were saying earlier, in Australia there is a real absence of longitudinal research, and I think that that provides the strongest evidence either for or against the hypothesis.

Mrs MAY—It would not help that you do not have ready access to department of education data. Is there a problem there?

Ms Buckingham—That is a constant fight on our behalf.

Mrs MAY—Can you expand as to why? Are they just not willing to release that?

Ms Buckingham—For starters, I do not think that the education department collects information about the family circumstances of children. That is more likely to be held by schools, and schools are not likely to provide that kind of information. The best that you can do is make a comparison based on the proportion of single parent families in a particular postcode, for example, and compare that to the school performance. You can only try to draw correlations based on averages, because that information is just not collected on a wide scale.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not want to put you under pressure. If you do not want to put this on the record, I understand the reasons why. If you would like to do it off the record, I understand that too. When I asked you the question about how you came into a lot of trouble when you are dealing with this particular issue—and I am not trying to be impolite—you skirted around it.

Ms Buckingham—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe I understand the reasons for that. Is it because it is on the public record at the moment? Do you have some views on this that you would prefer to give to this committee privately, not on the record? Sorry, I do not mean to put you on the spot.

Ms Buckingham—No, it is okay. Let me think about it for a moment.

CHAIR—If there is anything you want to say in camera, just indicate that you would like to do that.

Ms Buckingham—Your question is: why is it that there is no recent research on the effects of single parent families?

Mr SAWFORD—It is broader than that. Why is this area so difficult and why are people so intimidated, I suspect, by a response that may come from somewhere? That is what you are saying to me at the moment. Am I being unfair in presuming that?

Ms Buckingham—No. There is an entrenched feeling that we should not criticise the decisions that people make in their lives.

Mr SAWFORD—So we should not challenge the current orthodoxy in the way we are organising teaching, the structuring schools, staffing and the whole lot?

Ms Buckingham—Yes, especially when it comes to personal decisions about divorce and a decision to have a child outside of wedlock. For all those kinds of things there seems to be a reluctance to make criticisms of people's personal lifestyle choices. I certainly am not advocating that people should be told what to do; I am all for freedom of choice. But I am also for informing people of the repercussions of their decision where there is evidence that there are repercussions. I do not know why it is not accepted that you should be allowed to voice concerns about the way that a society is moving in terms of its acceptance of different choices.

CHAIR—The basic problem here is that in your report, *Boy troubles*, one of the issues that you identified was fatherlessness, which has numerous causes, the most common these days being separation and/or divorce. In identifying it, you are basically saying that one of the contributing factors to reduced school performance by boys is a lack of a father or a father figure for the particular boy. As a consequence, you have been attacked and the institution for which you work has been attacked. We were attacked the day that the minister announced we were doing an inquiry into boys education. We were attacked by the Democrats, by Senator Allison in particular. She accused us of having a witch-hunt against single mothers. I am divorced. Like you, I think that if people are going to make choices, no matter how legitimate they are, we have a responsibility, as a society and as policy makers in particular, to see that people understand, based on research, what the consequences of those decisions will be, in this case for their children.

We had two blokes who came to see us in Melbourne at our hearings who were unusual and had what I would describe as an unorthodox approach to dealing with boys in disciplinary programs in schools. Nonetheless, I am sure they are very effective. I think they call it 'football, meat pies and girls' or something along those lines, which some would say was perhaps contributing to the problems. One of the things that I remember, apart from the fact that this bloke pulled out a didgeridoo and played it to us, was that they had dealt with 160 boys. They had been called into schools. When we asked them, not one boy that they had dealt with had a father, lived with a father or perhaps even knew their father, and they felt that that had something to do with the reasons why these kids had problems. As you know, my electorate is up in the North Shore of Sydney. My observation is that, just because a father is physically there, it does not mean that he is emotionally engaged. Fatherlessness is not just a question of physical isolation; it is an emotional one as well.

Ms Buckingham—It is a matter of degrees, though. Even an emotionally detached father in the home is an example and possibly provides a disciplining influence. It is not just that but also that he alleviates the stress of carrying that burden of raising children on the mother. So there are advantages to having two parents that are not diminished when one is not necessarily 'father of the year'. They still have a big influence.

CHAIR—With this question of information, for example, when kids are enrolled in schools, should we be soliciting information about the mother? For instance, if there is not a mother is there a mother figure for this particular child and, similarly, is there a father and/or a father figure?

Ms Buckingham—I am not sure whether or not that is a good idea in terms of individual children and it being linked to their names. I am going to a workshop on Monday. There is a new survey being workshopped at the moment called the longitudinal survey of Australian children, or something similar. I think that would be very useful rather than actually making parents give their personal details when they enrol a child in the school. It would be a random sample to find out those sorts of details and follow them through their schooling. There is no way you can follow every child through. They change schools, they leave in the country—

CHAIR—But it seems that, if you were teaching kids—Rod has been a teacher for a long time—surely an important thing would be to at least have some idea of what the family relationship is.

Ms Buckingham—You would think that a teacher would find that out anyway. If it is a matter of the personal relationship between the teacher and the child, you would hope that a teacher would be interested enough to know what the child's family situation is.

CHAIR—With what we are discovering through this inquiry, I would not assume that such basic things were being done by all teachers.

Mrs MAY—That is particularly so when, in terms of classroom sizes, you are talking still of 25 to 30 children in a class. How close would a teacher get and how much would she know about each of her individual students?

Ms Buckingham—I think that has also got a lot to do with the level of parental involvement in a school. When there are only half a dozen parents who turn up to all of the P&Cs, ladies auxiliary, fetes, et cetera, then you really have no clue of what the situation is for the other thousand children in the school or however many there are. That is something that could be helpful—increasing the level of parental involvement.

Mr SAWFORD—It might be the opposite. When we had almost negligible parent involvement in the schools the difference in achievement status of boys and girls was pretty marginal. The more we get parents involved in the school the bigger the differences. I am only being silly about that. I want to ask a serious question. In terms of challenging the orthodoxy—and that is a very important issue that you have raised—and overcoming denial and the lack of balance in this current debate, does your institute have any plans in the near future, in the next six months or 12 months, for dealing with any of those three issues?

Ms Buckingham—Yes. We are conducting a long-term research project into differences in performance in different areas, linking the prevalent socioeconomic status of a particular postcode with the performance of children who live in that postcode. That is really the most we can do at this stage.

Mr SAWFORD—When will that be completed?

Ms Buckingham—Next year.

Mr SAWFORD—When next year?

Ms Buckingham—It depends on how long it takes. We have been trying to wring information out of education departments. We really wanted to get hold of UAI scores, but were not allowed to. We tried and tried but could not get hold of them.

Mr SAWFORD—That tells a story too.

Ms Buckingham—New South Wales is particularly difficult. Victoria is less difficult and Queensland have been fairly forthcoming with their information. At this stage we do not have any clear results. We are still trying to pull all the data in. It is just a matter of how long we have to fight to get hold of the information that we need. I would say it would be the middle of next year at the earliest.

CHAIR—Another area that seems to be hostage to ideology is this question of gender balance in the teaching work force. We have had people say to us that they are concerned about the lack of male teachers, particularly in the primary system. We have had others that have diminished the importance of having gender balance in a work force. What sort of work have you done or are you aware of in this regard? Intuitively, I think most parents especially, at least the more sensible ones, realise that they would like to have male and female role models for their kids at school, whatever their gender. Others seem to think it is not a problem.

Ms Buckingham—I went looking for empirical research on male role modelling as to exactly how this process occurs, and whether you can say that boys consciously look to someone as an example or whether it is just the fact that the person is there, including what sorts of attributes they look for and those kinds of things. There is basically nothing in terms of empirical scientific research. There is some research around that indicates that a male teacher in an all male classroom can engage the students a lot better. He is more keyed into their thought processes and possibly more able to handle the activity within the classroom. As you talked about before, boys are less sedentary. They are less likely to sit still. They want to be actively involved. There are some indications that men deal with that a bit better.

As for why there are not so many men in the teaching force these days, I think that is a combination of quite a few things. Partly there is a bit of fright around about being involved in working with children, with all of the different legal ramifications of working with children on a regular basis. The career structure also does not really appeal to men in the same way that it does for women.

Mr SAWFORD—In what way?

Ms Buckingham—There are not as many opportunities for ambitious people. Ambitious men might find the teaching profession a bit frustrating in terms of exactly how much they can earn. You can say that a teacher should be teaching because they want to teach, not because of how much they get paid, and that is true to a certain extent, but I am not sure that the incentives are there.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it a problem that a lot of possible male teachers look at a teaching staff and think, 'Goodness, I'd be the only male on that staff'?

Ms Buckingham—Yes, it is a roller-coaster. The numbers of men start to decrease, so they decrease further because men are not attracted to working in an all female environment. The same could be said if it was a predominantly male environment. A woman is less inclined to throw herself into the midst of that. It is just human nature. So it is a roller-coaster of different effects which have all accumulated leading to the situation that we have now. I do not think there are any short-term solutions to remedy that. At the moment I have been researching school choice and how to remove the distinctions between public and private. That is a whole other issue, but that brings with it the sorts of changes which could attract men back into the profession.

Mr SAWFORD—In Australia at the moment we have people from the UK desperately trying to recruit hundreds and hundreds of Australian teachers to take back to the UK. The average age of our teachers is somewhere between 45 and 56, depending on who you want to believe. There

is going to be a huge teacher shortage at all levels very quickly in this country. Isn't there an opportunity for government to make some serious recommendations about gender and where people come from? Is there an opportunity now to encourage indigenous Australians to become teachers at all subject levels? Is there an opportunity now, particularly from some of the examples we had this morning, to encourage young people from ethnic groups who have recently arrived in Australia and young people from lower socioeconomic areas into teachers colleges? We have done this in the past to meet teacher shortages in this country. Do you think, as a committee, that we ought to seriously consider the teacher shortages that are coming up and the opportunity that gives for governments to perhaps change the structure of future teaching forces in the next 20 or 30 years?

Ms Buckingham—I think that would depend on the way you brought those sorts of changes about. For example, certain universities and colleges in the US reduced the entrance level to admit minority groups. I do not think that that is a solution. I think it is more a matter of looking at how to make teaching attractive: how to make them want to do it rather than making it easier to do it. There is an argument for making sure there are no obstacles, but I certainly do not advocate making it easier for particular groups over other groups to go into the profession. I would rather look at what would attract them into it, and how to encourage them rather than push them into it.

CHAIR—Thank you, Jennifer. We really appreciate you coming to speak to us and for the excellent work that you are doing. If, in the course of the inquiry, there is any further information you think we should have, can you please send it to us?

Ms Buckingham—Certainly.

CHAIR—It was very good.

Ms Buckingham—I have been looking at the report that came out recently by Collins, Kenway and McLeod. There was not a great deal to argue with in the report and it had some interesting information but one thing I found particularly disturbing was that there was really no acknowledgment of the fact that boys and girls might be innately different in certain ways.

Mr SAWFORD—You could state it in another way: a refusal to acknowledge.

Ms Buckingham—That was my only concern really. They have some interesting arguments about post-school destinations when you compare different groups of boys and girls et cetera. But I think we need to consider that 'different' does not mean 'better' or 'worse'.

CHAIR—Exactly. That is right. They are different.

Ms Buckingham—Strengths and weaknesses can be worked with, if acknowledged that they are there. So I thought that was worth mentioning.

CHAIR—If that disturbed you, you should sit here and listen to a lot of what we listen to.

Ms Buckingham—Did you speak to Andrew Humphreys in Melbourne?

CHAIR—Yes, we did. He made an impact.

Ms Buckingham—I am sure he did.

CHAIR—Yes. He was perhaps at the other extreme, but he put a very cogent argument for his point of view.

Ms Buckingham—I thought of him when we were talking about technical schools, et cetera. He has some interesting views on that.

CHAIR—Yes. Thank you very much, Jennifer.

Proceedings suspended from 12.34 p.m. to 1.47 p.m.

BROWNE, Mr Rollo (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you very much for providing us with such a comprehensive submission. Could you tell us the capacity in which you appear? If you then provide us with an overview of your submission we could discuss it and draw the points out.

Mr Browne—I am an independent consultant and provider of training to schools on the education of boys, gender and equity issues. I do not really know the best way to go about this. Perhaps I can just chat to you.

CHAIR—Yes, that is good form. We have read the submission. You are obviously aware of what we are doing and have been following it, so just tell us what you think we ought to hear.

Mr Browne—All right. Friday last week I went to a school in Victoria where they have tried a whole series of innovations which revolve around having separate year 8 English classes. They were pretty pleased with all this.

CHAIR—Is this a co-ed school?

Mr Browne—This is a state co-ed school on the fringes of Melbourne so there is a bit of a debate on what is going to happen to the kids after they leave school. It is close to the Dandenong area. Their main concern there was the culture of alienation and switch-off which the kids had reached by years 8 and 9. In a lot of my work I asked the teachers at what age they noticed this switching off occurring. There were a variety of responses. They noticed the acting out at year 9 but the boredom kicks in at about year 7. The enthusiasm with which kids leave primary school and then shift into high school gets wiped out in about six months flat. I have been working for five or six years now to try to get teachers to pay attention to the social dynamics in the classroom.

One of the big effects of the shift to high school is that the students move into a situation of cycling through teachers—six is good, 14 is not good—throughout the week. If a problem emerges between Sawford and Nelson, the teacher thinks, ‘Well, if I can hang on for another 10 minutes, it’s someone else’s problem.’ This approach is different from the approach taken in primary school because the primary school teacher knows that if they do not deal with the problem at the time they will have to go through the parent situation and someone will have to write stuff. In high school the responsibility of who takes care of the social environment falls through the gap. This is what I call the big black hole of middle school. They have attempted to address it in a number of situations, but the results are particularly poor with respect to outcomes for boys. If boys get into a survival mentality—survival often means taking account of who the peer leaders are—and the peer leaders are negative or anti-learning, you will have a fight on your hands. Essentially, we are losing teachers because of the power struggle in high school. As you know, teaching stock is getting older and the capacity of those teachers to manage that difficult transition in adolescence is being eroded. This is just something that will have to be faced. That is one core point. How do we enter the social environment and structure the social environment for students, particularly boys, in year 7 because by the time they get to year 9 entrenchment is strong? In all the research and case studies I have looked at the outcomes

of intervening in boys' social development after year 9 and year 10 is extremely low. Transfer rates are not good.

I am in favour of a lot of the middle school reform that is going on now, but it is quite haphazard—there is nothing coherent about it. The second thing that goes along with that is that when it works well they break down this faculty based structure of high schools, which basically says that it is more important to get a proper maths teacher in year 7 than it is for all those teachers to focus on who this year 7 group is as a learning group. The fundamental proposition is: social environment precedes academic outcomes. We have lost that plot as a structure and as an organisation providing education. We very much focus on academic outcomes. The proof of that is: where and when do we collect data on social outcomes? We basically have none, unless you include the kindy reports which say, 'Can cooperate and play with others,' which fade out by about year 2, 3 or sometimes 4. As an aside, this is becoming increasingly important in job placement in the future—the social development of kids to work in teams, know their strengths and weaknesses and so on. I could elaborate on that, but I think there is a major case to be answered in terms of the gap in social development of what is required in the workplace and where the jobs are relative to what we are actually providing by virtue of our curricula structured schools. That is the first point.

The second point would be that the core of social development is taught. It used to be called the hidden curriculum, which I am sure you are familiar with, which is what happens while we are teaching something else. It comes down to how the teachers manage difficult situations, particularly the men but also the women. If they say, 'Right, you two! I've had enough; open your book at page 32,' no matter how much they talk about the ability to understand each other's point of view we grab the attention and we insist. If we maintain that through high school when power struggles increase, can teachers afford to lose? No way. They do anything they can. So the skill level with which they manage difficult situations is vital. When you go out to schools and notice what the ability levels are, you find that in the middle schools where it is working well you have volunteer teachers taking an interest in the early part of the development. So they can do it. They actually listen to the kids and manage them respectfully. Where it is not working teachers often resort to external authority rather than dealing with it in the classroom. At the worst school I have ever dealt with—I never actually got invited there; I was involved with a sister school—all the heads of departments used to send their naughty kids to the deputy with a slip and the deputy's job was to tick them off. So it meant that managing social behaviour got lost and was pushed up the line because the teachers did not want to do anything except teach—which is not unreasonable, but if you cannot make an agreement with the kids that that is what they are there for you have lost the battle. I do not think we pay enough attention in our teacher training to the development of their social contract around that, and that is a big gap.

So that is the second point: we have to clean up the way we manage behaviour. There is huge diversity across schools, and the places where the most changes have occurred are the ones where the leading teacher—which is what they are called in New South Wales—or the deputy in charge of curriculum and learning enrols sufficient teachers to align practice so that the kids do not think, 'It's one warning from Mr Bartlett. I can get three out of Mr Rees. Mr Nelson's got us on detention before I even walk into the room.' They begin to play people off against each other. Therefore, whose job is it to control them? It is not theirs; it is ours as teachers. If that is the game that goes on, learning is out. So the idea of how we frame that, I think, is fundamental.

The third part is to do with teacher/student relations. I will not go on about it because I am pretty sure you would have heard Ken Rowe, who says the only effective way to change behaviour is teacher behaviour that gets through behind the classroom door.

In terms of what the inquiry can do, this is trickier because you are out of the state system, you set policy level and that sort of thing. What I notice is that in Victoria significant things are changing because, through their school charter systems, they are forced to collect data on their boys and the gaps in performance, and therefore they have to respond to some of that about what they are and are not doing. But without data collection, we are losing the plot, and I do not think we have collected enough data. We have collected heaps of data on girls, but there is no equivalent around boys' voices, and there is no pretence that we are trying to create boys to be more like girls. Second to that is we do not have a framework for the social outcomes we are actually after. I have given you a rough draft on what a first glance might look at, but I think this is a fairly major debate and most communities find it difficult to discuss what exactly we are looking for in our boys at various age levels.

Interestingly, I do work in private schools as well which pride themselves on the types of communities they produce—that is, the boys they produce. What I notice there is that, to the boys who are 15 or 16, winning is everything. That to me is a heroic and adolescent level of what masculinity might be. What is not emphasised enough is the notion of how they might serve their community. So they serve the school image, but to what degree do they go out and actually make the world a better place and to what degree is this modelled? So the modelling stuff matters too.

There are so many different ways in which schools have started to do stuff that the leadership has shifted away from government departments and is down at the grassroots level. I think that is pretty healthy, but what we do not do is evaluate that stuff properly, nor do we know how to transfer it when the key person has moved on, as they do. The other thing is that it tends to be isolated in a school. So one of the other recommendations I make is, when you collect best practice stuff, you try to promote it so that the feeder schools link to a core school and they drive stuff up and down so you get a community of practice, not just, 'It only works because Mr Brown's pretty good at the year 8 loser group and keeping them out of trouble.' So the moving outwards has been haphazardly, perhaps, implemented.

One of the things I do for my work, apart from my teacher training, is I co-edit the *Boys in School* bulletin. So I go out there and talk to them about what is working and what is not working, and there is a lot of stuff going on. We do not tend to hear about it too much except when the media pick it up, but there is nothing coherent in terms of an overall blueprint. The last comment I would make is that I do not think at a policy level there is much good thinking around how boys might be included or how boys' aspirations might be worked with. It is all framed around the girls equity and the girls having got somewhere, so the boys' voices are still evolving. That is a quick skip through of what I am on about.

Mr SAWFORD—I have some quick responses to your submission, and then I would like to go back to your oral presentation because I found that very interesting. The language of this inquiry that has been presented to us is quite incredible, and you have done it a bit, too.

Mr Browne—What have I done?

Mr SAWFORD—You say, ‘Social skills are increasingly required beyond infant classes as a component of academic success.’ And you wrote that boys are ‘slower to develop’ in this area.

CHAIR—Rod is a former teacher.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of what you just said, why didn’t you write that boys are ‘different’ in this area?

Mr Browne—Because the way we evaluate these things is: have we achieved such and such a level by the end of year 2 or year 3? That comes from the academic drive.

Mr SAWFORD—I will come back to that in a minute.

Mr Browne—Therefore, there is slippage in using the academic language rather than a socially developmental language.

Mr SAWFORD—All right. Then you went on to say, ‘Boys resist learning that is collaborative and process oriented.’

Mr Browne—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not disagree with you, but why did you write that? Please do not read me as being critical. I understand why you wrote that, but why didn’t you balance it with ‘boys learn in a positive state more effectively in this sort of way but it is sometimes perceived that they must learn in this way’? Why didn’t you do that?

Mr Browne—I wanted to draw out the contradictions more strongly than just pointing out difference. The reason for that is that there was one conference I heard about which placed a big emphasis on how boys learn best, which would be very structured and very hands on. It occurred to me that if we just fitted in with how boys learn best then we would find it increasingly difficult to teach them what I think of as the skills and social maturity that, even though they resist, they still need to pick up.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay, but we do not do this with girls in the sense that boys are much better at analysis; girls are much better at synthesis. Boys are much better at visual spatial skills; girls are much better at verbalisation. Boys are much better at comprehension; girls are much better at translation, and so on all through the old taxonomy. You can divide them up, but the truth is that girls and boys need all of those things.

Mr Browne—That is true.

Mr SAWFORD—Yet the propaganda about girls’ equity and gender construction never admits the other balance. It only admits what suits them. There is almost a denial of the other half. People who are involved in boys education use almost an apologetic beginning to their language. You said there is a ‘fundamental gap between boys and girls maturity’.

Mr Browne—Yes, there is.

Mr SAWFORD—I would not have thought that. No, there is a difference. It is different. I take you up on your point about boys acting out noticeably in year 9. I remember reading a book that my wife brought home which one of her colleagues wrote called *Year 9 are animals*.

Mr Browne—That is right.

Mr SAWFORD—But the book referred to boys and girls, not just boys. Why are boys acting out? I would have thought boys are acting out because what is being presented to them via the educational program is inactive—see, hear but do not do. The other thing I wanted to comment on was your statement, 'Two inferences can be made. A place to start creating positive peer culture is the first week of year 7.'

Mr Browne—Yes. I wrote that mainly because my client group are mainly high schools. However, I am not trying to exclude primary schools. It is more about where is the peer group least concrete and resistant? I think that the older they get the more it is formed. That is what I am trying to get at.

Mr SAWFORD—I take your point. I have read that wrongly. You also say in terms of peer influence:

> The two most critical influences were not poor curriculum or problem schools but a) disengagement by parents and b) peers who denigrate academic success.

I would have thought the key measurement of any successful school is the quality of the educational program that is offered and the way it is delivered and measured.

Mr Browne—However, when Steinberg studied over 20,000 people he found that that in itself was not as strong an indicator as the social environment of the kids and whether parents and peers were supportive of them engaging with that satisfactory curriculum or not.

Mr SAWFORD—The biggest longitudinal study in the English-speaking world on education was the Inner London Education Authority's major longitudinal study, published in *The Times* in 1986 which said—if I can remember the final recommendation—the major determinant of every child's future success or failure was the quality of the educational program that was offered to children between the ages of seven and 12. It is more important than gender, race, religion, or socioeconomic background. That has never, in my view, been successfully contradicted anywhere, although lots of people have tried.

Mr Browne—Ken Rowe argues similarly but he pins it even further down to the quality of teacher/student relationship amongst all the other factors within schooling. He does not pin it down to those year levels. He says that as a factor is much stronger than school denomination, gender and all that stuff.

Mr SAWFORD—Ken has spoken to us.

Mr Browne—Yes, I am sure he has, so I do not need to reiterate it. This to me addresses something slightly different which is to do with the reasons for failure not the strongest reasons

for success. When it comes down to it, I am still arguing that the underpinning of academic success is still an adequate social basis.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you mind if I keep going because this connects up with what you said in your recommendations which I think are very important?

Mr Browne—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—You also said that high school teaches subjects, not students. They do not and they never will because they do not have the professional development or the teacher training to support that.

Mr Browne—Middle school could. I can see the exam system basically running top structures at school. I cannot see a way around that at this point, but I think middle school could certainly teach the child prior to the lesson and I think it would shift in terms of, say, transferable skills as opposed to content. Is it more important to read six books or to do two in depth so that they have some analytical skills they can transfer? It is the same argument. It takes longer to do the depth stuff and, likewise, it is easier for teachers to teach subject than it is for them to structure a program around it.

Mr SAWFORD—Would changes in teacher training or professional development significantly alter that fact?

Mr Browne—I think it would and I think part of the big problem with the training is that the student teachers are trained off site. The most interesting one I ever saw was in Canberra, where they had a two-year training program but the second year involved them doing essential practice which then went back to the university in a way that meant that they had to actually deal with face-to-face situations as opposed to learning theories about what you might do in a certain situation. It meant that their ability to engage a group and frame and structure things was infinitely enhanced because the new teachers in the schools are the ones who are most worried about control. They are the ones who most regress to notions of control which actually are part of the problem.

Mr SAWFORD—I applaud what you said in your recommendations about data collection. It is a real problem in this country and it is part of the reason for the weakness in the arguments either supporting or not supporting. I totally agree with you. Then you went on to the second one—'A National Framework of Social Outcomes'; and the third one—'Linking Social Outcomes to a Qualification Relevant to Post School Options'. I totally agree with the third one. When you say 'A National Framework of Social Outcomes', I am back to this language argument again. Basically, in some ways, it could be argued that you contradict yourself. In your third recommendation, you acknowledge 'technical, conceptual, interpersonal and communicating skills' and here you isolate the social outcomes. I would have thought it would have been a bigger advantage to have included social outcomes within intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and technological skills described in the third one. Why did you do it that way in the second when you did it the other way in the third?

Mr Browne—Within the list of social outcomes I have included conceptual skills and emotional skills.

Mr SAWFORD—In the third one.

Mr Browne—No, in the appendix which lists the basic content that I think ought to go in such a framework. I do not know whether that got included or whether they have excluded the appendices for that. It includes such things as the ability to set goals. To me that would be a conceptual and a thinking outcome. At what age do we expect kids to demonstrate this sort of stuff and who would be tested for it? It is everyone's job, a job for no-one in particular—likewise communication skills. We tend to presume that they will develop in tandem and we are not specific enough about that. The reason that technical is there is that in discussions a person pointed out to me the highly successful and useful accreditation that was given through—in this case—the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Board, year 10 equivalent structure. It tied it specifically to what is useable in the workplace.

What is missing from middle school are high linkages of relevance to the world out there. With the language of social, I always thought of that as social outcomes not exclusive of emotional, conceptual. I would have thought that technical had a lot more to do with understanding stuff. It does not mean it should be pushed away, but what is missing is the social stuff. It is embedded in the technical work-related. It is only an abstraction; we pull it out and focus highly on it. I do that to provide the contrast to what is missing—and you have done it in your inquiry references in that you are looking at the socialisation of boys. So that is partly why I left it that way.

Mr BARTLETT—I think you are absolutely right to focus on those middle years. It would seem to me that in about the second half of year 7 interest starts to wane. With some of those kids it comes back again at the end of year 10 or the start of year 11, but for some it does not. It seems to me that the critical things are to hold on to as many of them as we can. But for those who do lose interest during those middle years, in your experience, what is the main factor in re-arousing that interest in years 10 or 11? Is it the groundwork that was done in the pre-adolescent years? Is it the strength of the programs in those middle years in spite of the resistance or is it, in fact, the quality of teaching in those post-adolescent years?

Mr Browne—In the schools that I am thinking of—in Camden High School or in one of the Geelong high schools—the situation for the apparent school refusers or failures almost always comes down to someone caring about them enough to find out what it is they need and linking their work—English and Maths—relevant to what they are going to do after they leave school, and then going out on work experience and coming back and realising that they just have no idea and they have to shift their expectations. The one in Camden involved older boys becoming mentors to younger boys. That would never have happened without that teacher taking the older boys through a lot of orienteering, saying, 'You can do it if you choose.' There was a lot of building up of their capacity to make a difference in their own lives which, for the school refusers, is a big factor. It often comes down to the relationship—or you could call it the charismatic nature—or how the teacher creates the spark.

Mr BARTLETT—I think you have hit the nail on the head by focusing on someone who actually cares about them. I think that is absolutely critical. Is it your view that in year 7 a class teacher is a better arrangement than having the class broken up into specialist classes?

Mr Browne—No; it is not the only way. One of the most exciting innovations came from a 14-teacher year 7 group: about five years ago, Gerry Gee from Dunheved High School got six year 7 classes and had 7 teachers to teach all the lessons for three of those classes, and they formed a year 7 team. There was a team leader. They were all volunteers. There was no extra time to deal with social stuff, other than that they planned on the same outcomes. In Victoria, there is a big problem with what is called the 'curriculum standards framework'. They have to cover X and Y, and the school has to stand up strongly and argue about the thematic or other outcomes that they wish to plan to.

Those kids saw the more seamless nature of where learning was heading. Secondly, they had fewer teachers to relate to, and the maths and English outcomes significantly improved on the previous years', so they rolled it over into year 8. Then they took that year 7 and year 8 and stuck them in a different block, and set up a staffroom for those year 7 and year 8 classes, so that the teachers related to each other on the basis of the social environment rather than their curriculum structures.

Mr BARTLETT—A number of schools are doing that, where year 7 particularly, and to a lesser extent year 8, is basically a home class group, with perhaps specialist lessons for music, art and so on. Is it your view that that is a desirable way to go, or do you think that is going too far?

Mr Browne—No; I do not think it is a problem. The problem occurs when you try and roll it over to year 8 or year 9, and there are big faculty arguments.

Mr BARTLETT—So there has to be a transition.

Mr Browne—Yes; there has to be a transition, and some kids need it up to year 9. There is always an argument about what is middle school—is it year 5 to year 8, or year 6 to year 9? If there is a team that travels with that group each year, that provides the consistency and the continuity of relationship, so they can actually learn how a person works.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you think that is more important in a co-ed school, or in a boys school?

Mr Browne—Again, it comes down to who it is, which is more important than whether it is co-ed or boys.

Mr BARTLETT—But do you think the need is greater in a co-ed school? Are the boys more unsettled in those middle school years?

Mr Browne—More than girls, as a generalisation?

Mr BARTLETT—No; more than they are in a boys school.

Mr Browne—As a generalisation, I would say it is equally important in both schools. There is not a big distinction. In the boys schools that I have been into, the traditional way of working the school is still what you see, which is: 'What are the rules? Who is the toughest? How are you going to enforce them?' The relationships come after that—and this is where it really

matters. The kids who have social skills will find someone to relate to. Those who are in trouble automatically get related to; and it is the big chunk in the middle that slip through the fingers, and they are the ones we need to worry about. In itself, I do not think one teacher in a class, or one group of teachers across three classes, is anything as significant as can be the engagement of the older boys in a mentoring role. There are not enough—

Mr BARTLETT—As you said, you need a teacher with the commitment to drive that, to make it work.

Mr Browne—Yes. In a school of 1,600, there are 200-plus year 7s. How many teachers do you need to make a difference to them? You cannot possibly do it without engaging the senior boys in the school, particularly for the younger boys—or, in a co-ed, just engaging the senior juniors. I do not think it is possible.

Mr BARTLETT—You mention that one of the critical issues is keeping parents engaged, especially dads. Presumably then, given the fact that in 30 per cent or 40 per cent of the families in many areas there is no dad there, would you say that is a strong argument then for encouraging more males into the classroom, or do you think that does not matter?

Mr Browne—No, it matters. But, even if you encourage males into the classroom, there are still nothing like enough.

Mr BARTLETT—Sure.

Mr Browne—On the dad stuff, when there are dads' events, it means making an effort to get grandpa, another significant male, or older brothers; and when they do work experience, to particularly find older men who can lead them to believe that they have something to contribute in the workplace, as opposed to just doing the photocopying and picking up the tools. It is in there somewhere. But the kids who are mentored in the workplace have much lower post-school unemployment rates than do those who are not mentored. It is about modelling work ethic, or modelling being valued as a worker.

CHAIR—I spoke to a large audience in Canberra last week about this inquiry. There would have been 250 people in the audience, which reflects the degree of interest in all this. A woman whose husband is a plumber came up to me afterwards—in fact, many did—and said, 'You know, he takes these kids on work placement and he writes a report and all this sort of business, and frequently the schools say, "You can't be talking about the same kid," because he will find the kid is eager to learn, helpful, courteous and keen. And yet the school experience is that the kid is a no-hoper, disinterested, disruptive and all that sort of stuff.' I know this is anecdotal but it clearly reinforces what you are saying. My own experience is that often it is not the kid that is the problem—the kid is often a symptom of what is wrong with the family and/or the school.

Mr Browne—There is an absolutely fascinating case study in Margaret River, Western Australia where there is a senior high school which has strong links to the local community. The local community began to take on these kids because they realised that, unless they did something about it, these kids would be the ones putting their daughters in danger, being the ones on the street. For the kids who are unacceptable to anyone else there will be some sheet metal fabricator somewhere, some plumber, who will see something in a kid that we have all

given up on. It is just amazing the changes that are made—to the extent that, in the department of youth surveys occurring in Western Australia, where all the young people were saying they felt like an alien in their own land, the one exception was Margaret River Senior High School, where the kids felt they belonged in the community. So this whole alienation thing is a big social bludgeon that is going to come around and get us if we do not pay attention this matter.

CHAIR—In terms of the recommendations that you have made to us, could you tell us a little bit about this concept of the year 10 diploma of achievement. I know in the old days they had the intermediate, leaving, matriculation—as it was then—so there were tiered levels of achievement through school. I am not suggesting for one minute that we go back to that, but could you explain how this idea of saying 'Well, you are a person who is not only educated but has developed personally' might work and why it is important that we should be looking at it.

Mr Browne—The model is, as I understand it, that kids about the age of 16 want to come out with a statement of their social, technical, conceptual and other types of skills. In order to demonstrate, for example, their ability to communicate, they would select from a number of publicly available things, such as the Red Cross course, or they might do something like go to the local kindy and help out and specifically focus on their ability to be a leader. If we only do this within school structures, there are just not enough opportunities for them to learn practical, hands-on skills. So the thing here is engaging them with their community in such a way that they have developed a social profile and competencies that have been tested outside our somewhat artificial environment. It is not the same if someone does 'leadership and peer support structures': the teacher is there or the group is smaller. It is better that they go outside and do courses and build themselves a profile so that they know they have covered say core areas—and these areas have been identified not by school committees but by workplace oriented committees. That is the strength of this particular certificate of achievement: it is not an in-house thing.

I did refer in my submission to 'the demise of the year 10 certificate'. It is not quite a 'demise': I believe there are some 70,000 people doing it now. Nevertheless, it does not quite capture what are the transferable skills from school to out there. If we go out there and say that this is where they have been learning those skills, we then have the capacity to document this and say that this is a platform for kids to keep becoming productive members of society. I think that is a healthy way to do it.

CHAIR—We heard from Marie-Anne Maakrun from Machismo this morning, a lady who has an impact on you. You listed in your submission, along with Machismo, a number of programs which you consider to be good models. I think we should visit some of those and have a look at them. Are there any in particular that are standouts, from your point of view?

Mr Browne—The Margaret River program—It Takes a Village to Raise a Young Man—I think is stunning.

CHAIR—We will put that on our list.

Mr Browne—The Rock and Water Program I think is pretty good. The guy is training people in Australia, so it is not quite a school—it has not developed. That is under 'Specific-focus

Programs, the last on that list, where it says ‘Self Defence for Boys’. It is offered in Australia as the Rock and Water Program. I think that is excellent.

Mr SAWFORD—That is in Holland, isn’t it?

Mr Browne—He is in Holland; he comes down here.

Mr SAWFORD—But where is it in Australia?

Mr Browne—The person to talk to about that would be Richard Fletcher, who is at the Men and Boys project. I am sure you have met him.

CHAIR—Yes, we have.

Mr Browne—Has he come and talked to you?

CHAIR—Not yet.

Mr SAWFORD—He will.

Mr Browne—He will. I mentioned the Boys in Focus program at Camden High School under ‘What Works’ at the end of paragraph 2. Another work experience program is the Dad in the Shed, which is under ‘School/Work Programs: Creating a Work Ethic’.

Mr SAWFORD—Which Camden High School—New South Wales or South Australia?

Mr Browne—New South Wales.

Mr SAWFORD—And the Dad in the Shed is in Geraldton in Western Australia, isn’t it?

Mr Browne—Yes, Western Australia again. Another Western Australia program—under ‘Specific-focus Programs—Making Links: An Alinjarra Challenge, is another good one. It is the second of the two arrow dot points. Are you going to Western Australia?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. Where is Alinjarra—is that a suburb of Perth?

Mr Browne—I think it is about one hour out of Perth.

CHAIR—We will find out, but we will visit at least a couple of those.

Mr Browne—These are pretty exciting. The edition of the bulletin which I have just edited has one in Southport High School—a guy called Errol Crone does the Responsible Thinking Classroom. Basically, it is a form of Glasser. I would hate to tell you to go and see a place in which the innovative person has moved on, and you are left with the inability of the school to deliver what they originally put together.

CHAIR—That is the test, isn't it? A program should be able to withstand the movement of personnel.

Mr SAWFORD—I know we want to finish but on that particular issue, which I forgot to ask you about before, when you look at teachers across the board—and I say this as a former school principal—one per cent of teachers are absolutely outstanding. Ten per cent can do almost anything: you want them to work in the traditional sense and they can do that; you want them to work in an experiential way and they can do that. They will make anything work, because of motivation and skill. But many innovative and progressive programs are beyond the abilities of most teachers. Is that a problem in the way in which we try and do things?

Mr Browne—Yes. I will go on with your picture. There are about a middle 60 per cent who can do tried and true things and then there are 25 per cent who do not have the will to keep engaging with the kids. Finally, there are a bottom three, four or five per cent who are actually not competent. But the 25 per cent who do not like kids enough—that may be one way of putting it—to build the relationship is the group where things will fall down. I think it is a major problem. I can do things as an external person, because I am a bit up front, showy and dramatic. I can make things work that they cannot—and that is not good; that is not functional. Schools have to work within the current skill sets.

Mr SAWFORD—Bureaucracies love success, and there are many examples in the last 30 or 40 years of huge successes and contributions made by outstanding teachers. They have then tried to apply them generally and they have always failed. Why do we continue to do this? Don't we understand that there are some things that only work with some people?

Mr Browne—There will always need to be some outstanding people to do the leadership stuff. What is missing is the next layer down—the group who are to work as reflective practitioners and actually assist each other to get better. Isolation is an endemic problem within the school system. People just get on with the next thing. I think you have to break down isolation, including the way we train teachers.

CHAIR—We could talk to you for a lot longer, but thank you very much.

Mr Browne—Thank you for having me.

CHAIR—It has been very useful. Thank you for what you are doing.

Mr Browne—Good luck with the report.

CHAIR—Thank you. We need that. If you have any supplementary thoughts, ideas, comments or criticisms to make on other submissions, do not hesitate to send them on.

[2.34 p.m.]

JONES, Ms Glynis Catherine, Education Consultant, Independent Education Union of Australia

SMITH, Ms Pamela Mary, Convenor of Women's Committee, Independent Education Union of Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you give us an overview of what you think the main issues are in relation to this inquiry.

Ms Smith—Thank you very much. You obviously have a copy of our submission.

CHAIR—Yes. If you go through that first, then there will be some question and answer stuff.

Ms Smith—First of all, we thank the committee for this opportunity, which we value very much. As we will point out during our input, the union has a long history of involvement in gender issues and Glynis will table a range of other materials a bit later on which reflects that involvement in gender equity, boys education, girls education and gender justice issues.

I think the IEU, at a federal level and at its state and territory affiliates level, is very well-positioned in terms of our union membership to make a contribution to this inquiry. At a federal level the IEU has 46,000 teachers and education support staff. We cover a huge diversity of schools and other educational institutions. In the current debate, we cover Kings and Trinity—those sorts of schools. We cover the Catholic systemics. We have boys schools, girls schools, co-ed, rural and regional. We have members who work in Aboriginal community schools in different parts of Australia. But, perhaps significantly for this as well, we also cover early childhood. There are some significant gender justice issues that we need to deal with in terms of the nought to five sector as well as the actual schooling sector. I think that context in our membership helps us to be aware of the issues and to contribute to the debate around them because of the diversity of the schooling sector and early childhood sector that we are involved in.

I might just briefly speak to the recommendations in our report, then Glynis might elaborate on some of the particular issues arising from that. Hopefully there will be lots of time for questions after that. The first recommendation in our report is highlighted on page 3. One of the major issues that has come to light in our work and research—and our membership is telling us this—is that a lot of these issues are very appropriately dealt with at school community level. Our first recommendation is the need to involve school communities, including parents, staff, students and other local community agencies, and the need, particularly in rural and regional Australia but also in the city, to look at the cooperative use of resources and use of technology and community facilities to enhance the services available to students, particularly the concept of the full service school which offers a range of support and facilities. Glynis, you might like to speak to that.

Ms Jones—I do not know whether you are aware of the full service school. It tends to be more prevalent in Victoria. It is where the health and the education agencies work collaboratively. Rather than families in need being addressed by the education agencies and then separately by social support or health agencies, the idea of the full service school is that all of those agencies come together in the context of the school and work cooperatively across health issues as well as educational issues, including behaviour issues, which we know is very much an issue for many boys, particularly in primary and lower secondary. The whole notion of a full service school idea is one which we have been looking at quite critically. There seems to be some degree of early success where those agencies do come together in that way.

Steven Kemmis has written quite extensively on the full service school model. We have brought an article along if you were not aware of it. We realise that you are going around nationally and no doubt are meeting no end of people. But if you have not been aware of the full service school model it was something which we thought you might like to be aware of.

CHAIR—We are aware of it but if you have got a paper in relation to it—

Ms Jones—I have an article here by Steven Kemmis where he talks about what has been happening with our school as a full service school. This is a professional journal that the IEUA puts out three times a year. Over the last seven or eight years we have been writing quite extensively about gender issues and in particular boys education, aligned with things like behaviour management in the context of schools and so on. We have brought a number of relevant articles. Obviously the audience for this is intended to be teachers, principals and deputies.

Mr SAWFORD—When you talk about full service schools, are you talking about schools with a health agency or are you talking about schools with a welfare agency, welfare advocacy or a legal aid office?

Ms Jones—As far as I am aware they do not involve the legal side of things but essentially the social agencies as well as education and health.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is welfare, education and health?

Ms Jones—Yes.

Ms Smith—I suppose that leads on very nicely to the second recommendation, which is on page 10 of our submission. But before that, if you have a look on page 3 at point 4—'Boys' Education—Is There a Problem?—we have highlighted some of the issues that are affecting boys, and I am sure most your other submissions have done so as well. They include, obviously, the ones that are listed on that page: dangerous and destructive behaviour, suicide, violence and bullying, drug abuse and homophobia. I think that links in with Glynis's point about the full service school. If we are dealing with students with a range of those sorts of issues in their lives, those sorts of issues are often more than classroom teachers or parents can deal with. They need input from councillors, psychologists and health and welfare workers. So the full service school can link in with the recognition that if we have students with those sorts of issues, then we need to address them in a comprehensive sort of way.

Mr SAWFORD—Are we overstating boys problems? A police inspector talked to us in Melbourne about his particular area, and I gave an example of where a senior policeman in Adelaide said that if you could remove 14 kids from the streets of South Australia—he may have been exaggerating—basically 80 per cent of the crime would disappear. This inspector made a similar claim in terms of his own area, not the whole state of Victoria. He said that if he could remove a number of kids, and I have forgotten how many he said, then a lot of the recidivist problem they had, including these negative behaviours, would disappear. What I am saying is that most boys do not behave like this.

Ms Smith—Most boys certainly do not. If you look at recommendation 2, one of the issues is which boys and which girls behave in that way. Our members tell us—and I am sure that the police probably say so, and I am sure the Australian Education Union told you—that there are groups of boys who are displaying some of those behaviours. Classroom teachers tell us, and the parents of students tell us, that those sorts of issues are certainly there. They are not there for all boys, but they are there for significant numbers of boys, and obviously in some schools more than others. Some of these issues are particularly in rural and regional Australia, in parts of Sydney and Melbourne, and obviously in parts of Adelaide, from your comments. So I think our second recommendation really needs to give priority—and we hope that your inquiry will do so—to the research and the policy implications of which boys and which girls in terms of student participation in education and learning outcomes.

The concern that we have—and I am sure others have said this—is that there are real dangers in saying, ‘The girls have had their go and now it is the boys turn. We have fixed up all the girls problems. We need to focus a lot of resourcing onto the boys.’

Mr SAWFORD—I have got to ask the question. You are putting forward—which I do not disagree with, by the way—the value of the disaggregated argument: which girls, which boys. Do you totally overlook or leave out the aggregated argument; that is, the trends that can be interpreted from all boys and all girls? If so, why?

Ms Smith—I believe from what our members tell us—and our research is working with our 46,000 members in non-government schools—that you really have to disaggregate it. I think it is important to look at trends.

Mr SAWFORD—You have answered my question. In other words, you overlook the aggregated argument. It is a good question to ask. We are going to have to pursue it. If you come back afterwards and give us an answer as to why you do that, it would be very interesting.

Ms Smith—We have also said in recommendation 2 that we need to look at best practice case studies and what is working for groups of boys in different schools in the city, in the country, in Aboriginal communities, and in different socioeconomic status communities. We are very much committed to asking the question ‘which boys and which girls?’ because I think that enables us to target policy development and resourcing much better. If there are issues that are not affecting some groups of—

Mr SAWFORD—I do not disagree with you. It is an important part of the debate—

Ms Smith—It is.

Mr SAWFORD—and you cannot overlook it. But what immensely puzzles me is that there are pluses and minuses in all we do in our life. It just seems to me that the aggregated arguments that are put forward do not seem to suit some people, and that is the reason they leave them out.

Ms Smith—We go on, in recommendation 3, to look at the differential needs of disadvantaged boys and girls. We consider that policy and resourcing issues need to target those groups of students—obviously socioeconomic disadvantage, Aboriginality, rurality, disability, et cetera. There are groups of students who, for various reasons, have impacts upon them, and I think it is another disaggregation argument.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, it is.

Ms Smith—We have to be targeted and precise in identifying; otherwise there is the danger of saying, 'All girls are now doing well'. They are not.

Mr BARTLETT—No. But the point is that, within most of those categories, boys are not doing as well as girls for whatever reason. You admit the differential needs of disadvantaged boys and girls within those groups, yet your recommendation is to simply attack socioeconomic disadvantage, Aboriginality, rurality, disability and the disadvantage that comes with those characteristics rather than the relative disadvantage faced by boys. What do you recommend to address the relative disadvantage faced by boys?

Ms Smith—That is one particular recommendation. We have seven recommendations. We are saying that particular attention does need to be given to those groups of students. On the other hand, when we are talking about curriculum issues, teaching learning strategies and school organisation that is when you are looking at boys more generally and the particular needs of boys as well.

Ms Jones—If you take the literacy debate, we are all very well aware of what is happening internationally vis-a-vis literacy for boys. There are some approaches which are very specifically targeted at boys in very low socioeconomic circumstances in the ghetto areas of the United States, for example. They are seeing that they need to have a much more different approach, a more holistic approach, again involving parental support and community as well as the curriculum.

We assume that all of this is going to be addressed through curriculum. It often is not; it is an amalgam of a number of approaches, a more holistic approach. For example, the Success for All program, which has been very successful in many states in America, has really targeted literacy for boys aged five to seven in very downtown areas of major cities. The John Hopkins University at Baltimore has a very targeted approach at boys literacy—it is for boys and girls by the way.

Mr BARTLETT—What approach does it use? Can you just elaborate on that?

Ms Jones—It uses the family more than a lot of our programs might traditionally here, although I know a lot of work has been done in various universities where we have been trying to embed literacy learning with home schooling, home approaches and so on.

Mr SAWFORD—Do they use any special strategies in teaching the literacy?

Ms Jones—They do.

Mr SAWFORD—What are they?

Ms Jones—They look at conflict resolution in the context of the classroom on the premise that many of children who are in conflict situations at home bring their conflict from home to the classroom. So a lot of work is done right the way from kindergarten to year 6 looking at conflict resolution, in the context of the classroom. So the classroom is a calm, learning environment where children are able to articulate and work out conflicts in the classroom.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not think that is the question that Kerry is asking.

Mr BARTLETT—I am not asking about the actual methodoloy but the pedagogy of teaching literacy.

Ms Jones—It is very structured.

Mr SAWFORD—It is explicit.

Ms Jones—Yes, it is very explicit.

Mr SAWFORD—It is analysis. Holistic is an interesting term.

Ms Jones—I was not meaning that—

Mr SAWFORD—You mean analytical; you mean explicit.

Ms Jones—Yes.

Ms Smith—I think you mean holistic in a cultural sense of working with the whole student—

Mr SAWFORD—No, but the question that Kerry was asking was in terms of the actual literacy program offered to the children. It is one denoted by explicit teaching, structure and analysis.

Ms Jones—Except that the differences do not deny the context from which the child comes into that particular school. It is not just the curriculum; it is the familial context of that child and acknowledging that and working with the parents as well.

Mr SAWFORD—Both.

Ms Jones—So one would wonder whether just the curriculum side of things would have the impact that earlier studies suggested it has had.

Mr SAWFORD—I think you are quite right. It is both.

Ms Smith—In terms of curriculum, I just note that in paragraph 6.2 in our submission we are talking about whether we need to do things for all boys at various times. In paragraph 6.2, we state:

There is a need to assist students in understanding issues of gender .... This may involve some strategies directed towards girls and others towards boys and many to all students.

I think one of the case studies we have in our submission is about a country high school where they have tried particular initiatives in terms of boys programs and girls programs in splitting up classes for different subject areas. That has worked well in some instances and less so in others. In some instances they put the boys into classes and some boys did not want to do that. That is one of the challenges. Within a co-ed school you can have single-sex classes. Some students do not want to do that. They prefer to learn in a mixed environment. We would agree that there are circumstances when you do target all boys or all girls, but that has to be done in a fairly strategic way which takes into account the learning needs, the cultural background and a range of issues in a particular school.

Mr SAWFORD—Just on construction of gender, do you acknowledge that boys and girls learn differently?

Ms Smith—I would say that some boys and some girls learn differently.

Mr SAWFORD—A disaggregated argument again. Do you give any credence to the biological and environmental-social construct arguments that are put forward? Do you favour one against the other? Do you overlook one? What is your response to biological differences?

Ms Jones—It is a big question, isn't it? There would be several PhDs on that one. My own view as an experienced English and history high school teacher, and as an experienced primary school teacher, is that it is not easy to answer that question. The reality is that students—boys and girls—learn in different ways. We, as experienced teachers, need to be able to respond to those differences. As the parent of two boys, I think there are some differences in the way in which they maximise their learning, their connectedness with learning, their engagement with their school, and the way in which they perceive things to be relevant or not. I think that girls sometimes tend to be more compliant in some of the requests made of them. Certainly, as an English teacher, I would have girls draft and redraft a piece of text. I would say to a boy that he has done it—that is it; finished; give him the next one to do. So I think there are differences if they are gender defined. Equally, I have known female students who have not been asked or have not been very welcoming about the request to redraft documents and things.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think, in a general sense, that the construction of gender fails to acknowledge biological differences and tends to put everybody in together?

Ms Smith—Could I make a comment in regard to that? I will not buy into the biological differences argument. I think Glynis said that we could have a numerous number of PhDs on it. Take, for example, the argument that boys learn in a hands-on way—that boys love making things and doing things, et cetera. Not all boys enjoy doing that and quite a few girls do. I suppose, as an example, you could argue: do some boys like learning in that way because they have had more opportunities to learn to learn like that? If boys had opportunities as small

children to manipulate things, to play with tools, to construct and to deconstruct using materials, do they develop that as a style of learning which suits them because of experience and, therefore, that is their favoured learning style as they become older? Not all boys are like that. I have seen many boys who have no particular agility with fixing things or making things, et cetera, and there are plenty of girls who enjoy that very much. I suppose that it is sometimes our definitions, too.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I think that is taking things to the extreme. When you say that boys have visual spatial skills, there is a big difference between saying that they have, in a general sense, visual spatial skills greater than girls and saying that they actually carry the visual spatial part—in that they can actually construct a letterbox out of wood, or whatever. That is a different skill again. But, in the general sense of visual spatial, there is numerous world research that supports that they do have greater skills in that area and that girls have greater skills in verbalisation. I would have thought, in the construction of gender, that both of those skills—that is, supreme communication skills, at which girls tend to be generally better, and visual spatial skills—are important.

Ms Smith—They are valued. In our report, we say, at one stage: 'a range of the curriculum areas and the skills that all students should have the opportunity to develop.' I do not want to use up our time by getting into arguments about whether it is nature or nurture because we can argue that girls have more opportunities to develop certain skills because of childhood experiences.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not giving you a choice of one or the other. I am saying: do you accept that this has a valid argument? Obviously, you do. You said that we could write six PhDs on it.

Ms Smith—We can certainly discuss it. But my own experience as a teacher would indicate that, again, I probably prefer the nurture argument.

Mr SAWFORD—It is quite obvious.

Ms Smith—I have seen enough boys who do not do those sorts of things and who have no aptitude for them for various reasons. If we can move on, recommendation four in our report looks at some of the developmental and learning needs of students in the middle years of schooling, believing that that is a particular area where student disaffection and alienation often comes into effect. Again, our union has been quite active in that area and we note a number of strategies which we think can be effective for all boys and all girls or for targeted groups of girls and boys. They relate to classroom strategies such as teaming, more integrated curriculum delivery and, again, the stronger community links, which I think ties back to some of the comments that Glynis made earlier.

From my own experience, before working for the union I used to work as a curriculum officer with the Catholic Education Office at Parramatta for eight years and some schools in the Parramatta diocese, including Emmaus Catholic College at Erskine Park, developed for years 7 and 8 a teaming approach which enabled students in year 7 and, then, following through into year 8 to work with a smaller number of teachers, so that the primary model carried through more into secondary. The school evaluated and reviewed that and obviously thought that it had

advantages for some students, in particular for some boys who liked structure and for whom structure suited their learning needs. Again, that was one strategy which I personally have seen working and is one which I think our membership tells us can be useful, particularly in that transition from primary to secondary for some students, including some boys.

Ms Jones—Certainly, from our experience with members, it provides greater blocks of time for the curriculum to be offered. Rather than having 50 minutes, you can actually have two-hour blocks, you can have two or three teachers working or you can actually have it integrated across English, history, geography or whatever. Certainly the feedback from students is that they respond very well to that. They like that integrated nature and the sort of stuff that is going on in Queensland with the productive pedagogy. Kids actually like that kind of approach rather than the dissembling, I think, of curricula across various curriculum areas and so on. There is a lot of work that you would be aware of happening in the middle years, but certainly the disaffection of students, particularly boys in those junior secondary years, seems to be less. The early research is showing that connectedness with the curriculum and what is happening at school seem to be greater where there is this more integrated approach, particularly in years 7 and 8.

CHAIR—Is that it by way of an opening statement?

Ms Smith—We have a couple more recommendations which I will very briefly allude to. Recommendation 5, on page 17, particularly addresses some of the issues going into the post-compulsory years—understanding the breadth of curriculum changes in those post-compulsory years, the opportunities for students to look at their further career development and career paths, the need for professional development for school staff which relates to the post-compulsory years and then into the world of work, and looking at assisting teachers and support staff to develop pedagogical and curriculum approaches, particularly for those students who are alienated and hostile about their school experience. I suppose that can start in the transition from primary to secondary for some students but, as we know, there are students now staying on into years 11 and 12—and I think that is a good thing, obviously—and teachers have to find a range of strategies to engage those students. There are very significant challenges in engaging those students.

Again referring to my days when working with the Catholic Education Office at Parramatta, the Parramatta diocese at that stage had a model of setting up some quite large senior high schools, like John Paul II College at Marayong. I think the challenges which were increasingly felt, and our teachers told us about them, were more and more students staying on, obviously, and that is a good thing—but, even with the proliferation of vocational education courses, you still have to be able to engage those students in a range of teaching/learning strategies and block ed courses per se are not necessarily going to engage all of those students. So it takes some creative and diverse teaching strategies to make sure that those students are there, that their issues of alienation and hostility are addressed and that they find those final years a productive time that gives them a lifelong positive attitude towards their schooling and, hopefully, into further study or training.

Recommendation 6 deals with the students who are disaffected from school, and I suppose we can talk about which boys in particular or whether it is all boys who are disaffected to some extent. But you can appreciate that our union, perhaps because our members tell us so, has particular concerns about groups of students who are not maximising the benefits of their time

at school, and some of these students can create great difficulties in the classroom environment and difficulties for teachers in terms of bullying and violence, even in the school environment.

The final recommendation is recommendation 7, which is on page 20. Again, because we are a teacher union I think we see the role of the teacher as crucial to boys education and girls education—education in general. We were very much involved in giving input to the class act inquiry. We are very much committed to celebrating the work of teachers and the contribution that they make to not only these sorts of issues but also the nation’s social fabric generally. Brendan, I have heard you interviewed recently about the crucial role of teachers, and you said that a lot of this is really about high quality teaching. It is about the professional development of teachers. It is not necessarily about—as some people would argue and you may have heard—the feminisation of the profession and whether that is an issue. We might have discussions about what it would mean if teachers were better paid. But I do not think it is so much about whether the teacher is male or female; it is about the quality of the teaching, the quality of the teaching-learning environment and the classroom strategies for responding to boys and girls and groups of students generally.

Mr BARTLETT—I do not think any of us would argue that it is the quality of teaching that matters. But surely, when a lot of young boys and girls are growing up in an environment without a significant positive male role model, there is some benefit for boys in having male teachers.

Ms Smith—There are benefits for boys in having contact with males in their lives. Ideally, that is probably in the home and family and in the school environment, but it may also be in the community, in church groups and in sporting activities. Boys are exposed to male role models in a diverse range of ways.

Mr BARTLETT—So you would acknowledge that it is valuable in the school environment as well?

Ms Smith—I think both boys and girls need to see successful same sex and other sex role models. Boys and girls need to see men and women being successful, achieving, resolving conflict—

Mr SAWFORD—So, in an ideal world—but we do not live in an ideal world—provided we have quality teaching a gender balance of fifty-fifty would have some merit?

Ms Smith—I think we could say that, yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I think some people this morning said that 10 years ago it was 35 per cent and yesterday someone said it was 19 per cent. It was said this morning that, in terms of teacher training, it is 17 per cent. So the trend is very clear. What is your recommendation to government about what they ought to do about that situation? Should they be concerned? What implications does that have for policy?

CHAIR—In terms of the gender issue you are right. I think most people—learned people at least—who have come to the inquiry have said, ‘Class teacher effect is more important than the gender of the teacher.’ But the parental expectation, and generally the societal intuition, is that it

is not healthy to have the kind of gender imbalance that we currently have. I noticed that in your submission you said that 21 per cent of teachers in independent primary schools are male. We in our lives, as much as here, are seeing boys and girls growing up who do not have a father, whether because of death, divorce, separation, alienation by mothers, abandonment by fathers or whatever the cause, do not go to church, do not play sport—do not do the things that you mention in an environment where they would have contact with a meaningful male role model—and then go to a school where there is not a male person on site. No matter what else is going on, it cannot be an ideal situation. Do you see what I mean?

Ms Smith—We would agree. I think there are issues about the status of the profession. For example, I went to Macquarie University recently to talk to primary school and early childhood teachers. There were about 80 in the lecture theatre; the Teachers Federation and the IEU went along. There was one male. I was told that more males than that were enrolled, but there was one there on the day.

CHAIR—These are undergraduates?

Ms Smith—These are undergraduates for ages 0-8—early childhood and primary. I was taken aback by that. But then, if you ask young men why they are not going into teaching, they will raise issues about the status of the profession, about remuneration levels—they can be a computer technician and earn more money—and about child protection and allegations against them. Because we are the union that covers teachers in early childhood, we have quite a lot to do with that sector. We cover the preschools and the child-care centres that employ teachers. I know we have a very small number of males in that but I know, from the ones I have dealt with, that one left an early childhood centre when somebody spray painted outside the centre: 'X is a paedophile'. Of course, he was not. But when that happened, he felt shamed in the local community, which was a country town. When those sorts of things happen, primary school teachers will say to us that they just do not feel confident anymore in working with young children. That is a partial explanation, but the figures are very graphic.

Mr SAWFORD—If the balance was fifty-fifty, I wonder whether that example would have happened.

CHAIR—The other problem that has been put to us is that the absence of men in primary schools, in particular, sends a subliminal but powerful message to boys that education is something upon which masculinity places little value. Is there any veracity in that?

Ms Jones—With the modelling you were talking about—children growing up without a male in the household—there must be an inevitability for some children of going through their whole primary education and never having a male teacher even for one year of those seven years in primary school. My own children have not had a male teacher; fortunately, they have a male role model at home. I think a reality for many children is that they do not have that male role model at school. What does that say to kids?—that men do not become teachers, that it is not a profession that they might aspire to themselves. There must be a subliminal message there somewhere for many of those children.

Ms Smith—There are also messages in there for girls at school. They see the way in which power operates in society. If there are girls in primary schools seeing that there are no men

around, what does that say about teaching and learning? It also sends off messages about how our society sees education and about what we value in our society. If the men are off doing something else, they are not in primary schools.

CHAIR—There is another thing I would like to ask you, which most submissions have not focused too much on. But it was an issue in yours: homophobia in boys learning. You said:

Homophobia can create a climate of fear and social control in schools and this climate can have negative impacts on the educational outcomes of many boys ....

I would certainly agree with you. How is that dealt with in schools? Firstly, I will say that I am Jesuit educated. I have got my son at St Aloysius, trying to get them to sort him out. How do they cope with it in schools when the churches are describing homosexual people as sinners and there is a school environment where you are quite rightly recognising this as an issue?

Ms Smith—I have dealt with a particular all boys boarding school, for which I am the union organiser. There was quite serious homophobic harassment at that school, which was targeted at some boys and some teachers. We tried to deal with it in that school—there was one parent threatening legal action if the school did not do anything about it; that was a pretty sharp focus—as a pastoral care issue. The union worked quite successfully with the school to say, 'We are committed to safe learning environments.' We looked at it as a safety issue; we wanted a positive, healthy school environment. While the Catholic Church might not support homosexuality, I am sure its rhetoric would also say that it does not support homophobia in the sense of harassment and violence. We have taken this line in regard to some industrial issues as well. Certainly, the major Catholic employers would say that they are totally opposed to any form of homophobic harassment or vilification. That is the line we took at one particular school.

It is interesting that some of the football codes—Rugby League and AFL—have also had anti-homophobia campaigns with posters. They have been quite successful, I think, in targeting boys to say that homophobia is not cool; it is not acceptable. It is a real issue in a lot of schools, in particular all boys schools and boarding schools. It has come through in our submission because, unfortunately, if a homophobic atmosphere in a school is affecting the students, it can also affect some of our members who work there as well.

Ms Jones—We have an article in here which actually looks at being a gay or lesbian student in Catholic schools. It raises this whole issue of the faith dimension vis-à-vis the reality for these young people in Catholic schools in either expressing their preferred sexuality or—

CHAIR—I do not think the Pope has a monopoly on this view. I think most of the Christian churches have a similar view.

Ms Jones—You might be interested in reading this article, which is sort of young people talking about being gay in a Catholic school.

CHAIR—Can we have a copy of that?

Ms Jones—And that is all about a student's alienation in relation to that as well.

CHAIR—Sorry, it has not been a major issue during this inquiry, but I did notice in your submission that it was something you have struck.

Ms Jones—We think very strongly that it is aligned very much with instances of bullying in many schools. If you actually look underneath many bullying instances in schools, what often emerges is discussion about sexuality. Unfortunately, too, some of the research is showing that young male suicide is often related to a boy who might have been accused of being gay, or others are saying he is gay whether he is or not, and just the mere fact that someone is calling him gay is sufficient for that person to question what their life is about. So some of the early research about young male suicide may well be related to the questioning of a young person's sexuality. All of this is pretty tough stuff for us to actually confront, I think.

Ms Smith—Conversely, there is also evidence—and some union members in schools with whom I work have said this—that some boys who bully are bullying to prove their male dominance. Because they have had some implication about their sexuality, they have to prove how tough they are, and so they get stuck into violence.

CHAIR—Often it is like the bikie culture; it is an expression of latent homosexuality, and that sort of aggressive kind of behaviour is sometimes a reaction to it.

Mr SAWFORD—I have two questions. When you organise and structure education around an educational program, you do not split, you actually unite. Gender can split people's views, religion can split people's views, sexuality can split people's views, ethnicity can split people's views.

CHAIR—Politics.

Mr SAWFORD—And politics can split people's views. They are all powerful influences. In Ireland, Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Canada—any country in the world you want to look at—they are there and they are real. In relation to education, one of the great things that you try to teach is tolerance towards difference. Sometimes I wonder whether the best way to teach tolerance is via something that is not implicitly divisive—in other words, an educational program which has a more classical approach. The great writers deal with a virtue or a principle by asking something like: 'What happens when you accentuate the rich-poor divide?' That is part of the classical learning in terms of trying to bring people together. There is that side of it. Then there is the aspect of consistency in the argument that you put up. Glynis, I think you mentioned having integrated approaches and a range of strategies—in other words, inclusive—and I totally agree with you. I will come back to my first question: why is it that you cannot cope with aggregation and you are putting forward arguments for disaggregation? That is not what you are saying in everything else. You are being totally inclusive in what you are saying throughout this whole submission—

Ms Smith—Rod, aren't you putting a false dichotomy there?

Mr SAWFORD—No, I am not. You put the dichotomy there. I am only responding to what you are saying. You said this on the record; you have said it in the submission. Everywhere else it is inclusive, yet in this bit it is exclusive. I do not understand that. Maybe I am a misogynist

but I do not think I am. I do not understand the reason that you have done that. It does not add up with what else you have done.

CHAIR—You are not on Emily's List, mate.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I am not. Can you understand what I am getting at?

Ms Jones—I am not completely clear, actually.

Ms Smith—No, I not totally clear either, unfortunately. I think we are inclusive.

Ms Jones—I suppose what we have tried to do is to reflect on the research, which is telling us that the 'boys/girls' issue seems to be 'some boys/some girls'. Disadvantaged boys—boys in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas and so on—

Mr SAWFORD—There are people who argue the other way. They argue for both. There are people who argue just for the aggregated information. I do not believe in the aggregated point of view. We have had that put to us on this committee. But I do not accept the disaggregated argument, either. I think it is both. It is all or nothing. It cannot be one or the other. I suspect that the research that is aggregated does not support some arguments. I am just asking, and it is a valid question, is that the reason why it is not being used—it does not support the arguments that are being put forward?

Ms Smith—What research are you referring to?

Mr SAWFORD—I am referring to the research that everyone seems to be using when you use the topic construction of gender. It is in there in your submission. I am not making it up. You said it. If you do not want to answer the question, I accept that.

Ms Smith—I am just not sure. We are not disagreeing with you. I do not think that we are totally either disaggregated or aggregated in our approach. I think we have to recognise that there is an incredible diversity in boys across Australia, as there is in girls, and disaggregate to an extent. We do boys an injustice if we lump them all together—

Mr SAWFORD—I agree.

Ms Smith—because we know from a union organiser's position that there is a lot of difference between a boy at Trinity Grammar School and elsewhere. I am not singling them out—I have been the union organiser for Trinity and am currently the union organiser for Kings. We have to look at boys who are at schools such as those, whom the rest of society would probably see as reasonably privileged, and boys in rural and remote Australia—Aboriginal communities and country towns. There are significant differences in being a boy in different social or socioeconomic contexts. There may also be issues and times, and we acknowledge this, when you do strategies and programs for all boys together in a school. I think we can have the best of both worlds but I think we have to be sophisticated enough to say that there are times when we talk about all boys and all girls and there are times when we talk about significant groups of boys and girls who may have real differences.

Mr SAWFORD—But that is not in that submission. I have pushed the point far enough.

Mr BARTLETT—Paragraph 5.2 in your submission is not something that I fundamentally disagree with but it seems a bit strange to have such a focus in a report on boys education. It says:

> ... changes in the attitudes of boys and men were fundamental to addressing the educational disadvantage experienced by girls, indicating that without changes in boys' education much of what needs to happen for girls cannot be fully realised.

I have got two questions in relation to that. One is: have those changes in boys' and men's attitudes and approaches, necessary to fulfil girls educational requirements, impacted in any way on boys?

Mr SAWFORD—Kerry, can you point out what you are talking about.

Mr BARTLETT—It is page 5, paragraph 5.2—in the main submission where it talks about the *Listening to girls* report. It states that the changes in boys' attitudes and behaviour and men's attitudes and behaviour were necessary to bring about a desired educational outcome for girls. Presumably, the evidence shows that the outcomes for girls are improving fairly substantially. Have those changes had any impact on boys? My second question is: would you accept a corollary that some might put that, equally, changes in attitudes of men and women are necessary to address the educational disadvantage currently experienced by boys?

Ms Smith—If I could speak to the first one initially, I think that report, which goes back to 1992, was looking at some issues, including playground issues in schools or attitudinal issues, where girls were experiencing harassment or particular difficulties in the school environment. Some of the arguments that we used to have discussions about were: did boys dominate the classroom? Girls were not able to have their say. Girls were not able to participate as fully. I think that report was looking at some of those sorts of issues, also sexual harassment in the playground in coeducational schools. I am optimistic enough to believe that there have been some changes. I think schools generally and boys and girls in schools are probably more sensitive to issues of harassment and violence and more peaceful interaction strategies than they were when that report was written.

Mr BARTLETT—Would you accept that there might be attitudes in schools that now work against boys success; say, a feeling of restraint that they cannot express themselves, a fear of being labelled sexist, a fear of aggressive feminism in some schools? Do you think any of those sorts of attitudes might work against boys success?

Ms Jones—I am not sure about those, but I have a personal view that some of our assessment actually mitigates against the success of boys; the way in which children are now assessed, particularly in secondary schools. In the past, most kids could get through the year and then they would perform for the exam at the end of the year. That would be the same with boys and girls, mind you. I think that boys find it much more challenging to be consistently on task with their study, whether it be homework—

Mr BARTLETT—With the ongoing assessment process.

Ms Jones—If they are involved in sport and they have got a major assignment, I actually think that many of them are less well able to cope with that consistent requirement of them that they perform through the whole year or the whole two-year period. Again, there are the sorts of the tasks which they are being asked to do: many are much lengthier written tasks these days. There are far fewer multiple choice type things. My feeling is that many boys find that very onerous. They would much rather sit down and say, 'Look, just ask me the questions and tell me what you think,' rather than have to laboriously write everything out.

Mr BARTLETT—With that ongoing assessment process where there are a number of assessment tasks over the year or two years, there seems to be a desire on the part of teachers to be more creative in the sorts of assessment tasks they set. Some of those actually require responses that perhaps tax the skills that boys have and are not as simple as attempting an exam at the end of the semester or the end of the year.

Ms Jones—I think the changes that we have had have, on the one hand, been very advantageous for the work of teachers working with students and so on. But I do think that boys find tough that ongoing requirement of them over an extended period of time with extended writing tasks often.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you think that is possibly one factor in explaining the growing divergence between tertiary entrance results for boys and girls?

Ms Jones—It may well be, but that would simply be hypothesis. I have got nothing upon which I can actually found a view on that.

Mr BARTLETT—Can you suggest any other factors?

Ms Jones—Not at the moment, no.

Mr BARTLETT—Ms Smith, you are the Convenor of the Women's Committee of the Independent Education Union of Australia. What role is that exactly?

Ms Smith—The federal union has a number of standing committees, and the women's committee is one of those. I am sure you are asking the question: what has that got to do with boys education?

Mr BARTLETT—My question was going to be: is there a men's committee?

Ms Smith—There is not a men's committee. I suppose if we could have these discussions in a perfect world we would not need women's committees. Does the Liberal Party have a women's committee or did it at some stage?

Mr BARTLETT—Yes.

Ms Smith—Perhaps because there is still a need to address some issues which, in a perfect world, would already have been addressed. So many organisations, including some unions and, indeed, some political parties, still have a women's committee as such. We look forward to the

day when there is genuine gender justice and perhaps we will not need women's committees. But I think the women's committee of our federal union has drawn upon some of these sorts of issues. It has had a longstanding role. We will table some of our documents in regard to gender equity and gender justice issues.

CHAIR—Why do you need a women's committee? What is the problem?

Ms Smith—We respond quite a bit to government inquiries and make submissions. There are issues affecting women such as pregnancy and work, sexual harassment, workplace bullying and health and safety. There is an enormous range and diversity of issues. Our membership is 71 per cent female in terms of our federal union's membership. I am sure that the Teachers Federation or the IEUA would have said that. Because of the female dominance, so to speak, of the teaching profession, there is a range of issues. There are still issues to do with access to career paths, to promotions and to positions. We are very busy.

Mr BARTLETT—In the last five years what percentage of promotions would have gone to women as compared to men? Do you have any ballpark figure?

Ms Smith—I do not know if we would have exact statistics. We could certainly give you that information, if required.

Ms Jones—We could do that as a subsidiary paper. We know from experience that there is a reluctance from women to go for the top jobs. We know that the Catholic sector would like more women to apply for principalships, but many women seem to be willing to have their career at the coordinator or deputy level and not go for the principalship, even if they are very able. The analysis of some data, which actually looks at who the heads are in Catholic systemic schools, would suggest that a greater proportion of males tend to be in those positions. It is quite interesting that many women find the structure of the role of principal as something which does not sit comfortably with other commitments—we do not know.

Ms Smith—I wrote an article recently for independent education which drew upon data from the Catholic systems in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. All three of those Catholic systems had expressed concerns about women accessing leadership positions, particularly in secondary schools. Quality women were certainly there as teaches and coordinators but they were not applying for principal positions. Being a principal is a bit like being a politician. To run a large school potentially involves 24 hours a day seven days a week in terms of the management and the pastoral care of students. Even when the burglar alarm goes off the middle of the night, someone has to answer it. So there are those sorts of issues and concerns. Our union in conjunction with some employers is certainly looking at those sorts of issues with respect to the attractiveness to women of leadership positions within the profession—that is, balancing work and family.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for giving us such a detailed submission. I appreciate it very much. If you have any supplementary suggestions or comments to make please send them on. We would appreciate that very much.

[3.33 p.m.]

BONNOR, Mr Chris, Deputy President, New South Wales Secondary Principals Council

CHAIR—Welcome. If there is anything you would like to say in camera at any stage, we would be happy to do that. You can give us an overview and we will then tear it apart!

Mr Bonnor—Thank you to the committee. I am currently principal at Asquith Boys High School in Sydney. I would like to spend about 10 minutes giving an overview of the thrust of our submission, and then obviously there will be issues and questions you want to raise. Our submission should be seen in conjunction with the submission of ASPA, the Australian Secondary Principals Association, of which I was a joint author. That submission has sharper recommendations. There are recommendations implicit in a lot of what we say here, but our submission wanted to focus on some big picture issues as well as detailed things. We identified two concerns to start with, and you would be familiar with a lot of those. The first is the disproportionate representation of boys in school discipline issues and social breakdown situations.

The second issue is, of course, the academic performance of boys and the newsworthiness of the underperformance of boys. We raise that as an issue, but we have found the debate can easily be trivialised into boys versus girls stuff. We find a lot of this debate very unhelpful and polarising. In fact, our submission became part of the polarising in relation to the issue of male and female teachers, because it hit the media about six weeks ago. We regret that because I do not think it helps the public understanding of a lot of the issues. In that sense, the interpretation of our submission was part of the problem.

We do believe that there are important changes that have tended to favour girls in the last couple of decades. We believe it is not in a conspiratorial sense, but it is just social and economic change that happens to have taken place. We raised this from the outset in our submission when we were concerned initially that the terms of reference may be too narrow, but after speaking with James, we are certainly assured that the economic and structural things that we raise in our submission are certainly within the gamut of the committee.

Mr SAWFORD—In actual fact, the original submission that I put forward had that in there and the minister did not want to respond to that and preferred a specific inquiry into the education of boys. I wrote the original brief, and the original brief was the resourcing of primary and junior secondary schools, public and private, in this country. That was not accepted by the minister, which is his right, and he obviously had some pressure on him about a topic which has certainly encouraged a wide disparity of views and which obviously is required. That is the reason that happened. The whole committee agreed on that argument initially. Whatever happens, as James has said, we can deal with this as the committee feels, but it was there originally.

Mr Bonnor—That is interesting. We are thinking about big picture issues and economic and structural change, in the sense that the changes since the seventies have created a mismatch between school leavers and the workplace. That has given rise to lots of debates in the

community including, we believe, the literacy debate, where you have lower skilled boys, in particular, competing for jobs further up the employment ladder and thus creating the overwhelming anecdotal evidence in the community that schools are no longer equipping young people to enter the world of work. In a sense, like many things, schools did not necessarily create the problem but it is ours to help solve. It is certainly our responsibility. Our submission talks about the restructured economy and the way in which it demands capabilities which are arguably better identified with culturally determined abilities of girls rather than those of boys.

We do refer to the Meyer competencies and the Meyer report in the early nineties. We know that is dated. Arguably five out of the eight competencies are more suited in a culturally determined manner to girls. These qualities are important not only for initial employment but for subsequent advancement. They are qualities such as planning and organising activities, working with others, cultural understandings and so on. I was at a conference a year or so ago where the CEO of Nokia constantly said that employers are looking for skills on the soft side of the skills palette. That message is reinforced to us in schools quite a bit.

I would argue that schools have actually moved that way to help equip young people for the requirements of the new economy. We believe—and I know this was canvassed by the last witness—that external exams and school curriculum have shifted to emphasise these requirements. We are proud of the way we equip young people for the real world. There is an accusation that in the process schools have become feminine institutions and are no longer boy friendly. We say that this is misleading, in the sense that it creates a sense of abandonment of boys, and I do not think any school is about that. But certainly there have been changes in the culture of schools as they have tried to equip kids for a changing economy.

We argue that girls education programs have encouraged girls to develop, in effect, cross the gender divide—in their learning, their choice of subjects and take-up of opportunities. It is our assumption that these programs have been successful. Not all people agree with that, but certainly anecdotally principals do believe that girls education strategies have been very successful. The gist of our submission is that the answer for boys is that they should be encouraged to also broaden their horizons and take up a wider variety of opportunities and develop the wider range of skills that seem to be necessary. We talk about the social culture and gender issues, and these have been presented to you by other people—the socialisation of boys in the community and in families and the distortion of this by the issue of male role models. You have seen all of that.

Role modelling is interesting. Role modelling is challenged by some recent research, but we believe if gender is socially constructed then role modelling is critical to that construction of gender and has a very important place. So an acceptance of the existence of role modelling underpins what we are saying. We talk about where male role modelling exists it is often quite dated and there is a time lag between where schools are in many ways and where some families are. I am principal of a boys' school, and a father would come in with a comment, 'Why don't you give him the stick? It didn't hurt me when I was at school,' and 'Let them sort it out. If he hits him, he's going to hit back,' and so on. This is an issue faced by schools.

We said in our submission that we believe schools, teachers and principals do contribute to the way in which boys develop their understanding of masculinity. We hope we do it in constructive ways, but we do not always. Our school organisation, our curriculum, our

organisation of sport often can favour some young people more than others. I would argue that there has been terrific improvements in the last decade or so. When we talk about strategies for boys, we are coming to it from the point of view of a gender inclusive framework. We believe that a gender inclusive framework is essential. Any other framework is not inclusive and not equitable. It is almost like an umbrella framework within which these strategies should be developed.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you see the contradiction in what you have just said? The word 'inclusive' means everything—gender, race. It means everything.

Mr Bonnor—I understand that.

Mr SAWFORD—You used the term 'gender inclusive'. Do you understand the inconsistency in how you have used the language?

Mr Bonnor—I understand what you are saying, but of course within the framework we also accept that strategies for boys and girls can be quite separate. There can be strategies for boys and girls together and separate strategies for boys and girls.

Mr SAWFORD—No. You said it in relation to a framework, a non-judgmental thing. One of the things that is coming across to me in this whole debate is the language that is used by the various proponents. On one side of the debate we have people who believe in a feminist conspiracy. On the other side of the debate we have got political correctness gone mad. Then we have got a whole range of views in between that basically seem to make a lot of sense but differ. I would have thought a framework either is or is not inclusive. Is it racially inclusive? Is it sexually inclusive? Is it ethnically inclusive? Why did you use the word 'gender'? Language is very important. Language sends messages, and sometimes we send unintentional messages by the language we use.

Mr Bonnor—I suppose it could be argued that you cannot have gender programs divorced from programs in cultural understanding and race and all that sort of thing.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you understand what I am saying? When you are talking about a framework why would you not just say 'an inclusive framework'? Why did you use the term 'gender'?

Mr Bonnor—I am sorry—only in the need to not exclude programs for girls—

Mr SAWFORD—'Inclusive' means not to exclude.

Mr Bonnor—Yes, but not to exclude programs for girls or joint programs or programs for boys.

Mr SAWFORD—No, that is putting a value judgment to it. Do you understand what I am saying?

Mr Bonnor—I am having trouble, Rod, I must say.

Mr SAWFORD—If you are talking about an inclusive framework you do not have to put a qualification on it—that is what it is. Is it inclusive?—yes. How do you know it is inclusive? Because it includes all gender, all races, all this, all that—that is inclusive. That is what I am saying.

Mr Bonnor—Yes, point taken, I know what you mean. Within this we believe that both boys and girls need to be resourced to take up opportunities and develop competencies which they may find less intuitive and which may stand sometimes at odds with the way their gender has been constructed. We have identified four things that schools should be encouraged and resourced to do within this. We believe they should analyse and reflect on the ways in which they contribute to gender understandings held by both boys and girls, in both positive and negative ways, and to develop strategies to convey appropriate messages to young people about gender. So that is the reflection part that schools should do.

The second thing schools should be doing more of is equipping boys and girls to discriminate amongst the messages they receive about gender, in particular media studies, and develop a capacity to pick and sort amongst the messages they receive from peers, media and teachers, for that matter. Then learn at school about gender and everything else that goes with it—in terms of even content in classrooms. We believe that then schools should allow and encourage boys to diversify the ways in which they develop, view and express their own masculinity and femininity. This relates to what they do at school, the subjects they study, the games they play and so on and the opportunities they have.

The fourth thing we say schools should do is create environments in which it is subsequently safe for boys and girls to be themselves—to be what they want to be. That is a very important role of schools. We go on to say that the inclusive framework, even leaving aside gender, should not prohibit specific strategies for boys or specific strategies for girls. We believe it does not imply equal time or equal resources at all times. I think this has been a bit of a mental barrier for many people working in gender equity programs in the past. They have believed that the inclusive requirement for such programs means equal at all times. We believe that there should be an overall balance over time but not necessarily in the short term.

Getting towards the end of our submission, we flag some cautions about strategies for boys. There are many examples you have probably been given. We feel that views of gender and masculinity and boys education are reflected in particular strategies. A strategy in boys education has to be unpacked a bit to see what aspect of masculinity or what aspect of boys education people are talking about and we need to validate claims of proponents of strategies. There is a need for the contextual information. The strategies that work in some schools cannot be picked up and transplanted to other places. I suppose the implication of what we are saying is that the Commonwealth perhaps should make available properly researched strategies in schools, or funding of research to find out what does work and the context in which it does.

There has been a lot of talk about male modes of learning, which will make the schools ‘boy friendly’ again—a lot in the last session. We believe that teachers need to understand the many ways in which boys and girls learn. Teaching needs to cater for the diversity that exists in every single classroom, including in same sex settings. We acknowledge that there are ways in which boys—I am generalising here—tend to prefer learning, but concentrating on these learning styles alone has a potential to disenfranchise many boys who may not fit the stereotypes. It may

also have the potential to reinforce stereotypes which are just not helpful for boys in social settings or when seeking employment. In other words, 'boy friendly' teaching strategies are essential to engage boys but should not remain as an end in themselves. If we are not engaging boys, picking them up, helping them widen their horizons and cross the divide and find new opportunities, then we are not succeeding with them. We talk about the types of strategies, and I will not go through those. That is background information.

Finally, we talk about systemic changes. This is where we excited some interest, which is a shame because it is not the core of our submission. Yes, we did talk about the employment of men in the teaching profession and the issue of men in primary schools. We are a secondary organisation, not primary, and we are aware that it is perhaps not our brief. But there are fewer men in primary schools to use as suitable role models. We did say that the feminisation of the teaching profession sends a clear and unbalanced gender message to boys. But this is in the context of what teaching is and what a caring profession is and who does these things, men or women, and who does the learning and who should do all this. I would argue that there is an equal gender message in the fact that primary school executives are male dominated. So I imagine that boys in primary schools would see that power is something that men have and learning and engagement is something that women do. I am generalising but—

Mr SAWFORD—They have been pretty bloody unsuccessful then, haven't they, in a way?

Mr Bonnor—Yes, one could argue that. There are two remaining systemic issues: we believe that an understanding of gender equity principles needs to become more prominent in teacher training, recruitment and promotion of teachers. Gender equity issues need to accompany more of the other things we do like engaging boys with literacy. If we talk about literacy and ignore gender issues, then we are not going to go very far. It is the same for student welfare, drug education and so on. If we do not talk about boys construction of themselves as a male and what may go wrong with that, then we are not addressing the causes of a substantial amount of drug abuse and so on. That is where we are at. We welcome the potential for the Commonwealth to become involved because there is a huge opportunity cost if action is not taken to address the sorts of issues that we raise. They are the broad issues. I wanted to leave as much time as possible for questions.

Mr BARTLETT—Focusing for a moment on the HSC outcomes in New South Wales—and obviously you are aware of the growing divergence that is there—have you noticed in the schools that you represent whether there is any change over time in the relative results of HSC students in boys' schools vis-a-vis co-ed schools?

Mr Bonnor—I do not know about change, but research does suggest that boys in boys' schools have a marginal advantage and girls in girls' schools have a marginal advantage over boys and girls in co-ed schools, but I say it is very marginal.

Mr BARTLETT—It is only marginal?

Mr Bonnor—Very marginal. I am principal of a boys' school, but there is no way that I would argue that that structure alone is an answer. Boys' schools can accrue lots of advantages in work gender equity but they can also accrue disadvantages.

Mr BARTLETT—What do you see as the answer to that? What things are the answer or part of the answer?

Mr Bonnor—Good teaching in good classrooms by committed teachers who know how to engage boys and girls.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the gender balance in your school?

Mr BARTLETT—Even given good teaching, we are still seeing a growing divergence between the results of girls and boys. Do you think that good quality teaching, without addressing any specifics, will narrow that gap again?

Mr Bonnor—We cannot ignore the issue of changing curriculum and changing assessment of students—

Mr BARTLETT—You noted the comments of the earlier witness about changing assessment procedure?

Mr Bonnor—Yes, and there is an interesting quote from Ken Rowe, who is the Principal Research Fellow with ACER.

Mr BARTLETT—Yes, we had a meeting with Ken.

Mr Bonnor—Good. But we cannot ignore that as an issue. The difference between classrooms in schools is far more substantial than the difference between schools and types of schools, and it reinforces the message that teacher training and development and subsequent retraining and development is absolutely critical.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you think there is a need for the professional development programs to be focusing on those issues of differences between boys and girls in terms of types of learning and also indeed on the application of assessment procedures?

Mr Bonnor—As long as we do it in the context that young people learn in very diverse ways. If my school, for instance, concentrates on boys allegedly being right brain learners who all like structure, hierarchy and competition, the real danger is that we disenfranchise a significant number of boys that do not fit the mould and do not have to fit the mould. So catering for diversity is always a safe way to go.

Mr BARTLETT—Yet in trying to do that we have still seen that growing divergence in the results, haven't we?

Mr Bonnor—We have but I would argue that there is a lot more work to do in the training and development of teachers to understand and cater for diversity of learning styles in young people.

CHAIR—Just in your school specifically, Chris, because you obviously know that better than anything, and also across the secondary schools generally, what sort of effort is put into the

professional development of teachers? Do we have people teaching today who are not involved in some sort of professional development?

Mr Bonnor—Yes. There are a significant number of teachers in all schools who are not actively involved in training and development. One of the issues in our sector is that training and development is heavily focused on systemic priorities, and the resources made available at the school level are very light in terms of school based training and development.

CHAIR—We were told that it was about $2,000 a school.

Mr Bonnor—It is $25 a teacher. It is difficult to buy a good book for $25. However, having said that, I need to say that—

CHAIR—In spite of that, a lot of teachers do it.

Mr Bonnor—Yes, and systemically substantial resources are provided for training and development.

CHAIR—But if it is the most important thing—and Ken Rowe and others have said that—it just seems that perhaps our priorities are not quite where they ought to be.

Mr Bonnor—I would agree. Far more resources are needed for training and development at the school level in learning.

CHAIR—Coming to the other end of it, in terms of teachers coming into the profession, are you concerned about the quality of the people who are coming out of their undergraduate training for teaching?

Mr Bonnor—Personally, I am at a bit of a disadvantage because, having a school in the Hornsby district, I do not get too many beginning teachers. Mind you, the ones that I have had in the last two or three years have been outstanding.

CHAIR—Is that because they get sent out to other areas?

Mr Bonnor—Yes, it is. I have actually picked up a couple of graduates in the targeted graduate program in New South Wales and they are absolutely outstanding. My own experience does not represent a cross-section. Anecdotally, our principals are saying that they are concerned.

CHAIR—In your system, the government system, you have to take whoever is sent you. You cannot pick and choose the teachers that you will have at your school.

Mr Bonnor—Overwhelmingly yes. We are a statewide system and, unless it is an executive position for which we can advertise and fill, most classroom teachers are appointed or transferred.

CHAIR—If I were running a school, I would wonder how you could run a quality outfit if you had to take whoever is sent you. For example, given the people who work in my office now, there is no way I would be able to run a good office if I were told, 'You have to have these other three people work for you.' In a former life, when I was employing a lot of people in a big organisation, that would have been untenable. In fact, when Gordon Donaldson, who is the headmaster of Scotch College in Melbourne, came to us representing the Association of Heads of Independent Schools, he said he could not begin to imagine what it was like to set up a quality teaching environment if you could not employ the teachers yourself. How do you deal with that?

Mr Bonnor—With great difficulty.

CHAIR—Obviously, you get good people coming to you but presumably you would have others who in an ideal world you would prefer not to have teaching under your supervision.

Mr Bonnor—It is a very big issue. We are, of course, increasingly accountable for student learning outcomes while at the same time we have very little control over inputs in terms of resources—not only money but also teachers. The Secondary Principals Council is arguing in New South Wales for greater flexibility for principals to have a greater say in the employment of teachers. At the same time we are a statewide system which has a service guarantee in effect to young people all over the state, a guarantee of access to good teachers. We must accept that. But I would argue that we need to reach a point where there is more of a balance between our capacity to employ at the local level and the capacity of the system to sustain an equitable statewide operation.

Mr SAWFORD— You have mentioned balance in this debate in terms of overreaction to statements. Let me read something to you and just change it around. 'Teaching styles which focus on male modes of learning may benefit some boys but equally have the potential to disenfranchise those boys who learn in different ways—reinforce stereotypes.' I agree with that. But you could also say that teaching styles which focus on female modes of learning may benefit some boys or some girls but equally have the potential to disenfranchise those boys or those girls who learn in different ways. Why has one part of the argument been stated there but not the other?

Mr Bonnor—That paragraph is all about strategies and focusing on male modes of learning.

Mr SAWFORD—Strategies for boys.

Mr Bonnor—You would not get an argument out of me on that.

Mr SAWFORD—Some significant changes have occurred in the new economy. You use the example of Nokia—'proud of people'. We have Nike 'just do it' and all the rest of it. Some people will argue that they are both evil companies.

CHAIR—You have not got a sponsorship deal with them, have you?

Mr SAWFORD—No, I have not—and I am not going to get one after this. The high value part of the employment of companies like Nokia or Nike is the very small groups of people

making huge amounts of money at the expense of millions of people in the Third World and underdeveloped countries doing the work and creating the wealth. That is a very different view of distribution of wealth than may have existed before the new economy.

I read a couple of weeks ago that higher wages in the United States—these figures are not available for Australia but they would be exactly the same—in the last nine years have fallen from 28 per cent to 21 per cent; medium wages have fallen from 37 per cent to 16 per cent; and low wages have grown from 35 per cent to 63 per cent. That is part of the new economy. In 1991, casualisation of employment in this country—you can get figures from the ABS; this is a conservative figure—was 13 per cent of the total work force. It is now 26.4 per cent. Effectively it has doubled. They are aspects of the new economy that place a lot of insecurity not only on boys but on girls too.

I remember that when the electricity in Auckland disappeared a poor young woman had to get on the television every night and explain what was going on. Someone made the point that it was the fellows who actually had to fix up the power lines. You need both in all of this, don’t you? Sometimes it is easier to gloss over one part of what is necessary to run a society successfully at the exclusion of others, and that is a perfect example.

CHAIR—It should be recorded that the deputy chair held up a Nokia mobile phone to the witness!

Mr SAWFORD—That is right. I am talking against myself. You talked about literacy. I will finish on this and let you respond. Boys do not normally like fiction, but if you tell them stories about Boadicea, Queen Victoria or Queen Elizabeth, they love them. They love stories about Hannibal and Alexander the Great if those stories are structured in such a way as they perhaps were in more classical education days of selling values and virtues and teaching tolerance and a whole range of things. Girls do not necessarily like that; they like fiction. There is nothing wrong with that, but why can’t we have both? If I wanted to teach boys literacy, I would not be giving them the *Getting of Wisdom,* but if I was teaching girls literacy, maybe I would. It makes perfect sense to do that. I had a look at some of the texts that are in language curricula and I shudder.

Mr Bonnor—In the area of literacy, it is a dilemma for English teachers: do you always use texts that appeal to boys’ innate interests—fiction or non-fiction—such as warfare and violence and so on? If you use those all the time, you are not shifting boys into texts that search for understanding and empathy and the sorts of things that they will need when they leave school. At the same time, if you use fairly convoluted fiction that involves their operating at a fairly higher plain all the time, you just switch them off. In talking to teachers around New South Wales, we encourage them to use both. You must engage boys by using teaching resources and strategies that will appeal to them and strike a chord with them, but then you should take them gently by the hand and lead them down in other directions that will help them when they leave the school.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that really what is happening?

Mr Bonnor—I think it is in my school. I think we have a good mixture of resources in the school. English teachers, for instance, would build a theme. One of their themes in senior

English is relationships. That is one out of three, but it is very important. In that theme, they would use a variety of literature, poetry and novels and so on, but they may be more conscious of that because it is a boys' school. I would argue that good teachers should be doing that all the time.

On the other issue on the new economy, you will not get an argument in the sense that the repetitive process production line work is exported overseas. Our kids, especially our lower school boys and girls, are left with nowhere to go. When they do compete for jobs further up the ladder, they are getting messages from employers, 'No, you're not equipped for this sort of thing. We want people who can work with others and who can plan and organise, communicate ideas, analyse, collect and organise information.' My feeling is that recently there has been a bit of a resurgence of apprenticeships, and that has helped me in my part of Hornsby because a lot of our boys are now leaving and getting back into apprenticeships. That is just great. I hope it will be a continuing thing for this section of the work force; otherwise we are doing them a great disservice.

Mr BARTLETT—That is certainly something that we have been pushing over the last four or five years.

Mr Bonnor—To the point where my year 10 to year 11 retention rate at school has actually started to drop again.

Mr BARTLETT—In fact, that is a good sign because it means that there are jobs out there for them at the end of year 10.

Mr Bonnor—Yes, and they are jobs that involve further training.

Mr BARTLETT—With real career prospects.

Mr Bonnor—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming along. It was very helpful. As you said, it is entirely consistent with what your federal body said to us. Thank you for that. It was very useful. If you have any further comments to make as we go through this, please let us know.

Mr Bonnor—Thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

CHAIR—Thank you; it is very important.

[4.11 p.m.]

CREWS, Reverend William David (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comment on the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Rev. Crews—I am really speaking for myself here, because I have been involved with lots of different groups and I do not know if any of them would want to own what I am saying. It is just my experiences in all of those groups.

CHAIR—Can you give us a potted summary of what your experience is and what you do at the moment?

Rev. Crews—In 1970 or 1971, I happened to walk into the Wayside Chapel in Sydney and it changed my life. The Wayside Chapel was in the centre of Kings Cross where lots of kids in trouble and runaways and other people went, and I stayed there for many years. I ran the social work programs at the Wayside Chapel. A lot of the kids that I saw were from institutions and were state wards, and I will talk about that in a minute. But while I was there, I set up the first Lone Fathers Association in New South Wales because in 1972 we were coming across a lot of fathers who were bringing up their children and they were quite lost. In many ways, they were on the run, because they were always afraid that Welfare would take their kids from them, because it was not the done thing for men to bring up children then. So we set up the Lone Fathers Association.

A lot of the kids that I saw then were runaways and many of them were failed adoptions, but they had become runaways, or they had run away from institutions as state wards. It is ironic that just two weeks ago I ran a public meeting for kids who had been state wards and all of that; and the lack of love in those homes was just appalling. All of these self-righteous church people who were running homes for kids and abusing them—it is a story that has got to come out one day. But the ironic thing in all of that was that you could say a lot of these kids grew up in an environment without any love, but the one thing that all of them did as they got up to talk was to talk about how love had redeemed them. They would say, ‘I wouldn’t be able to speak here today, except for Mary over there,’—or Jim over there—‘and I don’t know why, but they looked at me and they loved me and they have cared for me, and it has given me strength.’

I became involved with homeless kids and moved to Ashfield in 1986. I set up the Exodus Foundation and, at that time, we were looking after a lot of homeless and runaway kids. One of the things that I found was that you could give these kids a bed for the night, look after them and get them all scrubbed up, but they would not last a day when they went back to school because there would be problems at school or they would swear at the teacher and would be turfed out. We set up a special school, initially to get homeless and abandoned kids back to school. We aimed it at 12- and 13-year-olds because that was the average age of the homeless kids that we were getting. We could get 60 to 80 different kids a night with no trouble. We aimed at setting up a special school so that these kids could go back to school and catch up on all the schooling they had missed. When I looked around, I ended up employing Macquarie

University to do the teaching side. We thought that probably the best thing to do in the beginning was to aim at kids who were 12 or 13 years old—year 6 and year 7—who were failing, particularly in their reading. We set up this special school for them to catch up.

Years later, we take 12- and 13-year-old kids—they must be way behind with their reading, they must be in real trouble at school, in real trouble with their families, and all of that. It just takes us six months to work with them. They come to us from nine till one, and it takes six months for them to catch up and go back to school. Four years later, 90 per cent of them are still at school, whereas otherwise they would not have been at school a year later. It has taught me that you can never write any kids off. Thirty years ago, we were getting kids from these institutions and were being told that they were slow learners or mental defectives. It is just outrageous. That is the background that I have come from.

CHAIR—As you know, I have been out there and I have seen them. How do you identify the kids? How do the kids come to your attention? Does the school contact you? Do you have a network of people who identify these kids? Do their parents contact you, if their parents are about?

Rev. Crews—In general, now the schools contact us. We take kids who have failed every intervention program that schools can throw at them.

CHAIR—What proportion of these kids are boys?

Rev. Crews—We try to keep it a bit balanced. If we get too many boys, it is too difficult to manage.

CHAIR—The point is: of the kids who have fallen through everything else, are most of those kids boys?

Rev. Crews—Yes.

CHAIR—I know that you are trying to treat everybody fairly—it does not matter what the gender—but the fact is that most of them are boys.

Rev. Crews—We could fill it with boys over and over.

Mr SAWFORD—In those six months, what strategies are used?

Rev. Crews—It is very positive teaching. The strategies are designed by Macquarie University. The way we work it is that we employ Macquarie trained teachers to do the teaching and we have a team of family therapists. We do all the caring and they do the teaching.

Mr SAWFORD—I understand. What are the fundamental attributes of the teaching?

Rev. Crews—It is called pause, prompt and praise—you praise them for everything. With a lot of these kids, you ignore the bad behaviour and concentrate on the good.

Mr SAWFORD—What I am asking is: is the teaching explicit or implicit?

Rev. Crews—It is very explicit. It is very directed. It is almost a rigid program of instruction in a warm, fuzzy environment. In lots of ways, the philosophy that I have is very Freudian; Macquarie University is very behaviourist. We clash every now and then. I think that it is out of that clash that things work so well.

CHAIR—You take the kids, you get them for six months and you have them basically in a concentrated program. You have them come to your facility for half a day a week?

Rev. Crews—From nine until one. They go back in the afternoon.

CHAIR—Is that every day?

Rev. Crews—Every day, five days a week, for two terms.

CHAIR—At the end of the six months, you have a graduation. The difference in the kids is extraordinary. Firstly, could you give us some examples of the kind of progress that is made? Secondly, once they go back to the school environment at the end of six months with your program, what happens to them?

Rev. Crews—Four years later 90 per cent of them are still at school or equivalent. The actual teaching methods you would be better to get from Macquarie. I can comment more on the observations. The things that have stuck in my mind are things like Macquarie measures them for everything. One of the things they get measured for is depression. On the first intake of kids we took years ago, on a Zeligman scale, I think it was, where 24 is profoundly and suicidally depressed, the average of the kids we got was 23. Just teaching them to read dropped the average from 23 to 15, with a lot of them not being depressed at all. It became obvious to me observing that failure breeds on failure and things start to go wrong that way.

CHAIR—Just how bad or how poor are their literacy skills when they come to you? Can you give us some examples?

Rev. Crews—We had one child going ‘Oh, it is the black stuff you read.’

Mr BARTLETT—That is fairly significant.

Rev. Crews—It is amazing. The way the program works is that they are measured as to where they are at, and they are given a task which is slightly above where they are at, but they can achieve it. Then they get hooked on achieving. To me it is just remarkable. We have seen the most remarkable changes, just as kids begin to feel that they can actually cope.

CHAIR—What explanation is given by the education system or the schools from which these kids have come? We are talking about kids who are 11 or 12 years of age. What explanation is given that a kid can get to secondary school without, for example, even knowing that it is the black stuff you read?

Rev. Crews—My feeling is that in general—this is my interpretation of everything—schools basically are set up on the premise that most kids go home to a standard environment. What they do not allow for is the confusion a lot of kids go home to. The system is not set up for kids who are in trouble at home. It is just not set up for that. So schools are trying to cope with social problems. It seems to me that it becomes a conflict between many teachers as to whether they become a teacher or a social worker. Teaching wins, because there are a lot of kids who can learn. So those kids who need more support than the teacher can give to the average child fall by the wayside and somehow get left. Then these kids learn strategies to stay down.

CHAIR—What percentage of those kids who come into your program, who are basically referred to you by the schools that they are in, have some sort of parental involvement?

Rev. Crews—One of the things I have discovered is that the longer you hold on to a child, the more the significant carer in their life becomes obvious and the more often they come for help, too. So often you find yourself not only parenting the child but the parent as well. Often they have all the good intentions in the world but they have not got the skills and they have not been given the time.

CHAIR—You have some Commonwealth money for the program you run. How is it funded?

Rev. Crews—It is funded by private donations.

CHAIR—So it is not all Commonwealth money?

Rev. Crews—No.

CHAIR—You have got private donations and so on.

Rev. Crews—We have had lots of fights with departments, basically because they do not like the idea of kids being taken out of the schools, ‘fixed up’ and brought back in. They would like it all to happen within the school system.

CHAIR—But it is not happening.

Rev. Crews—We have found that with some kids it just cannot. You really need to take them out into a new environment where there is a different attitude shown toward them, because often what the environment decides a kid is, is what that kid becomes. If they go into a different environment that is positive, they will respond.

One of the most profoundly depressing moments in my life was associated with one of the first intakes of children we had, when we invited all the principals of the schools that these kids had come from and were presenting to them the results of the children halfway through—how much they had improved. They could not believe it. They would say, ‘Jim—he’s hopeless.’ ‘Fred—I can’t believe that.’ It was an intellectual problem for them to cope with the way these kids had responded. Nowadays, because the principals expect it, they know that is what happens, but in those times it was very difficult. It was very sad to see the way that these kids—who we had not seen like that—had been written off, when actually they were not.

Mr BARTLETT—Bill, it is very heartening to hear what you are doing there. Can I ask you about the practical methodology of the teaching that is going on. How many young people are in a classroom together?

Rev. Crews—Twenty to 25 at a time.

Mr BARTLETT—They are groups that large—it is not individual?

Rev. Crews—No. However, we have three and a bit full-time special ed teachers and then we have a lot of volunteers who come in each day, and each child each day does 20 minutes of one to one reading.

Mr BARTLETT—And what is actually happening in the classroom for the other four hours between nine and one?

Rev. Crews—There is a whole graded series of projects.

Mr BARTLETT—But it is all literacy?

Rev. Crews—Yes—essentially literacy. But then through literacy you can teach other things as well.

Mr BARTLETT—Sure.

Rev. Crews—The other thing we found was that, in the beginning, schools would say, ‘Well, they are going to miss all this schooling,’ and we would say, ‘If they cannot read, they are not going to—’

Mr BARTLETT—They are missing out anyway.

Rev. Crews—Yes.

CHAIR—Can you send us a copy of the module or something? Is it possible for us to—?

Mr BARTLETT—Or could we come out and have a look?

Rev. Crews—Yes. I would like to invite you to come, yes.

CHAIR—It is very impressive.

Rev. Crews—It has been remarkable.

Mr BARTLETT—Is the actual approach taken in those four hours largely a phonics based approach? Is it very structured?

Rev. Crews—It is a rigid, structured approach.

Mr BARTLETT—Sounds, putting sounds together, the whole phonics approach to learning?

Rev. Crews—Yes, in fact I am beginning to think—I will get on to that in a minute. I will answer all your questions first.

Mr BARTLETT—They are generally 12 and 13 year olds?

Rev. Crews—Yes.

Mr BARTLETT—Have you tried it with older students?

Rev. Crews—No. We will later on, but it has taken us all this time to perfect what we are doing and to get long-term results to show to people: we could give all this anecdotal stuff, but we have actually got numbers on a page which show it now.

CHAIR—Do you think that you would be better off targeting, say, year 5, so you could get them ready for secondary school instead of picking them up when they are already in secondary?

Rev. Crews—My honest impression is that it would not matter what year we chose, we would be overrun. It would not matter. It probably works with year 5; it probably works all the way.

CHAIR—So if you had the resources and so on, you could cater for much higher demand? In fact, we probably should have facilities similar to yours throughout Sydney.

Mr BARTLETT—Yes, this is the whole point: kids should not be slipping through the net in infants and primary school not being able to read—they should be developing those skills along the way.

Rev. Crews—Yes, but they learn lots of strategies.

Mr BARTLETT—To hide themselves?

Rev. Crews—Yes, and you have got to be really quick and have the time to see what is going on. One of the things we do a lot is monitor the teachers. We actually count the number of times they smile at each child so we know their relationship with each child. Outside in the teaching environment, teachers would probably feel a bit threatened by all of that but, to me, it seems to be really important as an aid to teaching. They need to see supervision or monitoring as an aid rather than as a test.

It is a chicken and egg thing. There was one little boy—this is from my experiences—who we discovered was having problems at school. Every Friday he was sick and did not want to go to school. We found that the reason he did not want to go to school on Friday was that he had a spelling test and he did not like the spelling test. The thing I have learnt is that, if you find things like that, you go to the school right away. So I went to the school and the teacher, being a woman—which means something in a minute—said, 'It doesn't matter; he needn't set the test.'

But the little boy did not like not sitting the test and he still kept getting uptight about all that. During that term he had three women teachers and he still kept getting sick on Fridays about the test and all of these sorts of things. I kept going up to the school and finally, in about week 9 of the term, the third teacher by this stage stamped her foot in exasperation and said, ‘I don’t know why he can’t do his spelling. It’s all in his spelling book.’ I said, ‘What spelling book?’ She said, ‘The spelling book they were all given in week 2.’ He had never been given a spelling book. It really struck me then that you have a little boy from a family that is in a bit of chaos, something goes wrong in the classroom, that compounds the situation in the classroom, it compounds the chaos at home and it feeds on itself. The parents, because of the chaos, do not go to the school, and you have problems.

Mr BARTLETT—It is compounded by a lack of self-esteem.

Rev. Crews—The interesting thing on that was that the next year at school the boy got a male teacher and at one time, when he had to do something, the little boy said, ‘I feel sick,’ the male teacher said, ‘Don’t be a wuss,’ and the boy loved him. He thought the sun shone out of his teacher. The real importance of males in all of this struck me at that point.

The other thing that I have learned in a lot of this—and I know this is a silly thing to say because it is so obvious—is that women are really afraid of male violence. Where you have young boys being brought up by mothers and being in a school mainly of females, there is a lot of difficulty about how to deal with male aggression and all of that. That speaks a lot for a need for many more significant males in boys’ lives. One area in which I have noticed there are lots of males is coaching in sport. I think we should reward that a lot more and give it a lot more value than we do.

Years ago I would have said, ‘It looks like the natural family is evolving into being the mother and children with males around.’ It seems to me that the family is evolving mainly to that, but also evolving to a significant parent and children with the other sex being involved a lot. It seems to me that schools are not catering for that at all. They are not catering for the reality of the home life that the children go back to. Schools are often set up as self-serving kinds of institutions, so they are not really focused primarily on the significant number of children in them for whom family life is not all that it is meant to be in the education charter. I think that is a real problem.

One of the things our school shows, I am sure, is that if you catch kids’ interests you can actually move a long way with them. In lots of ways I have got out of welfare for kids and into education, because you can do better welfare through their interests than through saying, ‘Here you are, you poor boy, we will look after you.’

Mr BARTLETT—And it is preventive rather than, perhaps, therapeutic at the end.

Rev. Crews—Years and years ago when I was setting up the Lone Fathers Association, we called a meeting of lone fathers and somehow it was wrongly advertised. All of these men came out of the woodwork on this Saturday morning who 20 years before had fathered children and who had never known where their children had ended up. It flew in the face of stories of males begetting children and running, which I think is often not quite true. I often see lots of males

who are hungry for children because they are denied access to their own through whatever has happened along the way.

CHAIR—It is very helpful information.

Rev. Crews—Rather than being equal, boys and girls are co-equal. I think we need to create a co-equal education system. Boys only schools lead to things like what happened at Trinity. I have been to boys only schools and the Army cadets and that is my experience of unfettered boyishness.

Mr BARTLETT—That does not have to be the case, though.

Rev. Crews—It does not have to be, but without a female presence around it can be. There is a need to look at teaching boys and girls together in a co-equal way. A helpline can be set up for women and women will ring it. You can set up the same line for men and no man will ring. But you can set up an information line for men, which is the same thing, and men will ring for information. Often when teaching boys and girls we need to look at that. You may need a co-education school with certain subjects being taught in a way that both boys and girls understand.

CHAIR—Parallel information.

Rev. Crews—Yes, but in the same canvass.

Mr BARTLETT—Some of our witnesses would argue the opposite, that you can actually address those issues more easily if there is a separate boys' school, particularly for boys who are having difficulty with the teaching of literacy, for instance. In a purely boys' school you can focus on the approaches to learning that suit them better. I am not necessarily agreeing with that, but that is a view that has been put.

Rev. Crews—The boys have to have access to girls.

Mr BARTLETT—There are women teachers there as well.

Rev. Crews—Yes, but I think they need to be involved a bit with their peers as well on the campus. This is just something I am thinking a lot about at the moment. We honestly need to, within the education system, look at the reality of where children go after school and how that impacts upon what happens to them when they are at school, because I do not think that is really looked at.

CHAIR—Thanks very much for coming and for everything you do. If you have any ideas or thoughts just drop us a note and we will most certainly take it into account.

Rev. Crews—One other thing is how often a lot of the volunteers that come to work with these kids become their mentors. In sitting and reading with a child for 20 minutes a day—you might have three or four people doing it with one child—they actually become advocates for them. When these kids get into trouble, they are really up there helping them.

CHAIR—A continuing relationship develops?

Rev. Crews—Yes, and an equal one. They do not see these kids as poor little things; they are actually in there slugging it out with them.

CHAIR—We will close the hearing and pay tribute, if not homage, to Mr Rees, the Hansard reporters and Margaret and to Mr Bartlett for the receptive way in which he has embraced the pearls of wisdom expressed by both Mr Sawford and me.

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 4.41 p.m.