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**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND  
WORKPLACE RELATIONS

**Reference: Education of boys**

WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2001

BRISBANE

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**Wednesday, 21 February 2001**

**Members:** Mr Barresi, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Elson, Mr Emerson, Ms Gambaro, Ms Gillard, Mrs May, Mr Ronaldson, Mr Sawford and Mr Wilkie

**Members in attendance:** Mr Bartlett, Mrs Elson, Mr Emerson, Ms Gambaro, Ms Gillard and Mr Sawford

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

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

## **WITNESSES**

<b>COOK, Mr Bruce, Australian Hub Chairman (and Headmaster, Southport School), International Boys Schools Coalition.....</b>	<b>607</b>
<b>EVERETT, Mr Garry, Deputy Director, Queensland Catholic Education Commission.....</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>GARDINER, Ms Judith Ellen, Curriculum Executive Officer, Queensland Catholic Education Commission .....</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>HEALY, Dr Annah Helena, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education), Queensland University of Technology.....</b>	<b>594</b>
<b>HEDEMANN, Ms Maree, Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland .....</b>	<b>565</b>
<b>HENDERSON, Ms Barbara, Acting Manager, Social Inclusions Programs, Education Queensland .....</b>	<b>565</b>
<b>JEFFCOAT, Ms Leesa, Assistant Director (Curriculum), Rockhampton Catholic Education Office, Queensland Catholic Education Commission.....</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>LINGARD, Professor Robert Leslie, School of Education, University of Queensland .....</b>	<b>641</b>
<b>McCULLOCH, Ms Julie-Ann, President, Queensland Teachers Union .....</b>	<b>629</b>
<b>McFARLANE, Ms Lesley, Assistant Secretary Research, Queensland Teachers Union.....</b>	<b>629</b>
<b>McWILLIAM, Associate Professor Erica Lenore, Assistant to the Dean (Postgraduate Programs) , Queensland University of Technology .....</b>	<b>594</b>
<b>MILLS, Dr Martin, Research Fellow, School of Education, University of Queensland.....</b>	<b>641</b>
<b>MORGAN-WILLIAMS, Mr Dallas Foster, Manager, MW Training Consultants.....</b>	<b>584</b>
<b>MORGAN-WILLIAMS, Ms Irena Mary, Training Manager, MW Training Consultants .....</b>	<b>584</b>
<b>NUNAN, Mr John, Secondary Teacher, Chair of Boys' Issues Committee, Marist College, Queensland Catholic Education Commission .....</b>	<b>616</b>
<b>PERCY, Mr John David, Deputy, St Joseph's Nudgee College; representing Edmund Rice Educational Services.....</b>	<b>654</b>
<b>TUITE, Mrs Kerrie Patricia, Principal (Acting), St Brendan's College, Yeppoon; representing Edmund Rice Educational Services .....</b>	<b>654</b>

**Committee met at 9.08 a.m.****HEDEMANN, Ms Maree, Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland****HENDERSON, Ms Barbara, Acting Manager, Social Inclusions Programs, Education Queensland**

**ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)**—I welcome representatives of Education Queensland today to give evidence to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys. I remind you both that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. The deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but if at any stage you should wish to give evidence in private, please ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. Would you like to make an opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Ms Hedemann**—I will quickly set the scene in terms of the boys' education strategy, which should be of interest to you. We have had a gender equity policy in Education Queensland for 10 years. We have done a lot of work around the social practices of femininity and of masculinity that have costs for particular groups of boys and girls.

The minister wanted to respond to the concern and the cultural anxiety out there around the whole issue of boys, so we developed a boys' education strategy. That has changed a little since the submission. We are developing a boys' gender and education website and discussion list. We are holding major conferences. We had a boy's education conference in Brisbane a week ago, with 350 people. There will be another one in Townsville in a week and a half. We are developing posters to send out to schools. One of the things that I did not mention in the submission, because it has been developing over the last couple of months, is that we have a really exciting boy's gender and literacy project involving a cluster of schools in the Logan Alliance. An on-line professional development module will be associated with that, articulating the processes, the issues and the reflections. That will be presented to teachers throughout the state next year.

The boy's education reference group consists of managers of other key EQ initiatives and is very much underpinned by our Framework for Students at Educational Risk: 'building success Together'. This frames all the work that we are doing around boys. There is a move to understanding intersecting gender factors. This policy urges people to look at intersecting factors and consider how we can address issues at the local school level. That is different from the target group emphasis that we have had in the past. We think it is important for teachers in Queensland schools to have PD around issues of gender, poverty, cultural and linguistic diversity, et cetera.

**Ms Henderson**—In Education Queensland a significant shift has taken place in the last couple of years in the framework in which we have been working. We have had a long history of a target group agenda as such, working with the education of girls, newly arrived students, and poverty. Over that period of time, basically with a target group agenda, we have had separate programs that have tried to address those issues. What has been shown through the statistics that have come through and from the data that has been collected is that that focus has

not made the significant differences that we have wanted to happen in the outcomes for boys or girls within Queensland schools or groups of boys. For some groups of students it has made a significant difference. For instance, the girls' strategies have made some significant difference to some groups of girls within schools. We have learnt a lot from that.

The direction in which the department is going is exciting in terms of not forgetting those groups and being much more focused on how we identify students at risk. Maree mentioned 'which' boys and 'which' girls—looking at those intersecting factors, rather than making the assumption that just because you are an Aboriginal boy or a low socioeconomic girl you will inherently be at risk or at a disadvantage. It looks at much greater complexity for individual students in the context in which they are living and going to school and does a much greater analysis of the complex social and economic schooling factors that impact on boys and girls and that are putting them at educational risk. It is a real move away, I suppose, from a central solution—from having centrally based policies and initiatives that are funded centrally to a real focus back on looking at the school and the community which the schools service to find solutions in the local context and becoming much more aware of that context. That is where we are coming from in terms of looking at the issues for boys in education in Queensland.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Can I ask an opening question to put into some sort of historical context just what has happened to the attainment levels of boys and girls? Very early in this inquiry we received information from the Commonwealth department of education that 20 years ago the differentials between boys' and girls' achievements in literacy and numeracy—literacy in particular—were less than one per cent right across Australia, a very consistent pattern. But today—the references, if I remember correctly, were to New South Wales and Victoria more than other states—current differentials are up to 20 percentage points. In your submission you give some information about current boys' and girls' attainments, particularly in English, literacy and maths and so on. Could you provide this committee with any information that tells us what the story was 20 years ago or even 40 years ago?

**Ms Hedemann**—We have a project at the moment that is looking at the DETYA report in the Queensland context. We have an officer from the Performance, Measurement and Review Branch looking at those sorts of issues. His advice to me is that to get reliable data from 20 years ago is extremely difficult. But he is still working on that project.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But there is a lot of information from 20 years ago. All the examination systems from 20 and 40 years ago are still available, and they show quite distinct changes. Has Education Queensland examined those?

**Ms Hedemann**—They are in the process of doing that. We have been doing work around boys and literacy since the early 1990s. I have done a lot of professional development. So there is certainly a recognition that there is an issue there, but I suppose it is also about what is tested in terms of literacy. We also know that a lot of the tests are about skills based literacy, that literacy is really changing, that many of the boys are better at things like cyberliteracies and that there is a real issue for girls in terms of becoming part of the information poor, given that statistics there are dropping. So it is an extremely complex issue. What sort of language, what sort of English, was tested 20 years ago?

**ACTING CHAIR**—We went to two of your very excellent schools yesterday—a primary school at Eagleby and a high school at Woodridge. The principal and the staff there were excellent in terms of presenting what I thought was information that paid no attention whatsoever to socioeconomic status, gender or race. They concentrated on the structural program, on the educational program. It seems that both of those schools have been highly successful. That is contrary to the introduction to your submission. It seems that when we talk to people in schools they do not talk about ‘socioeconomic status’; they push that aside and take children for what they are. They concentrate on the structure of their educational program, which probably fits in more with the longitudinal research around the world that says that it is not socioeconomic status, it is not gender, it is not race, it is not religion, it is not cultural bias; it is the quality of the educational program that is presented to children that determines whether they are successful or not. Would you like to comment on that?

**Ms Hedemann**—I would like to comment on that. I do not know what research you are accessing when you say—

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am talking about the most significant longitudinal research in the world, done by the Inner London Education Authority—ILEA—in the mid-1980s, and it continues on today.

**Ms Hedemann**—There is also a huge amount of research that suggests that poverty and the sort of work that is done in the classroom in terms of teacher talk, for example, have huge implications in terms of outcomes for students. So I think we need to have a look at each other’s research. I am really astounded that you are making that claim. It certainly is not the position of people like Alan Luke or Bob Lingard—respected academics in Australia. We did a lot of work at Eagleby some years ago in terms of gender and behaviour management. They may be saying that those issues are irrelevant but I am—

**ACTING CHAIR**—No, they did not say that at all. What I am saying is that their concentration was on a highly structured literacy program—highly active, with a huge involvement by parents and with teachers’ aides being employed two hours a day. It was significantly different from the organisational structures that you would see in traditional schools, quite a different approach. Here were the basic fundamentals of education—mind on mind, adult with child, small active groups and a very structured program which was highly successful when results were measured over the last three years, with dramatic improvements for girls as well as boys. The differentials when they started were quite small really compared with some of the information we have received, and the differentials were even smaller at the end.

**Ms Hedemann**—The project that I mentioned at the beginning was the boys’ poverty and literacy project, with a cluster of schools in the Logan Alliance. They will be focusing on things like the way programs get enacted, for example, in the classroom. We know that teachers often have particular intentions but a lot of the talk that goes on in the early childhood years around literacy is about behaviour management issues, and they have what they call ‘interactive trouble’. So you might find, for example, that in half an hour a teacher has actually given them one direct instruction in relation to literacy and the rest of the work in the classroom is about behaviour. They are the sorts of things we are focusing on in that project.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I do not disagree with that, but both these schools reported to us—and there is continuing evidence around it—that the schools that have successful programs also have successful behaviour management programs. Because of the success of their behaviour management programs they do not have huge problems in that area.

**Ms Henderson**—The schools with very low socioeconomic backgrounds have a history of having resources to examine the range of problems. They have also had a history of having very creative and innovative people in those schools who have been willing to experiment, to go out there and look for solutions to the issues that are raised. I agree with what you are saying, and I think that Maree would not disagree either, that the whole focus of the work we do is that significant change will only occur through looking at pedagogy, looking at teacher practice and looking at structures within schools—looking at the very issues that you are talking about. A one-off program that has a very specific focus for a short period of time has not worked. Those schools historically have been through that process of having a whole range of programs. Projects may have been sponsored through Commonwealth money; they may have been sponsored through Education Queensland in terms of a specific thing to do. In the days of girls' education they may have been involved in a specific project.

Those schools, and many others in Queensland, have been through a process of knowing that a one-off project that focuses on a specific group for a specific time is not the most effective way to make a change at those schools. Eagleby, in particular, has had some fantastic people in there who have worked very hard at looking at effective practices. They have done marvellous things in involving the community in a whole range of creative and innovative things that have not been way out but that have been based on really good pedagogy.

I was at a meeting last year with the principal, who was saying that the things that had happened in their school had been experiences of doing something for a long time that had not worked. They suddenly thought—in relation to home literacy and young students—‘We have never actually been out there and interacted with those students in terms of their home literacies and what they are bringing to school.’ As soon as they broke down that barrier, a huge and significant change was made. It is all about a process that schools go through in terms of developing good practice and good pedagogy. We are in a process now of being able to share a lot of that with other schools.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Surely that is the point. If it can work there, it can work in other schools.

**Ms Henderson**—It can in different ways because all schools have different contexts in which they work. Certainly the learnings from that can be taken.

**Mr BARTLETT**—If the resources and the in-servicing are there to share those ideas with other staff in other schools, surely it can work. Eagleby is not in a favoured socioeconomic area. If it can work there, surely it can work in other areas if the support for staff, the leadership, the in-servicing and the funding are there.

**Ms Henderson**—If you have all of those things I am sure that it could work. But I am not sure that in all situations you have working that combination of things you have just mentioned.



**ACTING CHAIR**—Does Education Queensland have as a fundamental catering for individual differences among children?

**Ms Hedemann**—Are you talking about—

**ACTING CHAIR**—In terms of *Queensland State Education 2010*. That is in your submission. Is it a fundamental?

**Ms Hedemann**—The focus in the policies is that you cannot meet the needs of an individual child unless you understand that child in their community. I do not think there is any question that people understand that you have to meet individual needs. The focus in Education Queensland's work at the moment is the issue of social cohesion and understanding the student in the student's community. That is an incredible challenge for all of us.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I find this strange. You can often tell something about submissions in the area of education and politics by what is omitted by them and also by what is included. In the main points of *Queensland State Education 2010* everything is positive except a bit called 'addressing divisiveness'.

**Ms Henderson**—Diversity?

**ACTING CHAIR**—No. It is called 'addressing divisiveness' and 'emphasising the things that unite us as people'. I find that a strange use of language. Whereas everything else is written in a positive sense, this is written in a negative sense. I go back to my original question. Catering for individual differences between children is not a fundamental at the current time for Education Queensland.

**Ms Henderson**—I would not put it in those strong terms of saying it is not a fundamental. What Maree is saying—

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is not prominent.

**Ms Hedemann**—If you are going to meet the needs of individual children the emphasis is on understanding that child within a particular socio-cultural context.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So are differences valued? When I read some of the aims of *Queensland State Education 2010* I would interpret a lot of it as valuing uniformity rather than differences. I do not have any problem with uniting people and bringing people together, but surely you need to appreciate that there are differences too. We do not want everybody the same. There is strength in diversity.

**Ms Hedemann**—We want our students to have the same opportunities in their experiences at school and their life pathways. It is our belief that we cannot give people equal opportunities unless we take into account those socio-cultural issues—

**Ms Henderson**—And the diversity of the students themselves. How can you possibly be looking at a student as an individual if you are not also looking at those socio-cultural contexts, which is a diversity?

**ACTING CHAIR**—You do not say that; you say ‘divisive’. I do not want to follow this any further.

**Ms Henderson**—Maybe that is an omission.

**Mr BARTLETT**—In your submission on the boys education strategy are a number of aims and objectives that sound admirable. The first one is that ‘strategies to improve outcomes for boys are informed by cutting edge research and practice in school reform and on effective pedagogy and curriculum’. Could you expand on what aspects of pedagogy and curriculum you see as improving the performance of boys? What work is being done to implement those?

**Ms Hedemann**—We are talking about initiatives like the new basics curriculum. I have also written in the submission a description of that. Essentially that is about, rather than school contrived tasks, tasks that actually mean something to kids in society at the moment. An example is the developing a year 3 website. Associated with that also is the notion of productive pedagogics. There are many elements there in terms of the recognition of difference—recognising that your students do come from diverse groups and making sure that the work that you are doing is relevant, not contrived.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Those things are aimed at improving teaching techniques and so on, but could you give us some specific examples of how they might address the needs that boys in particular have?

**Ms Hedemann**—Obviously, you are looking for an example of how this might look in practice. In this large boys’ literacy and poverty project, the teachers, the universities and Education Queensland have recognised that a big issue for boys from lower socioeconomic groups, for example, is that they have literacies when they come to school, but they are not necessarily the skills based literacies. We need to acknowledge, value and build on some of those literacies. So part of that project is going to be for teachers to become familiar with some of the home/community literacies that the boys are interested in. But that sort of thing is really important for girls as well.

In another branch of the project teachers will be looking at cyberliteracies. There is a real issue around boys in terms of particularly the narrative forms of text. They do much better at exposition. That is one of the difficult things about the data: when you start unpacking it, you get a much better idea of what is going on, instead of making blanket statements about boys not being good at literacy. So cyberliteracies are important.

Another thing that is important is actually giving students the skills to look at texts, so that they can see how they are being positioned, and I give a little story from my own son. Teachers often believe that the texts they use in the classroom are apolitical. Admittedly, this was 10 years ago, but the basal readers have not got that much better. When my son, who was in year 1, came home he gave me this book called *Jane is the Teacher*. He said, ‘Mum, not all boys are like that.’ The text went like this, ‘All the boys are bad. They look at the wall. All the girls are

good. They read their little books.’ That is a blatant example of the way teaching practices and resources can construct boys to behave in particular ways. My son was able to say, ‘Not all boys are like this.’ I guess that is another element in this project. We will be trying to give kids skills to look at texts that might position them in ways that have costs for them. There is a lot more to the project, but does that give you an example of what we are trying to do?

**Mr BARTLETT**—It does. On a slightly different tangent, do you think there is a difference in the ways—regardless of the pedagogy—boys respond to male teachers vis-à-vis female teachers?

**Ms Hedemann**—This is a difficult area. I think it would be Education Queensland’s position that, if we can get more male teachers, particularly in the early childhood years, and if we can get more females into administrative positions, that would be wonderful. But the question is: do you just have this virtual male that you deliver into schools—this teacher who, on the basis of his chromosomal patterns, is going to solve all the problems? We would suggest that it is not. It is about male teachers and female teachers who actually have some understanding of the issues, who will respect students and who are aware of the problems. I guess, again, it comes back to respecting good pedagogy and curriculum. We would take the position that you are not going to change things simply by putting more men into schools. You have to ask what sorts of social practices around masculinity are on offer.

**Mr BARTLETT**—But given equal ability in pedagogy, you would say that some boys would respond better to male teachers, particularly in those early years?

**Ms Hedemann**—I think that balance for kids is always excellent. But to presume that female teachers, for example, are doing poorly in terms of boys is a separate argument. It is a different direction in which to take the argument. But I think balance is great. One of the problems is that male teachers in the past have been unwilling to go into the early childhood years in particular because there has been a devaluing of the profession. There are also connotations here around homophobia. If you are a male who goes into the early childhood years, are you gay? That has to do with the fact that a lot of professions that women take up have been devalued in the past. So it is very complex.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Is EQ doing anything proactively to encourage males into teaching in the early years?

**Ms Hedemann**—Yes. I have forgotten the name of the project because it is in another area. They have a project through which they are trying to increase diversity. So it is not just male teachers. Although it is male teachers, it is also more diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds—indigenous teachers and those sorts of things. We also have posters, which we are about to organise to send out to schools, depicting boys in professions that perhaps in the past have not been acceptable. That is a problem for us. It is easier to do a poster for girls telling them that they can do engineering and science. It is really hard to develop a poster for a young boy saying, ‘You can go into nursing,’ ‘You can go into teaching,’ ‘You can go into pre-school education’. It is problematic in terms of whether or not they are going to want to take that up.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Could I follow up with the story you told about your son and the poor text? Do all Queensland schools, both primary and secondary, have fully trained librarians?

**Ms Hedemann**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Who chooses the text and books in schools? Would the librarians do this?

**Ms Henderson**—Not necessarily.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Who chooses them?

**Ms Hedemann**—That would be done by the administrator and the teachers together.

**Ms Henderson**—Heads of department with their teaching staff?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Why would you not use the schools for the librarian? Are trained librarians a little more in tune with current values in literature than, say, administrators?

**Ms Henderson**—Not necessarily and we would hope not. Administrators should be curriculum experts as well within the school.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But they are not in the school. They are not buying the books.

**Ms Henderson**—We are talking about principals in the schools and also heads of departments of English or whatever faculty—I mean they are the ones who are making the choices.

**Ms GILLARD**—As Rod outlined at the start, part of the motivation behind this inquiry was that if you track back 20 years you see a very small gap between boys and girls. If we look at some of the data now there is a big gap between boys and girls in terms of achievement. In the course of gathering evidence in this inquiry I am not sure that we have satisfactorily explained what has changed that could have caused that difference. People have come along and told us that boys develop literacy differently from girls in the early years, when they are five, six and seven. Presumably if that is true today that was true 20 years ago. People have come and told us that boys like more active models of education and find it difficult to sit still at tasks for long periods of time. Presumably, if that is true today that was true 20 years ago as well.

So, it seems to me that we need to try to focus on the things that have changed. In terms of some of the things you have said, if socioeconomic status has a correlation with educational attainment then I am sure that was true 20 years ago in the way that it is true today. If indigenous background has a correlation with educational attainment, I am sure that was probably more true 20 years ago than it is today. So it is a question of trying to focus on what has changed that could explain the difference. I would like you to direct some comments to that.

Things that have been said to us include that the curriculum has changed in a way that inadvertently disadvantages boys' learning. People have said to us that assessment might have changed in a way that is inadvertently biased against boys' results. People have said that because of the loss of male role models in schools, and more generally in society, boys having a clear role of what it is to be a man in our society has become more problematic over the last 20

years. All of those things might be in some way related. I would be interested in your comment on those three factors and what else you can say has changed that could explain the difference.

**Ms Henderson**—Firstly, a lot of social factors have to be thought about in terms of the last 20 or 30 or 40 years. If you go back 40 years in Queensland, for instance, a majority of kids left school at the end of year 8. If you passed a scholarship you went on to do year 10. Once again, only a minority of kids actually went on to years 11 and 12. That was still basically the case when I was at high school. There was certainly a great attrition from year 10 to years 11 and 12.

If you look at it historically, 20 or 30 years ago only a minority of students were actually progressing to years 11 and 12. That was because of the testing and the barriers. Also, the job opportunities were there. In my day, either a boy or a girl could leave at year 10 and pick up work very easily in apprenticeships, office work or whatever, so there was not that employment issue either. I suppose the students who did continue were the best or the brightest of that sifting process. That is significant, because that has really only changed in about the last 15 years. We have actually had a change in that process of—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Queensland had the second lowest retention rate in Australia—you do not include the ACT. So significant changes occurred in Queensland in retention rates.

**Ms Henderson**—Yes. That is partly due to the assessment process that we have here. I think I was the last person to do the state-wide senior exam. It is only since that time, which I should say is most probably about 30 or 40 years ago, that there has been a change in the client, in the number of students who are progressing. That is significant in the debate about what marks and what achievement levels were. In fact, 20 or 30 years ago, the achievement levels, particularly in the senior secondary areas, represented a very different cohort of kids from the data you are looking at today in terms of the diversity and range of students who are progressing to years 11 and 12. I think that is quite significant.

Another of the issues you mentioned is the changing nature of assessment. In Queensland, one of the reasons why we have had such a good retention rate compared with others is the fact that we have had school based assessment and not external examinations. That form of assessment allows kids to work progressively. It has also meant that teaching pedagogy in practice in Queensland has had to be looked at more carefully. If you have school based assessment, teachers themselves have to be accountable. They are the ones who have to carefully look at what we are asking kids to do.

My experience of teaching at that time was that, in terms of the criteria and from a secondary perspective, we were much further ahead than other states in developing those sorts of things. There was an expectation that, if you were going to be giving kids major amounts of assessment, you also had to be very clear yourself about what you were asking the students to do. The students had to be very clear about what the expectations of them were in terms of how you were setting the task. So a lot of teacher work was done.

**Ms GILLARD**—Is it possible that that transition in curriculum assessment has inadvertently advantaged girls over boys? For example, people have put to us the proposition—and I have no idea whether it is right—that boys prefer examination and short, sharp, shock style assessment rather than longer, continuous assessment. Obviously you are saying that the system has moved,

for a whole lot of good reasons, from external examination based assessment to continuous assessment. Is it possible that there is a by-product of that in boys' education? Is it possible that a by-product of the curriculum change that went with that may have disadvantaged boys in education? I am still struggling to see the things that have changed and why we have a gap. We are not necessarily comparing apples with oranges when we look at the statistics—I will bear in mind that that is a factor.

**Ms Hedemann**—I do not think anyone can give you an answer on that. One of the things that we try to do is not be absolutist about this stuff. There needs to be a lot more research. The way people go about it and understand it is really important. If you decide, for example, that boys are not naturally good at doing narrative and if you decide that is a natural attribute, that is going to determine the goals that you set for those boys and the strategies that you use.

Historically, it is really interesting to actually go back to the 18th or the 19th century. I think you would even be familiar with this notion of the strong, silent male as opposed to the garrulous female. That is changing. It has got to change because we are now living in a society where interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are, as you know, so important. So I think it is about what was valued as well. And I think that we need to think about how we are framing up the boys issue in terms of: do you think they are naturally like that? I think that is an insult to our boys. So, yes, those sorts of questions are really important in terms of the directions that teachers go in in the future.

**Mr EMERSON**—Just listening to that exchange Julia was driving at, yes, lots of things have changed in the last 20 to 40 years, but what has changed that has resulted in a deterioration in the relative performance of boys? Your first answer was retention rates. In 1982, the year 12 retention rate in Australia was 36 per cent. It is now in the high sixties. That has changed, but why has that changed in a way that has disadvantaged boys? Listening to the exchange, I think maybe the reason is the changing nature of the demand for labour; that is, 20 or 30 years ago, jobs were abundant in physical trades—plumbing, bricklaying, working on roads and so on. Most of that has been mechanised to a level where there is no growth in jobs in those areas. Also, we went through a big population expansion, so we had a lot of housing, office construction and other construction going on in Australia which is probably not going on now. The boys who said, 'Look, that's what I want to do,' from a fairly early age are now realising that and saying, 'Well, we're not going to get a job doing it.' They think they had better hang in there and at least be able to say, 'I've got a year 12 education.' Maybe they go and do a TAFE course as well although they do not actually want to. I am trying not to generalise; I am talking about the boys who are at risk here and who are not performing as well. We talked to kids at Woodridge yesterday. I suspect some of them would like to leave school but they are not going to. Their retention rate from year 10 to year 12 is 99 per cent because they are not game to leave school. But some of them do not really want to plough on either. When we said, 'Well, what're you up to?' they said, 'You've got to at least have year 12 to have any chance of getting a job.'

**Ms Hedemann**—I think you are absolutely right.

**Ms Henderson**—There is still the research in terms of the particular subjects that students choose and some research shows that boys may in fact be choosing subjects that they are not very good at; ones that they think that they need to do to achieve whatever it is that they are progressing towards. Lots of boys may be doing the harder maths, sciences or whatever when

they really are not capable of doing them, because of expectations about those subjects and about their futures that may be unrealistic.

**Ms Hedemann**—I think that issue of homophobia—which a lot of people do not want to talk about—is crucial. The notion of boys doing dance: it is really difficult for them to cross the gender divide and do that subject because there is often so much homophobic harassment, particularly the boys that you are talking about from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Actually demonstrating that you like school and like your teachers is incredibly problematic for them in their peer groups. One of the things that I have talked about with teachers in schools since the early nineties is this issue of homophobia and how to address that. When people like the Gilberts and Wayne Martino, researchers around Australia, talk about this issue, maybe nobody else thinks that gender or masculinity are relevant but the boys are stating quite explicitly that they want to know more about this masculinity stuff. They feel really bad about having to behave, wear their clothes and move in particular ways in order to be accepted by their peer group. They want to know more about gender because it affects their everyday life. They want to know how they can negotiate pathways through life where they are more aware of what is going on in terms of this gender stuff.

**Mr EMERSON**—I just have one more question in this round because I am conscious that others want to ask questions. If we have time I would like to come back; if we do not, well, that is life. The second question is a really specific one. At Eagleby State Primary School, they have enjoyed and achieved dramatic improvements in literacy. The funding formula, however, is based on the year 2 diagnostic net results. Their success is likely to be rewarded with a withdrawal of funds. So do they say to the next two years, ‘Look, we are going to have to junk your two generations to drop our results so we can get some more money’? This is not a complaint that they made to us. We actually teased it out, and I think I said at Woodridge there is a working party in Education Queensland looking at that dilemma. Have you got any thoughts on how to encourage schools to achieve really good literacy results through these innovative programs and to continue funding them for their success, not failure?

**Ms Henderson**—I think that is a real dilemma, and it is certainly one that is raised all the time by schools with us. We, from a student services branch perspective, certainly take that up within the department and advocate for a change in the processes which have a financial basis. There is not a truly educational focus about where the resources that are there go. I think it is a real issue—that whole issue about not rewarding success. From our perspective in terms of student services we strongly advocate within the department for a change in those sorts of practices.

**Mr EMERSON**—I would hate to see the reading recovery program get junked in the process or get watered down.

**Ms Hedemann**—Can I also say that I think for many students that intervention is crucial. But sometimes, when there are actually social issues involved—and I talked about homophobia before—you actually need to go beyond that intervention. I value all of that individual remediation and I agree with what you are saying, but particularly when there are issues like gender and even poverty involved, sometimes you actually have to go beyond that to what happens in the classroom. It is about whether or not you actually value the home community literacies, for example. It is about whether or not you do give kids some opportunities to see

how they are being positioned in terms of masculinity. I guess what I am saying is that you can actually do individual remediation until you are blue in the face in terms of literacy but if one of the issues is a social issue—social attitudes around homophobia for example—then you really need to be looking also at the sorts of programs that you have in the classroom.

**Mr EMERSON**—At Eagleby they certainly do that and in fact in their opening remarks they said that children arrive at this school with a rich literacy experience and what they do is identify how they can bolster that in a particular way rather than say, ‘Oh look, they cannot read or write very well’—

**Ms Hedemann**—They are not saying, ‘These kids are deficit; they have not learnt anything at home,’ when they in fact have learnt a lot, yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And Woodridge was the same with an alternative group. They did not tell the teachers where these kids came from and what they were there for, so it did not become an issue—the program becomes the central part of the relationship between the child and the teacher.

**Ms Hedemann**—I have a lot of problems with that notion.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I know you do. I can tell by your position. I can tell that greatly, yes. We can agree to disagree.

**Ms GAMBARO**—I know we keep talking about Eagleby but you said earlier on when you were speaking that we do not necessarily need to have more male teachers and I think that was a sentiment that was shared by the principal of Eagleby. Perhaps we can look beyond this teacher thing at community role models. She gave the example of the policeman on the beat who goes away on school camps and who the kids feel is an adequate role model. They loosen up and they talk to him. He is not necessarily a teacher role model but he is a role model from the community. I know we are trying to look at what has happened over 20 years but are these role models, be they in male sport or in the community, perhaps diminishing? I know Julia touched on some of the socioeconomic things. Do you think we could look at developing, in the school curriculum, more of a community participation with not just parents but other community people? What are your thoughts on that?

**Ms Hedemann**—I think that is absolutely crucial. One of the things that is outlined in ‘Building Success Together’ is developing community partnerships. The role modelling stuff is the issue that I brought up before. Police officers and a range of people throughout the community can have wonderful input in terms of kids. The more parents that we get into schools the better. I suppose you have heard of construction of gender frameworks—people have probably thrown that around. I think most people would not be engaged too much with the biological arguments, but the next two are the role modelling and the construction of a gender framework. If we are just going to put a police officer, a father, a teacher or whatever in contact with kids because they are men it is problematic. For example, when you move to a father or to a teacher who is a male who is also aware of gender issues around homophobia and of violence and who is concerned about the sorts of messages that boys are getting from ineffective role models, you are actually moving out of the role model and into an acknowledgment that gender is constructed through a whole range of institutions. Can you see what I am trying to say there?



**Ms GAMBARO**—Yes.

**Ms Hedemann**—So, absolutely: I think the community stuff is very important.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Yes, it has a part to play along with some other things. I want to touch on some life skill things. We have talked about literacy. I remember having a conversation very recently with Brother Paul—Kay, I think he is in your electorate—who has Kids Helpline. He said to me that overwhelmingly the majority of phone calls that he receives from young boys are about life skills. You talked earlier about homophobia—how one acts and what this thing masculinity is. I have a 12-year-old whose every second question is, ‘Do you think he’s gay?’ There is a real fixation on masculinity, and it seems to be at that 12-year-old age. What can we do? We went to a school yesterday where the boys said that they played up because they needed praise. The year 9 or 10 girls were talking about the boys and saying, ‘They play up in class because they need praise.’ I just wonder if we are tackling some of these self-esteem issues for boys in a minimal way. Can we perhaps look at those issues a bit more?

**Ms Hedemann**—One of the things that we are looking at in equity programs is the fact that boys will play up not just because they want praise. Often it is because they are resisting a curriculum or a school organisation that isn’t really about their lives. Girls will do this too. If you have a teacher who will not talk to you about sexuality or gay or lesbian issues and that is what all the kids in the playground are talking about, then you do not respect that and you resist it. It is big picture stuff. It is about connectedness in terms of productive pedagogies. It is about teachers and parents listening to those kids, whether they be boys or whether they be girls, and acknowledging the fact that they know more about this life in a global society than we are ever going to. I am sure that praise is an issue and that relationships are an issue. But it is quite complex as well and you do not solve it by putting a male role model in a school, that is for sure.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Professional development for teachers: I have a sister who is a teacher. How do you stop them from leaving? Do you feel that there needs to be more done in the professional development area? Is the drop-out of male teachers more significant than that of female teachers?

**Ms Henderson**—There are a few questions there.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Yes. In Queensland education, for example, as far as professional development is concerned, do you feel more could be done there in developing professional programs for teachers?

**Ms Hedemann**—I think teachers need more time to reflect on their practices and to communicate with the kids in their classrooms and with the parents, so there is that community partnership. They need more time to do that. They do not get a lot of time to do that. Yes, I do think they need more professional development. When we had a conference in Brisbane a couple of weeks ago they said to us—and we knew this was the case—‘You have just scratched the surface. How can we get more workshops around issues of gender, boys and literacy?’ Yes, it is a real issue.

**Ms GAMBARO**—That is lacking. What about the retention of male teachers versus female teachers? Are you losing more male teachers in the system? Have you done no studies?

**Ms Henderson**—I would not be able to answer that. I do not have that information on hand.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Has there been any research done on that?

**Ms Hedemann**—There are some Board of Teacher Registration figures.

**Ms GAMBARO**—You would just be looking at the figures from year to year?

**Ms Hedemann**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In New South Wales the figure for primary schools has gone from about 37 per cent to 17 per cent over a period of 10 years, so there has been a dramatic change.

**Ms Hedemann**—It is about how teaching as a profession is viewed—whether it is valued or not.

**Ms GAMBARO**—In any other profession people would ask, ‘Why are we losing these valuable people?’ regardless of gender issues. Do you think looking at retention, be it male or female, is done in Queensland education? Do you know of any studies?

**Ms Hedemann**—It is probably work that the strategic policy and planning unit does.

**Ms GAMBARO**—It would not be in your scope, I understand.

**Ms Henderson**—I am sure the HR section would be monitoring that closely, given the teaching situation at the moment.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is through the state.

**Mrs ELSON**—I am just wondering whether Education Queensland have looked into behaviour patterns within the early secondary school years. I noticed during this inquiry and also in my electorate that primary schools have some very good behaviour management programs where students are removed from the classrooms when they play up and taken to a special room where they get walked through patterns of behaviour. I have observed in my electorate that at year 8 award nights three boys versus 20 girls receive certificates. That seems to be predominant in all areas in year 8.

Woodridge High School boys yesterday said that boys seem to get serious when they realise they have played up for a bit too long. They get stuck into it in the last couple of years or until the last six weeks, in one case. A few boys said that they wished there was more behaviour control in the classroom because, if their mates play up, they play up—it is a peer thing. If the teachers could get a bit of discipline into the classroom, they could concentrate more and would not play up. But at the moment they are allowed to do what they want in the classroom—speak to each other, move around and so forth. I have no problems with that but they seem to feel it is

distracting. I think they are going through a stage in their life where they do not concentrate as hard and it is even harder to concentrate when there is noise around them. Many teachers in my electorate have complained to me so many times that they get no support to clean up the behaviour in their secondary schools. I wondered whether Education Queensland have looked into it and whether they are reacting to the teachers' response.

**Ms Henderson**—One of the largest programs supported through Education Queensland is the behaviour management program. There are specialist teachers in all districts. Funding goes to all districts to set up behaviour management teams. Every district has a behaviour management team made up of people from all of the schools. There are certainly specialist staff in each region to work with schools in developing behaviour management programs. So it has certainly become a decentralised function. I think through Education Queensland a significant number of resources go to behaviour management.

**Mrs ELSON**—But the individual schools are not enforcing that. It appears that they have had discipline management through primary and when they get to grade 8 everything they have been taught is out the window. It is a behavioural thing—'Hey, I can play up here and I can show my other side.' Whether it is enforced as seriously in secondary schools is what I am trying to determine, because the teachers think it is not.

**Ms Henderson**—There is a whole range of factors in the transition from primary to secondary schools. People have already talked about the changes that are happening to 12-year-old boys and girls in relation to puberty and about kids trying to construct their identity, particularly their sexuality. A whole range of issues are raised in those early secondary years. They are confronting ones. Then there are the things you have mentioned about peer pressure. There is a whole range of social and cultural things that impact on the things in kids' lives, and that is certainly impacting then on what is happening in the classroom. I am sure everyone will say a bit more on that, but I am just thinking in terms of responding to the behaviour management issues. The department has a broad policy, but it is within that policy that schools develop their own behaviour management practices and processes and engage with the districts and other schools to share what they are doing and to share what is there.

**Mrs ELSON**—Can there be more support, then? I might put it another way. I had four teachers in the family. Could there be more support for teachers to give them the authority to be able to control their classrooms because they honestly believe that they are not getting the support to be able to do that. That is why teachers are dropping out. There are two in my family that dropped out because their hands are tied when it comes to getting the children to behave in secondary school.

**Ms Hedemann**—It is too complex an issue to say what sort of authority they want. I think it is tied back again to things that people were talking about earlier—that is, that the behaviour management issues are set within the context of the pedagogy, the teaching practice. The point that you are making in terms of your visits to Woodridge and to Eagleby is the fact that the teachers there were saying that behaviour management is not an issue because the teaching practice, the pedagogy or whatever, that is happening within those schools in fact has diminished the students' behaviour.

**Mrs ELSON**—What I was trying to get through is that the students, not the school system, thought that it was an issue and, if the children see it as an issue as to why they cannot concentrate and learn, then I guess if we do not listen to the teachers we should listen to the students.

**Ms Hedemann**—I agree, and obviously you need to then look at the complexities of the issues around. Why is it that those individual kids are actually feeling dispossessed within that classroom in terms of their learning? We need to know what is happening in those classrooms or within that school.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We need to conclude this particular session, but I wonder if I could just ask a few very brief questions and get some brief answers on a range of matters that we have not covered. Who initiated, who funded, the University of Queensland school reform longitudinal study?

**Ms Hedemann**—Bob Lingard and the University of Queensland. I am not quite sure how the funding was organised in terms of Education Queensland and the university.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We are going to see them so we can question them.

**Ms Henderson**—I think it was an Education Queensland funded longitudinal study.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In relation to the perennial biological arguments, do you give any credence to biological differences in the ways boys and girls learn?

**Ms Hedemann**—That would be foolish. I think what we would say is that it is very difficult to separate the biological from what actually happens from birth. I do not think anyone would deny that boys, generally speaking, have better developed gross motor skills when they first start school, but how you perceive that will frame the sorts of strategies you use. If you think it is because they have actually had lots more opportunities to play with swings and balls and that sort of activity contrasted with girls, then you will be looking to develop those. I guess the bottom line is that it is really difficult to talk about biological, that it is hard to tell, but we know that there is a huge—

**ACTING CHAIR**—All I am asking is, do you give any credence to it at all?

**Ms Hedemann**—I have probably answered that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I know; you have. A couple of the points that have come to us from principals and teachers, and probably this is about their unions and about their education departments—and this is not just a Queensland thing; it is something that has been picked up through talking to those people—if you ask them what sorts of things could be improved in the system, basically two things mentioned yesterday were that they would like the department to actually recognise a little bit more risk taking in terms of what schools do and have support for that, and the other issue is creativity. Do you think state bureaucracies in education around Australia are not taking seriously enough risk taking and creativity in their schools?

**Ms Henderson**—I certainly think historically that has been an issue because I think, like all big bureaucracies, education has not been into risk taking, particularly when their focus has been on students and student outcomes and how much risk can you take if you are focussed.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I do not mean putting kids at risk; I do not mean that at all.

**Ms Henderson**—A focus of what we do is based on what happens in the classroom at all levels, so it is about balance. I think within Queensland, in terms of the QSE-2010 agenda and the other agendas that are coming through, there is much more focus around schools and school communities as being the context in which action needs to happen. Certainly the rhetoric is there for much greater flexibility. There are greater opportunities for schools to be more creative and more flexible. In terms of the responsiveness and what that means, the financial way that we have always done things, the staffing in schools and how we have allocated funding for schools, I think there is a dilemma going on in our department at the moment. The 2010 report talks about issues such as differentiation. It talks about issues such as dealing with local context and whatever. It is going through at the moment and trying to really look at, ‘What does that really mean in terms of how we have handled finances in the past? How have we handled staffing in the past?’ They are some fairly significant changes that I think people realise need to happen, but I am not sure that people have worked out how you do that yet.

**ACTING CHAIR**—On this issue of homophobia, and perhaps we had better close on this, Teresa made a reference to the helpline. There is another reference in here as well, but I cannot find it. The actual calls on issues of homophobia varied from about one per cent to 10 per cent. Is that being overstated? When we go to schools, those issues do not seem to be raised at all, either off the record or on the record. I can understand why perhaps they may not be raised, but they are not even raised off the record at all.

**Ms Hedemann**—Often they are not raised in schools. One of the challenges for us is in terms of behaviour management is to move beyond individual psychological issues. We want teachers to actually address some of these issues, such as gender, through the curriculum. If you are always analysing bad behaviour on the basis of there is something wrong with that kid, you are denying the data that says 75 per cent of behaviour management problems are as a result of institutional factors like race and gender. That is a real challenge. I am not quite sure what you mean by homophobia.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In terms of matters that are important to schools.

**Ms Hedemann**—But when you say homophobia, are you talking about violence against gay and lesbian students or just homophobia to keep boys under control in terms of peer groups?

**ACTING CHAIR**—No, I am talking about harassment of boys and girls because they may have homosexual tendencies or may be homosexual or whatever. The kids ring up the helpline when they have a problem. When they ring these lines—and I think, as Teresa said—over 90 per cent of the things they raise have to do with life skills. They do not have to deal with homophobia, but there are some who do. Those figures are one to 10 per cent. Are you actually overstating the problem?

**Ms Hedemann**—What I would say is that it is very difficult for students, young people, to actually enunciate issues around homophobia when no-one is talking about it in schools or the community. The other point I would make—

**ACTING CHAIR**—There is also another way of looking at that—they are not talking about it because it is not an issue.

**Ms Hedemann**—We could also talk about the fact that a huge percentage of the youth suicide rate—an estimated 35 per cent—is related to issues of sexuality. The other thing that I wanted to make quite clear is that, when we talk about homophobia, we are not just talking about violence against gay and lesbian students, it is that other issue of the way you keep boys in peer groups under control by telling them that they are poofs and wusses and girlies if they do not behave in ways that are acceptable.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Here is an example from the school yesterday. They were talking about the rock eisteddfod. You mentioned an example, where in a number of schools boys are unwilling to participate in aspects of dance and drama. Obviously, it was not a problem at that school. In other words, they had created an educational program that involved kids. I go back to the same old argument—when you have the neutral argument of the educational program that is the focus, you seem to get much better results than when you focus on gender, race, religion, nationality or all the rest of it. That confirms the point of view of the biggest longitudinal study of learning in the English language of anywhere in the world, done by ILEA, which is contrary to the point of view that you are putting forward.

**Ms Henderson**—I would say that most probably, through those programs that those kids are doing, they are actually talking with kids about issues of gender, race, and socioeconomic status. That would happen in all sorts of ways—through the types of books that they are choosing to read with kids, the way they may do critical literacy within the school.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But the focus is on the program.

**Ms Henderson**—What is the program?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Gender divides people, race divides people, religion divides people, socioeconomic basis divides people. You acknowledge it in your submission. An educational program is the means by which you unite people.

**Ms Henderson**—You unite people through actually taking those issues and discussing them within the programs so that kids are actually working with them, talking about them and looking at what the impact of those are on their lives and on the lives of those around them so they can get an understanding of who they are and where they fit.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Can I conclude with this?

**Ms Hedemann**—Can I say something?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, you can.

**Ms Hedemann**—You are speaking very strongly there and I want to speak strongly as well. Take a boy in year 8 who loves school, loves his teachers and is called a poof and a try-hard. You can either say to that kid, ‘Gender has nothing to do with it and you are the problem kid,’ or you can say, ‘This is not about you, darling, this is about bigger societal issues.’ I think that neutrality and invisibility in terms of gender are inappropriate and our students in Australia are asking, through major research projects, that we look at some of these issues, that we acknowledge them and that we work together to try to figure out how we can negotiate a way through a life that has really serious discriminations in terms of gender and race.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I will conclude on this. You are putting arguments in a synthesis framework to us about the same issues that I am putting to you in an analytical framework. We are talking about the same issues and we are approaching it in different ways. What I am saying is that both arguments are valid, aren’t they? Isn’t an approach by analysis as appropriate as one by identifying all the bits and pieces as you are arguing and hoping it makes a whole? Isn’t the argument by approach the same one?

**Ms Hedemann**—I cannot comment. I am not quite sure what you are getting at there.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Okay. Thank you for your contribution and thank you for being prepared to go a little bit over time.

[10.22 a.m.]

**MORGAN-WILLIAMS, Mr Dallas Foster, Manager, MW Training Consultants**

**MORGAN-WILLIAMS, Ms Irena Mary, Training Manager, MW Training Consultants**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome. Thank you for your preparedness to provide a brief submission and to appear before this committee. Would you like to make an introductory statement? Then we will open up the questions.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—MW Training Consultants started in 1994 as a vocational education and training company with a specific focus on literacy and numeracy. In that time we have run a number of programs for what we call disadvantaged or fringe group areas within the region and also in Tasmania, through the LANT program. The organisation also runs, as part of its program, an educational centre for disadvantaged youth from the ages of 12 through to 15 who have been expelled or removed from the education system or who have refused to go to education and training. We also have a number of young people aged 15 and over who come to us through the LANT program for literacy and numeracy support through Centrelink, and we have also adopted some of the distance education programs to support a specific education need.

The company is a very vocationally focused organisation, so everybody in the organisation who trains with us is focused towards a TAFE or higher education learning outcome or towards long-term employment. Many of the young people that we have have very little or no education at all. Their average level is around year 8. Currently we have 10 students under the age of 15 and we are expecting that number to rise to 20 through our centres. We will probably have another 10 students aged 16 through to 18 coming back specifically to pass year 10 to access the apprenticeships and traineeships system.

We also offer information technology free to the young people as part of their operation when they come in to do their LANT programs. Our distance ed children also have that opportunity to do certificate 2 and an introductory program in information technology to support an employment outcome. In a lot of cases with the young ones we try to get them to go on to a TAFE program or return to school. That is proving to be somewhat difficult.

In general, the organisation's philosophy is one of individualised learning. Every single student who works in our organisation, who comes to our organisation, has their own learning program, their own learning structure, based around what they perceive as being their need. So we have a number of young men and women come in who are looking at everything from the army to a trade to information technology. Our job, basically, is to ensure that those young people have an opportunity to get the basic skills to move on and access that form of education and training so they can get long-term employment. That is where we are at the moment.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—To clarify that, you will find on the back of the first page of the document just given to you a sample of the change that we look for in each person coming through. That is an individual who came in as an older man. He had been with us for seven



months. He started, as you can see, with that type of writing and—seven months later, part time—you would call him employable. He is just a sample of the type of change we anticipate and see in the young people and the range of people we work with with the programs. That is where we see the individualised programs working.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Those individualised programs go to some degree—if you look at the last page—into the sorts of figures that we have been getting from clients that traditionally are seen as being unemployable. They come through the centre. We have had 450 referrals through our centres in the last 18 months: 368 were assessed and 100 or so did not even bother to turn up for the assessment. Of those that have stayed with us over the half-year mark, the employment figures are: 79 have been employed and have improved their levels; 63 have re-referred to continue to develop their skills—they are usually low level; six are doing volunteer work at the same time; and 13 are enrolled in vocational courses and approved courses. What I mean by that is that a number of the young people, because they feel very comfortable within a community learning setting—which is what we have—enrol in the open learning institute. We have access through our Internet system for them to get all that information. They enrol through open learning and then re-refer back to us for support. So we have people doing child care and community services, for example. A number of training programs through open learning TAFE are actually coming to our centres and getting support from our trainers at the same time. It is purely to do with the fact that they see the philosophy that we use as being more appropriate for them. What is probably more significant is that these people are traditional Centrelink people who have been long-term unemployed for over 18 months and up to two years, some of them for up to five. They are now coming back and using the education system to do something for themselves.

I move now to the one at the bottom, the distance ed program. The most significant thing about that is the number of inquiries that we are getting just across the region—the only place we have our programs running. There have been 150 inquiries in the last 18 months. Unfortunately, despite a number of interviews—we have done about 55—some of the people do not come to fruition. A lot of them come through our networks with Correctional Services. A number of the very young ones that come to us are on bail or have parole conditions. They do not last very long with us because they usually end up doing something wrong, their bail conditions are revoked and they are put into some form of reform situation. And we have not got a network yet with the reform organisations to get their books on. We are working with distance ed at the moment to have an open program where, if a child is incarcerated, we will be able to send the books through distance ed to the centre so the child can continue their education even though they are incarcerated.

Turning to the number of starts, with 39 starts we had 18 finish. A number of those boys again are in correctional service control or coming through the courts. I have four at the moment who are on parole through the system. Of the 18, 12 were boys and six were girls. Last year we had 10 completions. Of those 10 completions, there were 12 young people who started year 12 and went through. Ten completed maths, English and science, subjects that we believe are core training for apprenticeships and traineeships. It is what employers are looking for: they want good maths and English skills. Of the 12 that went through, 10 completed, two have got jobs in the traineeship system and the other eight who are in years 7, 8 and 9 have re-enrolled and are now back in the system along with a large number of kids that have come to us. All of these

young people have come through a system that is by word of mouth only. We do not advertise it because we are not able to support the numbers that are coming to us.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you want to add anything, Irena?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—Only to say that we started documenting the number of inquiries in about September last year. I wanted to confirm some research that I had done a few years ago that showed there is a hidden group of young people who are not yet listed on Centrelink as unemployed and who are no longer at school. They have fallen out of the system and are just sitting there doing things that maybe we do not want them to do. They are throughout the country. If we have got this number of inquiries in our little region here, then my concern is the replication of that throughout the country.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—The figures that we have on our region, which is DETYA region 15A—subregion Caboolture-Redcliffe joined together—are from discussions we have had with Centrelink because we are the LAN provider there. We have a fairly close relationship with Centrelink. The figures they have are that between 500 and 600 people under the age of 30 years of age have year 8 or less. We are working specifically in that area to try to get those people back inside the system and into a re-educating process. The other area of concern is that we know from statistics and our own research within the region that between 150 and 200 young people every year fall out of the Murrumba Downs region in terms of education. Whether they are expelled, do not go to school, truant regularly or are not achieving is not the question; the question is that the numbers are there. There are a myriad of reasons as to why they are not in school. A lot of them have got family background problems.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you have any sources of funding other than DETYA?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—No.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Total funding?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You have made a whole set of recommendations and I want to ask a question about one. My colleagues may wish to ask questions about the others. On the issue of role models you promote the male, the youth, the boy in positive ‘can do’ language, not at the expense of the female but as wonderfully different. I want you to focus on the word ‘different’, which seems to be a word that some people do not want to use anymore. It used to be a fundamental of education in this country that you would cater for the individual differences among children regardless of any other characteristic. That seems in education departments around this country to have been removed. The valuing of differences is nowhere in the propaganda. You also recommend that the range of male role models available to boys in schools should be widened. Would you like to comment on those two issues: the widening of the role models available to boys and also differences?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—I will start with the differences. Essentially we believe that gender makes people different. Their race, background and life experiences make them all different. But they are different when you are looking at and working with them as individuals. That is

what makes them as people. When we are talking about saying boys 'can do' because they are different, we believe that they can do things that are sensitive, fun, playful and different and show themselves as strong and perhaps as able to be weaker. We feel that being male with the body strengths and all those sorts of qualities is a valuable asset.

If boys are playing around, they should not be seen as acting up, being naughty or having a behavioural problem. It is just spirit; it is part of their growth and it shows that their energy is coming through, especially in the age group of 11 to about 14, where they have got all this growth and energy happening. Instead of pushing it down and suppressing it, we should be saying, 'Great, let's use it.' Let us move more of that into the classroom or into the training or the program that you are doing, instead of trying to squash it because what we want is a quiet, passive person who sits at the desk doing their work well and neatly. There is a lot of stuff that is not done neatly that is excellent work. Because we have programs that are individualised, as I said before, we see that conglomeration, all the different components, rather than it being a case of 'boys act like this and girls act like that'. So we are not looking at a stereotypical approach to the young.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Fundamentally, if you take every person as an individual, look at them as an individual and work with them as an individual, you see strengths and weaknesses in each person. Therefore, when you take out the gender issue and look at them as a person, if you can work with them in that situation, you can build their skills, irrespective of whether they are a boy or a girl. It makes no difference. With respect to the people that we work with, you have to do that. If you don't, you won't make it through the door; it is quite simple. These people have already had years and years of a very negative educational process happening to them. If you are going to turn them around, you have to start dealing with them as an individual—running individual programs at their speed, and that is what we do.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You deal with a small number of girls as well in these programs?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—A very small number of girls.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What sort of conclusions have you reached about that? I do not want to put words in your mouth.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—We have not done any research on it, but I would suggest that, as Irena said, boys between the ages of 11 and 14 start a fairly strong testosterone growth. They have a natural ability to be out there and be, as a lot of teachers will say, difficult. Therefore, they are rewarded by being excluded from education and training—a lot of the ones that have not got control over it.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am asking you about the differences between the boys and the girls.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—The ladies tend to be a lot more passive.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Even in terms of your programs?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Yes, a much bigger difference.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Irena and Dallas, thank you very much for appearing before the committee today. I know we have had discussions before, but I want to touch on the fall-out of 150 to 200 students each year from the school system. I was speaking to the principal of Woodridge State High yesterday. We were talking about this very issue of tracking students when they have been expelled from one school and have probably been expelled from the whole region, and distance education takes it up. You mentioned some sort of tracking system from distance education to kids who have to be incarcerated or go through the corrective services system. There seems to be a lack of some sort of tracking system within the education department as well. Could you comment on what your observations have been on that? For example, if they have been expelled from schools in a whole region, how do we find out about those kids?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—Remember that we are not in the school system, so we rely on information that we gain from people in the school system.

**Ms GAMBARO**—What do you think needs to be done?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—When we did the research what I wanted to look at was whether there was a correlation between truancy and literacy levels, so I worked through the schools in the region. When I met with some of the young people who were truanting or who had been removed from the school system, I found the other children—siblings, friends and so on—sitting at home doing a range of different things. I went back to the school and said, ‘What about Jimmy Smith or Mary Brown? They used to be at your school. Do you know where they are supposed to be now?’ I was told that after six months they drop off the registration at the school. Supposedly, there is a central registration but if they are dropped off that registration system they are not shown anywhere.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—They just disappear.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—They are gone, so to speak. That is all we know. That information might be incorrect.

**Ms GAMBARO**—I think the same issues were raised with me yesterday and these probably need to be looked at in tracking where these kids end up. Do you think that schools need to make changes to their programs to allow for a much more interactive type of education for boys? You talked about girls being more passive and boys being more energetic. Do you think that is probably a reason why a lot of them are dropping out?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—About 50 to 60 per cent of young people will get through regardless of what we do to them in the education system—I am sorry.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—That is a fact.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—So what we are looking at is about 40 per cent of young people who, for whatever reason, it is not working for. For those young people I would say, yes, interaction for the boys—the type of program where in fact they move from desk to desk or in groups and they learn greater interaction. For girls to be bolstered or to feel confident in talking to a range of people, maybe passivity is a problem. I think that is the case, but I also think there are

constraints in some of the subject areas or in some of the ways the timetabling is done. It may not work for all of them. I think we have to have a range of alternative programs to cover that grouping of young people.

**Ms GAMBARO**—I have one last question about the kids that come to you. How many of them are forced to come to you because they have been referred by Centrelink or whatever, and how many of them come voluntarily to see you?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—Only the 16-year-olds and up are referred.

**Ms GAMBARO**—But the younger ones?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—They do not have to.

**Ms GAMBARO**—You are just finding them in the system?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—The parents bring them in because the parents have nowhere else to go.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You are not funded for that?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—No.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We also have JEB for women in domestic violence crisis situations who have to move because of violence, and it is all very private. We have young people, the children of these women, coming into our centre who, because of the trauma they have gone through, cannot operate in a school environment. It is too much for them. That is another network, along with Family Services, and Dallas has mentioned the corrective services people. The Magistrates Court uses us—people can come to do some training or they can go here or they can go there.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—A lot of youth agencies refer people to us who are maybe not in trouble but homeless or fringe homeless.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—There are a lot of street kids.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Most of the kids we have are street kids, ex-street kids or fringe. As an example, as I was saying before, two of the young girls in my program at the moment were prostitutes at 12 years of age. They are now both setting up to do traineeships and both have completed year 10. They have been with me now for four years, so it has taken four years to turn them round. Those are the sorts of young people who come through our system—that is normal.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And you have received no funding for those two girls?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—Not for years.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Did you apply for funding from government? You haven't applied?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—There is no funding in the Queensland system for us.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—Under the FSSR, the funding actually goes to the schools.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—It goes to the children in danger, not to the ones who have gone.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—These are gone; these are out.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—They are out of the system and they come back through the other way.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Have you approached the Queensland education department?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—We have.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We have a good relationship with them.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—We do. They have FSSR funding but, unless the child is referred specifically from the school to us—and they are now starting to talk to us about those ideas—we do not get any funding as such in what we do for these people.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So no-one takes responsibility for them?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—No.

**Mrs ELSON**—In your submission, under the issues that impact on boys, you mention lack of male teachers, communication and a few issues in education. Did that information come from educators or from the clients that you speak to and through the rapport that you build up with them, I guess, to enable you to find out about an individual person and their problems? Does it come from those people or from the educators you are speaking to?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—It comes from the kids.

**Mrs ELSON**—So it is very independent.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—That is the young people's perception of how they see education—what it is to them. As I said, all of these people—or 100 per cent of those who come to us—have significant negative experiences through the system. I am not saying that the child is right in every case; I am saying that all of these people have significant barriers to education and training, and in the long-term that creates a whole lot of other social issues by the time they are into their teens.

**Mrs ELSON**—Is it your perception then that they have not been treated as individuals and that their needs were not identified in the school system?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We have millions of anecdotal stories. We are not taking on board a ‘bleeding heart’ type thing and saying, for example, ‘You poor thing, you were bullied at school.’ The particular examples that these young people come up with are really outside what a teacher is supposed to be doing in interacting. I have got a teaching background and I worked for a long time in this sort of area. I have seen it; I have seen the way other teachers have dealt with people and noted their listening skills. I have especially observed the listening skills of adults per se with children and often with teachers. They are not open; it is not active listening. We take on board what the young people have said but we also take some of it with a grain of salt. We have also had experience with teachers who deal with young people at that level, and it is not always with the respect that we believe people should be given. They are the anecdotes, as it says, verbatim from some of the young ones.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Thank you for your submission. You mentioned boys suffering ADD and ADHD. You suggest that we ought to be looking at symptoms rather than just addressing it with medication. What is your experience with boys you have dealt with who are suffering from ADD? What alternative approaches have you tried and how successful have they been?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We have had two cases. One was given medication to keep himself under control. Within an hour of starting the program with him, his head would be on the desk and he was out of it. He was 12.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—He had been on Ritalin since he was six.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—His behaviour when he was coming out of the medication was ‘off the tree’. He had problems—breaking and entering and doing all sorts of things. He was just not in control. In that situation we tried to mediate with the medication and the mother, et cetera. He is a lost one. He ended up in jail early, in Woodford or somewhere. He has gone now. The other example—

**Mr BARTLETT**—So he stayed on Ritalin? You did not successfully wean him off?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—No.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—There are four whom we have successfully pulled off the Ritalin over an 18-month period of time and they are now going on to higher education and training. Their attention spans have doubled because of very simple things: simple food, good nutrition, drinking water instead of Coke, eating quality food instead of Maccas, looking at their lifestyle, exercise and starting to feel really good about themselves. Within the space of about six to eight months you can start to see a dramatic change. It starts very slowly and then all of a sudden it just takes off.

**Mr BARTLETT**—So it is standard stuff. Have you deliberately set out to measure that, or can you—

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We can see it in their training.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—You can see the way they do their work and the quality of their results; you can see it in the way that they are starting to pick up information. It would normally just go straight past their eyes.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—A lot of the time we use computers with the ADD kids because their attention span is so short. They actually make decisions really quickly, and that is what you want if you have someone working with computers. So we put them on the computers to get them to learn ABCD, that sort of thing. We teach them little programs and they can do it. The longer we can keep them on the computers and then off again and on again, the more their attention span increases, because they are motivated to learn and they want to be there.

**Mr BARTLETT**—You have small groups of individuals. Would that approach be as successful in a classroom context? Would the approach of changing diet, et cetera, work as well when they are with 25 other kids in a classroom?

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—We have 18 to 20 people, and we have 80 young people scattered throughout.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—The centre is actually run on the basis that it is open learning. The Redcliffe centre runs with between 30 and 35 people a day, and the one in Caboolture runs from about 20 to 30. The ages are from 12 right through to 50. We are able to do that within that environment simply because we are always focusing on the individual. We are looking at the way they learn and why they learn.

**Senator BARTLETT**—When you have 30 people, how many supervisors or staff do you have?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—If we are running 35 people through a centre, we will have four fully qualified people on the floor. We are running about one to eight, one to 10 or one to 15.

**Ms Morgan-Williams**—With that particular group, you provide them with work to do, you change it every 10 or 15 minutes and then you extend the time.

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—It is about keeping their interest long enough to be able to do something and to show them that learning can be progressive. You then take them back and show them the work they did three or four months ago and the work they are doing now. You put it in front of them, and it is a very visual thing for an ADD person. They see it.

**Mr BARTLETT**—By the way, it is still higher than you would have in a lot of classrooms, unless you have parental support, teachers aides and so on. It is your view, then, that with some of these strategies—changing diet—you could actually take a lot of people off Ritalin, in classroom situations, who are currently using it?

**Mr Morgan-Williams**—For the ones we have worked with, we have been reasonably successful at taking the Ritalin out of their diet and then substituting these other things and changing the way they think. But to do that you have to have a very high teacher or trainer focus, which is what we carry. The school system unfortunately has one to 25 or 30. We are running four trainers against 35 clients. They are constantly rotating, dealing with the individual



and the individual training program that that person has. So there is always a focus on who those people are and where they are going. That deals with a whole lot of self-esteem issues, it deals with a whole lot of progress issues and people can actually see themselves moving forward. That is really the fundamental process.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I have a general comment for Dallas and Irena. Working with young people who are sometimes abandoned by society is a very difficult task, and we would like to pass on our regards to you for your work with young people and also for your submission and your being here this morning. This committee may in fact go into the next parliament—we are not too sure—but when it does table its report the secretariat will forward a copy of that report to you. Thank you very much for your participation this morning.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.54 a.m. to 11.06 a.m.**

**HEALY, Dr Annah Helena, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education), Queensland University of Technology**

**McWILLIAM, Associate Professor Erica Lenore, Assistant to the Dean (Postgraduate Programs), Queensland University of Technology**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome and thank you for putting forward such an interesting submission to this inquiry. Would you like to make some introductory comments, and then we will just open it up for questions.

**Prof. McWilliam**—I will just make some broad comments, particularly in relation to situating boys in a social-cultural context, especially a context to do with work, work culture and changing work culture. Then Annah will take up more specific issues to do with literacy and some of the things that we see as the key imperatives in that area and some of the approaches that might be useful.

Clearly, the issue of boys is resonating in a whole range of areas. As you quite rightly said before, Rod, there is an amount of push and pull in relation to that. One of the things that we have got our eye on very much is the changing culture of work and particularly the sorts of skills which are now understood to be important to an enterprising culture, a culture of performance. Increasingly, in terms of global workplace change, there has been a decline in the number of people employed in what was once industrial production and very much an increase in the number of people employed in the office and counter sectors, particularly the service sector. So the things that boys might once have gone into, the jobs which were in the backroom—the fitters and turners and so forth—is a shrinking world of work.

There is no doubt that the world of work that is increasing is a world of service work. Service involves a whole range of skills, particularly in communication; it involves a range of what Karpin called enterprise skills. I think the Karpin report is very important, and education has not picked up on it very much, I have to say. The Karpin report raises questions around the nature of the enterprise culture and enterprise skills. Karpin actually elaborated on a number of what were called ‘enterprise skills’. That came out in ‘Enterprising nation’, 1995. It is clear that the people who have those skills, particularly the skills of service provision—clear communication and an ability to engage with other people, hear what their needs are and try to meet those needs—are the ones who are increasingly employable.

There are a range of ways in which boys’ cultures militate against some of those service skills. A particular issue for some sections of boys in our community is that the imperatives of service—saying to people, ‘Can I help you?’ ‘How are you?’ ‘My name is ...’ and even making eye contact and sustaining communication in a way that invites other people in—for a whole range of cultural reasons are skills which girls are more likely to have. I do not personally believe it is because of something about girls’ brains. There is a lot we know from research with babies about the way in which little girls are engaged with and the ways little boys are engaged with. We know that, if you dress up a baby in pink, people are more likely to talk to that baby when they care for it. We know that, if you dress that same baby up in blue, that little blue baby

is encouraged to run and explore. On the issue of whether it is brain or environment, we know a lot about what the setting does.

I think it is fair to presume that, particularly in certain sorts of subsections of gender cultures, girls may be able to prove themselves capable performers on a number of the Karpin enterprise skills. It seems to me from what we are seeing now that the boys are going to struggle to do that. I will just give you a couple of figures from our sources. The office sector in two decades in Australia has grown by 55 per cent to 3.3 million. The counter sector, face-to-face work, has grown by 111 per cent to 1.4 million. Full-time employment of more than 40 hours per week is on the rise. I think we all know about the more than 40 hours a week sort of employment. Meanwhile, the industry sector has seen a decline in full-time jobs—a decline of 7.7 per cent in two decades. The industry sector has also seen a decline in part-time jobs, and full-time employment of 40 hours or less a week is declining.

The point that we deduce from all this is that job seekers who do not have service or social interaction skills, strong communication skills, will either have no jobs or they will be consigned to the shrinking, less skilled sectors of the economy. I think that is a real issue for boys. And it is an issue for particular groups of boys for whom service, engagement, pleasant communication and social interaction cut across their very different definition of masculinity. To offer service is seen to be something, to put it bluntly, that poofters do. I think that is hard for a lot of boys. For the boys who do not carry that personal prejudice, it is a very strong cultural factor which militates against boys picking up on the Karpin enterprise skills. For us, there is a broad agenda about employability. We also think there is an agenda whereby certain numbers of boys will not be as employable while we continue to see the importance of the communication and negotiation skills and the social interaction skills—such as being positive and flexible—that are defined by Karpin. That is the broad agenda in relation to work. There is a subset of issues there in relation to literacy.

**Mr EMERSON**—Before you came in, we were having a discussion with Education Queensland. Julia asked the fundamentally important question: what has changed—given that around 20 years ago the performance of boys relative to girls was about the same at least in terms of year 12 retention—there may be other indicators—and now it has diverged dramatically? We were grappling with that and then you come in and give us what I think is the answer—that is, the changing nature of the work force in terms of the demand for labour.

**Prof. McWilliam**—And then what is valued in terms of skills; different things are being valued.

**Mr EMERSON**—Personally, I would urge the secretariat to place a lot of emphasis on this, because this is something that is objectively identifiable as a change that has occurred. A lot of other stuff such as ‘attitudes are changing’ has been said, but there has been nothing that could ever be tested.

**Prof. McWilliam**—I think you can get bogged down with the ‘what about the boys’ as distinct from the feminist stuff. I think there is a meta issue which gets lost when we get into that push and pull. And I think the meta issue is much more to do with the changing workload.

**Mr EMERSON**—It is quite simple. It is great when complex problems have simple explanations instead of complex problems having complex ones. I think it may be remarkably simple. I was just looking through here for this Karpin stuff. I may have missed it, but I cannot see it in the submission.

**Dr Healy**—It is not in the submission at all; this is other work that we are doing.

**Mr EMERSON**—Can we get that presented through the committee processes?

**Prof. McWilliam**—Yes, sure. I have a project here, *Enterprising futures for boys in regional Queensland*. What we are trying to do is to work with the DPI to get some of that going. We have not had this funded yet, so I will just say that. This is just in a power point presentation of easy read bullet points: what the enterprise skills are; why we should focus on those; what it means in terms of the boys; and what we are planning to do about it. It is all here. I am happy to leave that with you, Craig.

**Mr EMERSON**—Not only may we have identified the fundamental problem but the possible solutions then flow in terms of what sort of teaching can actually encourage boys to enter into the occupations that are growing.

**Dr Healy**—I think so.

**Prof. McWilliam**—And girls too. I think what we are saying is there is another issue here.

**Mr EMERSON**—Sure. Julie will back this up, but we do not want to see anything that is to the detriment of girls. I have questioned the value of having an inquiry into the education of boys.

**Dr Healy**—If it de-franchises. It does not mean to, but it can do if we are not very careful.

**Prof. McWilliam**—We do not need to set it up as boys versus girls. It is not. I think changing work culture is not about that. It has always been true that some sectors of the community have been better placed to have their skills understood as valuable. What you have now is a huge shift in what constitutes valuable skills. Some people call it emotional literacy. I find that a bit suspect because I do not like the idea that we can be trained in our emotions. That is something that Daniel Goleman is very keen on. I would not be looking to push it into the area of emotional literacy too quickly, but I certainly feel that we can account for an amount of genuine concern around the futures of boys if we do a cultural reading at that level.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I would have thought in the last couple of last years in particular with call centres and the way in which people get information these days that face to face employment is falling. Communication in call centres right around this country, which is increasing dramatically, is not face to face at all—it is on the end of a telephone. You cannot get any information from banks these days unless you ring a 13 number. If you want almost anything in this country, you go through a call centre. That is not face to face employment, is it? They are a different set of skills again.

**Prof. McWilliam**—But there is a dimension now to service. The guy who came to put my phone in recently said, ‘Yeah, no worries. Yeah, no worries.’ Once there was no problem with him saying ‘Yeah, no worries’ 15 times and leaving. Now there actually is a problem. He now has other things that he is required to do in an enterprise culture which he once did not have to do. There is something else now which he has to do—make eye contact with me and say his name. There were things that were never once required. I take your point, Rod, but I also think that this is something that is permeating a whole range of service provision and is now an extra piece that was never part of it.

**Dr Healy**—As Erica pointed out and as you have pointed out, at the end of the telephone you have to be far more articulate than you do face to face because you do not have the other non-verbal language to support what you are saying. So it is very important that messages can be transported through a telephone as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I was talking to a supervisor in a Telstra call centre in Adelaide where all the calls are logged. He said that the young men who answer are far quicker and far more precise in their explanations that are requested than the girls are. The girls take a lot longer but may be a lot friendlier. Sometimes people want a long presentation and appreciate that. Sometimes people appreciate the ‘No worries’ once and think, ‘Don’t talk to me. Just put the phone on.’

**Mr BARTLETT**—I agree with what you are saying about the need to develop some of those other skills—cultural, social and communication skills with boys—but that still does not detract from the literacy issues at the early years.

**Dr Healy**—I had not spoken about it yet.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Sorry, am I jumping the gun here a bit?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Why don’t we ask Annah to make some introductory comments.

**Dr Healy**—First of all I will define ‘literacy’ for you. It comes from ‘literati’ and means the ability to read and write. So the way that literacy has been fragmented, such as environmental literacy and so forth may have a place, but that is not what I am on about. I am on about literacy in the Latinised sense—that means being able to communicate by either writing or reading it.

I am coming from, if you like, two branches of interest, and I will touch on the first one very briefly. It is about physiological factors, which have very little to do with anything that Erica has said or anything that I have got to say about social education and literacy. Where it sometimes goes wrong and boys get pushed to the edge is that there may be a basic physiological difference. There is quite a lot of evidence about that. The fact is that in many male children—not all, so we have to be careful there—and in some girl children too, the cortex at the base of the brain closes much more slowly than it does in others, and that has an effect on the child’s laterality focus. So learning to read in our culture, that is from left to right, may be an almost impossible task for some children.

Scandinavian countries have picked that up. They have now mandated that no child will have formal reading until they are seven years of age. If they learn to read in the meantime, that is

fine, but they know that sometimes when we force little boys too early and they are not ready they are literally trying to see stuff that we see, but they do not see it; they may be seeing the spaces between words. So it makes it virtually impossible to teach reading. That is the physiological difference. If we are forcing them, then that may become a psychological barrier: 'This is hard, I can't do it.' So other things come into the early childhood classroom, and little boys are often marginalised because they find reading hard, where others have picked it up. I stress that this does not affect all boys, but it is a physiological difference that we have detected through research.

In terms of learning to read and write in early childhood years, we are now astute to that, but there are the social construction issues within literacy and how we bring them to the classroom in different ways. I think boys have been alienated because, in many classrooms, we are still looking at a very bourgeois, middle-class, Western notion of literacy—the criterion 'book'—and a lot of children come with other experiences. The book is no longer so central in some homes; it is no longer central in the community. If you go into Myer, you watch four-year-olds pushing buttons to find where mum wants to go. They are very literate in another kind of way, so it means that the child's focus to read is there. I think that is a really important thing in primary education in particular—that we look at what children are actually bringing now, in this contemporary context, to classrooms, and not forcing children immediately away from that as though it were some bad thing, and that the only literacy that exists is in a print fairytale literacy.

Going beyond that, it is not about computer literacy overtaking print literacy, either. They are different kinds of literacies which must be engaged in from the start, so that they run parallel with each other. Within that, the oral communications that help to build understanding of that is being left out and maybe ought to be in there. For example, if you walk into year 6 and 7 classrooms, you will see kids sitting around a computer, totally unmonitored. It is almost the reward for when the real work of classrooms is done, so the literacy is still in this traditional thing that kids do not see the particular point of it. They do not know where it leads to, but there is nothing monitored, directed or critiqued. There are no critical aspects of literacy going on around that space that they think is terribly important. Nor do you find, in most cases, that the literacies are an avenue to the sorts of things that Erica was talking about. What will you need to do if you do those kinds of jobs? What do you need to know?

It is not even a recidivistic practice. It is hanging on to what was really important until about 1979, and which began to be less important after that. So it really does need to be a new curriculum. You have heard of the work that Alan Luke and people like that are doing with new basics and so on, but it is more than that as well. It is about not saying that we moved totally from print to here. It is not saying that we now recognise that boys are like that. We do have to recognise what boys read and what they are interested in. In order to help children to become literate, we have to work from what they are familiar with and what they want to know. So it is a shift, if you like.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I agree with what you are saying about different forms of literacy, but whether it is print or computer based, children still need to be able to recognise the combinations of letters in order to be able to read the words.

**Dr Healy**—I am not saying they do not.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Whether it is on a screen or in a book.

**Dr Healy**—Absolutely. Print literacy is one medium among many. That is the push I would make: what it is for is more important—‘What am I doing this for?’ This is the stuff that Erica has been talking about: ‘What am I being prepared for?’ is what kids have lost and a lot of boys have lost—and ‘Why do I need to do this?’

**Mr BARTLETT**—It is not so much what it is for that is an issue for them at the age of 5 or 6—

**Dr Healy**—No, but we are preparing them then.

**Mr BARTLETT**—The skills that they need and the ultimate use of those is absolutely essential, and they still need to develop those skills. Is it your view that there are differences in the way that literacy is taught that advantage or disadvantage girls over boys? We have had a number of witnesses and submissions that say that a much more structured approach is better for boys and a whole of language approach is better for girls. Do you subscribe to that?

**Dr Healy**—No, I do not at all. It is the experience of the child in the world outside a school and the link that that they can make within the classroom, and I do not think that is gender specific. I think that is a myth. In fact, there is no real work that substantiates that at all. We find that some girls are equally disaffected when their practices and life worlds are very different from the stuff they find within the classroom.

**Mr BARTLETT**—That is interesting. A number of other submissions have argued the opposite—based on research as well—that the more structured approach is better for boys.

**Dr Healy**—I think there is a structured approach that has a place in time, and that is in early childhood education for a lot of children. A lot of children respond very positively to a very structured approach. Nearly 20 per cent of children come into school already reading print. They have been able to break these codes and get into the whole thing. So it is about difference as well. A lot of the boy-girl thing is, as Erica said, that girls tend to have been talked to, they have learned to verbalise and they have learned to recontextualise things with language in ways that boys often do not.

A lot of the research that we use for students at the university shows children in a kindergarten playground. The boys are in a sandpit with their little trucks and things, and they are verbalising in a way that is equal to the girls around the dressing of dolls. There is a much closer match between what the girls are doing around those dolls in the classroom, very often with a female teacher, than there is between the conversations that the boys have and what they do in the classroom. The boys do not actually see how that is connected, whereas it is a very clear transition for the girls, and that is the beginning point of difference. It is the way it is treated.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Perhaps then in the classroom the pedagogy should more closely reflect what the boys are doing outside, so we can bridge the gap more easily if we are aware of that problem and are directing our in-class activities to overcoming that problem.

**Dr Healy**—Yes. And there are subsets; it is not only boys and girls. There are Aboriginal and Samoan groups of children and white western groups. So it is a matter of recognising what children bring with them and what is important to them.

**Prof. McWilliam**—There is also a broader issue, which is to do with the culture of schooling more generally and the idea that schooling has increasingly become associated with being a female thing to do, as we have a highly feminised teaching force. One of the great tensions for us is that, at the moment, we are both highly suspicious of men who seem to be involved in the lives of six-year-old children and at the same time insisting that we need more male teachers.

We know in our university—and have documented it—that we are losing male teachers in primary education. We never had any in early childhood, but we are certainly losing them from primary. There are men who are simply saying, ‘I refuse to be guilty of suspicion; I am not going to take my family and my children through that.’ We do not know how widespread that is—and it is one of the issues that I am getting an ARC grant to have a look at more closely. In schools where the only male figure is the groundsman and the boys are actually following that groundsman around or rushing to the fence when a man comes in a truck what we get—and it is a bad thing for women too—is an understanding that women are the hacks and are always available and that men are sexy and exciting. It is not just the boys that run to the fence to say, ‘There’s a man.’ I know of a school where that has happened recently—‘A man, a man!’—and the kids ran to the fence to watch him doing something exciting with a truck and a ladder.

If we have come to this and we cannot seriously say, ‘Let’s get a lot more men in year 1,’ we then have what Joanne Wallace calls child panic, where we panic about the physical bodies of men in close proximity to our five- and six-year-olds. We are going to lose. One of the ways we may well lose is increasingly with the idea that schools are where women work and where kids watch women work, and men are somewhere else doing exciting things.

**Mr BARTLETT**—It is particularly exacerbated, of course, by the fact that many children are growing up in families without an adult male role model.

**Prof. McWilliam**—Absolutely.

**Dr Healy**—Absolutely. There is also a lot of very spurious work being done on the fact that boys do not read. In fact, they were asked questions about what print books they read. They read lots, but they do not necessarily read print books. So there is a lot of work to be done on giving truth to this. Boys are being set up in a particular social construction on some very spurious research as well.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I will ask one other question and then I will move on. You mentioned the Scandinavian example of no structured reading programs until age seven.

**Dr Healy**—Age seven, which is the—

**Mr BARTLETT**—What other results have they measured in terms of their level of literacy—say, by the time they complete primary school or complete year 3 or 4? If so, how does that compare with what it was before they introduced this approach?



**Dr Healy**—It was mandated in 1999, so it is much too soon to say. However, I do not know whether any of you are aware of Montessorian schools and so forth, but that has been their own particular philosophy for a long time. For children who go through those less pressured, if you like, less structured schools until a particular point of time, reading and writing does not seem to be a particular issue. I think it was Julia Spireli who did a very good piece of research back in 1998, looking at the differences in the types of schooling. She used various contexts for her research, but she showed that, where children were not pressured until a particular time and they felt what she called ‘social equity’ among their group, they seemed to learn without the kinds of difficulties that other children who were pressured too early can sometimes have. We still take children in depending on their age and to the month or whatever. We know that the maturation levels of five-year olds are hugely different depending on their life world outside of school. So those sorts of factors are there. The information has been around for a long time.

**Mr BARTLETT**—I am nervous about going down that path but—

**Dr Healy**—Yes. I would not necessarily recommend it.

**Ms GILLARD**—I want to be clear about some of this early literacy information. We have had people come to the inquiry and say—in terms of the development of literacy for four-, five-, six- or seven-year-old children—that there is a greater incidence of hearing defects in young boys and that affects literacy. I would be interested in your comment on that.

**Dr Healy**—Absolutely.

**Ms GILLARD**—That is true?

**Dr Healy**—Absolutely. Until children make what we call graphophonic relationships—that is, the relationship between what they hear and how we show them what it looks like—sometimes they cannot distinguish between the sounds. Therefore, they do not know what the differences are when they see something like ‘sh’ and ‘ch’ and ‘th’. They hear that as the one sound. We are saying, ‘Look, it has all of these different ways of being represented,’ so hearing is absolutely important. The other thing is we know that children cannot begin to become literate until they have phonemic awareness, understanding of those sounds, and phonological awareness, which relates to that issue about deafness. So they need to be able to hear it as we say it.

**Ms GILLARD**—But is there evidence that those skills develop more slowly in boys?

**Dr Healy**—I would not have any kind of evidence of that at all. That is saying that boys have a medical condition to a greater degree than girls have, and I do not know that. I have no idea of knowing that, and I have never seen anything that says that. It may exist, but I do not know.

**Ms GILLARD**—I think we have had evidence before this inquiry. But having normal hearing, if I can put it that way, as opposed to the development of the ability to link the sound with—

**Dr Healy**—One precedes the other. You have to be able to hear it clearly to know what it is.

**Ms GILLARD**—We have had it put at both levels that there is a greater preponderance of the absence of normal hearing in boys and that boys—even boys with normal hearing—more slowly develop the capacity to link a sound with a thing. You would say you are aware of those conditions, obviously, but not aware that they are disproportionate in boys.

**Dr Healy**—There is quite a lot of research on boys' inability to represent shapes in the same way that girls can represent them. There can be about a 15- to 18-month difference in that. That affects reading and writing.

**Ms GILLARD**—Is that shape recognition?

**Dr Healy**—Absolutely.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Recognise or use?

**Dr Healy**—Recognise.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The opposite of usage.

**Dr Healy**—There is quite a well-known experiment where children in year 1 looked at a simple line of text. It was a simple sentence. Text was covered up except for two letter shapes at a time.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You are saying letter shapes?

**Dr Healy**—Yes, letter shapes. Children were asked to represent what they saw. The girls represented it almost perfectly even before they could read. The boys were often trying to create the space that was in between the two letters. It was an interesting experiment. They were not even looking for the outline that we know makes letter shapes. There is all of that stuff as well. It is the way they visualise what is there.

**Ms GILLARD**—The other thing that was put to us in terms of the development of literacy is that one of the explanations for the differentials between boys and girls was that girls develop fine manual dexterity skills more quickly and that you need that for writing.

**Dr Healy**—Fine motor skills.

**Ms GILLARD**—Is that true?

**Dr Healy**—Yes, there is lots of evidence to show that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What about gross motor skills?

**Dr Healy**—Gross motor skills are normally in place for both sets, but the fine motor skills that develop from the gross are slower in many male children, but not all. We have got to be really careful about saying there is an immense difference for all boys, because it is not true. You would go to certain places and find there is very little difference between the boys and

girls. I am not sure what happens there. If we go to other places, it might be to do with experience and what children actually do in the home. You find little girls with pairs of scissors a lot more than you find boys with pairs of scissors. They will be out doing big things—riding bikes, pushing trucks and so forth. Once again, it relates to the things that children get to do. There are no simple answers to any of these matters.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In terms of your introduction, you gave what I would have thought was a narrower view of literacy than we are used to. You said ‘reading and writing’, whereas I would have thought the definition of literacy was much wider than that.

**Dr Healy**—It has become wider.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Reading is a receival skill, writing is a transmission skill, speaking is a transmission skill, listening is a receiving skill, non-verbal communication is a transmission skill—literacy is in a much wider sense. Do you still stick to a narrower sense of literacy?

**Dr Healy**—I said that very deliberately because I see literacy, in a way, as a science. What has gone wrong is that it has become this warm, fuzzy, fit-all thing. What we are really talking about is the difference between orality and literacy. We know that some tribal peoples have immensely sophisticated orality. Their literacy is through drawings. That is how they communicate. ‘Literati’ meant ‘to write’. Literacy means a form of communication which is permanent, to some degree; orality is not, unless we record it. It is not, in terms of being able to reflect on it in a written sense. We have got to refocus again on becoming literate in ways that differ from communicating orally. I do not see that as literacy. It is the underpinning of literacy. You have got to have that to become literate. Then you have got reading and writing. That happens in print, multimedia and it can happen on sand. Being literate can happen in a number of ways. But it is recorded messages in some way.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Does the University of Queensland have any documentation in terms of attainment of girls and boys 20 or 40 years ago?

**Prof. McWilliam**—The University of Queensland or our university? We know nothing of sandstone, Rod! We talk about three universities: we have sandstone, vanstone and unkempt. We are not sandstone so we are either vanstone or unkempt, and we think we are probably vanstone.

**ACTING CHAIR**—My question is still valid.

**Dr Healy**—We have gained lots of evidence since 1995. Prior to that, some figures are available on literacy levels, but you will not find much before 1992 on differences between boys and girls.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Our Commonwealth department of education has given us quite detailed data.

**Dr Healy**—For boys and girls?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Dr Healy**—I do not think that has been made generally available to these people.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Basically—in a sense, the argument of 40 years ago—I think they would probably argue very strongly that curriculum and examination systems were structured in a way that grossly discriminated against women and girls. But 20 years ago—

**Dr Healy**—I see what you are talking about. Yes, that is there.

**Prof. McWilliam**—It is interesting to make the point that, when Greek and Latin were seen to be the passport to cultural capital, boys happened to be very good at Greek and Latin. When languages were not a passport to cultural capital, boys were not very good at languages. But then, when Japanese came in and was thought to be a new passport to cultural capital in the eighties, suddenly it was the boys performing much better at Japanese than at European languages. So the way we almost invent those capacities is interesting. I think it is interesting to note what we are saying about 19th century boys and this argument that boys were much better at languages than girls in the 19th century because languages were a passport to the sort of capital we are talking about. I think those things can still be very culturally loaded.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What about learning styles? A lot of people have put forward the argument to this committee that girls are very comfortable—girls have even told us that themselves—and that they are on task and quite happy to work through modules in a linear way, whereas boys are not terribly turned on by that sort of style of pedagogy and that style of interpreting the curriculum. They would rather a more active than a more passive curriculum. Could you comment on that and on the comments by a couple of principals of high schools yesterday who said that, if they wanted to improve education in this state—and they were talking, I think, more about their own education department—their education department needed to appreciate more risk taking, and all that that entails, and creativity.

**Dr Healy**—Problem-solving based.

**Prof. McWilliam**—We think health and safety and risk management practices are changing quite dramatically the way teachers teach. You might have seen on the weekend—to respond to your question—that the trip to Tangalooma is now no longer possible because one of the disabled students sued. It was not possible to download her from the barge, so she was left behind. So the whole school will now have to forgo the Tangalooma trips. They will have to find some other trip to go on which is safer for her, because it was not safe for her to get off the barge. This is another one of those issues like the one: ‘We want men in with our children, but we don’t.’

We want risk taking, but we are increasingly delimited by risk management strategies that say, ‘For God’s sake don’t take the kids outside. Be very careful what you do now.’ I think there are a number of imperatives that really do make it very difficult. I suppose the question is what sort of risk taking we are talking about. But the imperative to take risks, which I understand in an enterprise culture—it is very important to it—is precisely the imperative that teachers have been warned against; that in fact litigation is actually being mounted to stop it.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I was not talking so much about putting children at risk in dangerous situations. I was talking in the sense of being a little innovative and a little more flexible in terms of how principals and their staff can operate within the school system.

**Dr Healy**—I would agree with that.

**Prof. McWilliam**—You would hope for that. I think there are still some implications about the literal business of active versus passive in some of those things that you are asking teachers to do. As an ex drama teacher and a teacher who taught in a boys school for 14 years, I do know that I worked very hard to be innovative, but I also know that you are still pushing in some cases. Accidents can occur because you are encouraging people to literally move—if you had anchored them it would not have happened, and so forth. There is still an implication there, I think.

**Dr Healy**—We are living in changing times, though. I know that the tasks we ask our students to do in the pathway forward to becoming literate should change radically. They should see the purpose of those literacy activities, so change is essential in that way. It ought to be a lot more about problem solving and looking at purposes and audiences and how different those are and therefore having a reason to become literate in a number of different ways for a number of different purposes. That is slightly different from Erica's response. Task orientation has to change markedly if we are going to get boys to be very interested in what we are doing. We should also give them the purpose for why they are reading and writing, and it has to be something they know as the real world out there.

**Prof. McWilliam**—When you say, 'Go out into that real world,' that starts to be a problem. I do think there are a range of ways in which we can restructure the tasks.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In the literature and the way people present submissions—we are only in the early stages of this inquiry—there sometimes seems to be questionable balance. There are good and bad things about almost everything in this world. Take a concept like competition—it is not all bad. There are some positives to competition, and there are some huge negatives. There are some negatives to cooperation in the sense that it can reduce people to the lowest common denominator, it can be uniforming and it can be conforming. In the propaganda these days there is almost an omission of what was very much there in the 1970s: valuing the uniqueness of children and catering for individual differences. You do not see that anywhere in the propaganda these days, and I wonder why not. What is so dangerous about catering for the unique differences among children? Is it dangerous? Am I missing something? Why isn't it there?

**Dr Healy**—I do not think it is a matter of danger or safety; it is a matter of the development of things within a globalised world that just keep adding to our agendas. It has become very difficult to choose exactly how you make the individual fit within this huge global thing. If you look at the history of education, you will see that we always fly back. The UK has gone back to the literacy hour—mandated. They will all do exactly the same thing—kids with IQs ranging widely, kids from different cultural backgrounds.

**ACTING CHAIR**—They are also going to get rid of comprehensive high schools.

**Dr Healy**—Exactly. It is one size fits all. We know that that will never, and can never, be the case. In literacy there is a changed textual landscape. The things that we respond to and react to—even jolly billboards are a completely different kettle of fish from—

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is not the question I am asking. What I am saying is that there appear to be omissions in the propaganda put forward on all sides. There are people who push biological differences between the way girls and boys learn, and there is another group of people who will not acknowledge that that even exists and say that it is all environmental. All of those arguments have been put to us this morning.

**Prof. McWilliam**—At the turn of the century here were nine categories of children in schools. One was ‘normal’ and there were another eight categories such as ‘moron’ and ‘idiot’—they were actual categories. Now there are over 300 categories to describe individual differences. My sense is that no, we have not given that away; we keep inventing categories. We have invented more categories to fit kids into who do not fit into other categories, and we continue to proliferate categories.

That is very useful in many respects, as we can identify ADD, ADHD, then ODD, and on we go. I also happen to think that we invent the child as we invent the category to some extent. If you ask teachers, most of them will tell you that they want to help each individual reach their full potential. I would almost say it is a mantra. To me one of the great challenges is community capacity building because markets are embedded in communities—and that is where I take your point about competition. The challenge of community capacity building, which is a very important reason to do the sort of work that you are doing and do it inclusively, is to help people understand the ways in which unique individuals contribute to communities.

If there is one message that we seem to be getting politically it is that the breakdown of communities has huge ramifications for everybody. More important is to understand the relationship between unique individuals and community capacity building and what role literacy and socialisation have in those things. It is also important to help people understand what is in it for them to develop capacities which pay off for communities as well as for themselves.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There being no further questions, thank you very much. I do not know whether you answered my question on balance, but it was a very interesting response nevertheless. Thank you, Erica and Annah, for taking the time to put your submission in and being prepared to be with us here this morning.

[11.57 a.m.]

**COOK, Mr Bruce, Australian Hub Chairman (and Headmaster, Southport School), International Boys Schools Coalition**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome, Bruce. Thank you very much for giving us the submission and for being prepared to participate in this public hearing today. Would you state the capacity in which you appear and perhaps follow that with some introductory comments, and then we can open up for questions.

**Mr Cook**—Certainly. I am very happy to be here. I am the headmaster of the Southport School on the Gold Coast in Queensland which is an Anglican independent boys only day and boarding school founded in 1901. I am also the chair of the Australian Hub of the International Boys Schools Coalition. I will say something about that shortly. I am a member of the standing committee of AHISA, which is the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, that I think has made a separate submission to this inquiry. I sit on the council of Griffith University here in Queensland and have links with Bond University. I am doing a doctorate myself, researching issues relating to boys' learning and development. In fact, the thesis title is, 'Motivation and other behavioural characteristics in boys: a contextual comparison'. The contexts that are varying there are boys in boys' schools and boys in co-ed schools. There is a lot of statistical analysis going on there, and I can say more about that later, if you like.

I suppose I wrote to the committee in my role as coordinating the Australian Hub of the International Boys Schools Coalition which is a fairly new, mid-1990s, initially North American based but international now, rapidly growing organisation of boys' schools around the world with member schools in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Japan and South Africa. It is growing rapidly. We have just this month appointed our first full-time executive director who will be based, initially anyway, in the States. There is a board meeting in Boston next week, but unfortunately I am not able to go to that because of other commitments. Normally I do go to the board meetings. There are two a year in the United States, one in February and one October-November, and there is a third board meeting held at the annual conference of the association which this year will be in London at a school called Dulwich College, an old boys boarding school in London.

The origins of the association were really a concern worldwide—lots of researchers were picking up what was going wrong with boys, what was happening to boys. We certainly see it reflected here in this country: failing at school, dropping behind in literacy and numeracy levels, dropping out of school, getting into trouble with the police, subsequent recidivism and, at the extreme end, of course, grossly abhorrent young male suicide rates which, particularly in this country, are very frightening. A lot of people around the world and in this country started asking: what is happening to boys? What is causing this? What are we doing? How can we do something about this? Until that time boys schools had existed without really questioning why they were single-sex schools. Most of them historically had grown up as single-sex schools.

Although I was at a high school as a boy in Melbourne, a co-ed state school—I am one of those strange people who has a very proud state school background—and ended up being

headmaster of a fairly prestigious private boys school, I have virtually spent my career in boys schools. I am probably similar to most people in my situation in that I had never really thought about what it was we were doing. I knew we were a fairly good school and I knew we were doing some things quite well, but I never really thought about what being a boys school meant in terms of educating boys. Most people thought there were good co-ed schools and there were good boys schools—as indeed there are—but we began to question in the early 1990s: are boys schools somehow or other doing something that is different? And, if they are, what is that? Many people in this country and around the world have started to investigate that very carefully and qualitative and quantitative research has been carried out and is continuing.. I think there is a bit of a ball rolling internationally as people start to look very closely at what boys schools are doing. Let me say right up front that I am not into the business of odious comparisons—I never say one kind of school is better than another because, as I said before, there are excellent co-ed schools and there are excellent boys schools. Because I work in a boys school I just concentrate on what it is that we are doing and whether it is making a difference.

Origins of the concerns about boys were looked at, and I am sure other people have told you that the interesting rise of the feminist movement may well have had a sociological impact. We do not know. But there are suggestions and some of us feel that perhaps as women were quite rightly and properly demanding to be included better in society and in their roles and were determining their roles much more clearly and actively—and in some cases aggressively—there may have been a disenfranchisement of masculinity occur for many people in that time and the old role of the male as hunter-gatherer has become confused. When I was a boy I knew what dad did and I knew what mum did: dad went out to work and came home at dinner time; mum made the meal—all those sorts of things. Men had a clear role. Nowadays adult male roles are more subtle and, for many young males, confused, I think. This is just me reflecting things that I have read and things that I feel at the moment. This is not statistical data I am giving you; it is a background to where we might have got things wrong for our young males.

As the pendulum swung very steadily and properly to the female side, I think a number of young males were concerned and confused about what their role as males was, and that was where we started getting problems. Certainly today it continues that females are very strongly positioned, particularly by the media, as succeeding in all sorts of ways. We have had university entrants coming in. In this month's papers—the *Courier-Mail*, for example; I ripped these out just a week ago—you get pictures of females who have chosen the right course. You get a picture of a girl; a very attractive girl, and that is probably why the newspapers focus on these things, and this is not atypical. In most cases—and in my role I am looking at academic things particularly—where females are doing well in the media you tend to see the females as successful. Again I think it is just reinforcing the view that females are successful. Males? Mmm, not too sure.

So what does all this mean for me, boy schools and our coalition? We are committed to intellectual stimulus, sharing and commissioning of research into boys and their development and education, particularly aspects of that which relate to single-sex boys schools. We are looking at gender specific learning styles, and it is quite clear now that boys and girls learn differently. So in our conferences and so on we talk about how we can focus in our schools on the best ways to support boys learning. We are looking at all sorts of things like risk taking, competition, leadership development and how we might be able to do those better in our schools. We as a coalition publish regular monographs. *Brad and Cory: a study of middle*



*school boys; Kind to be cruel?: restoring generosity to manhood; Boys at play: sports and transformation; Beyond politics: boys, biology, values and character; Women teaching boys—very important—Teaching boys to become “gender bi-lingual”; and The romance of boys’ schools* are just some of the monographs that have been put out by the coalition in the last five or six years, and they continue.

I will leave all of you today with a little booklet we put out from the Southport School. It is a promotional brochure, although we very carefully did not style it as something you would only get at boys schools. It is designed to help parents raising sons. We called it *All about boys*. I am very happy for you each to take home a copy. So that is a background.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thanks for that. This is an opportune time to ask some questions. We have got only until 12.30 p.m. You said that girls and boys learn differently. How does that occur?

**Mr Cook**—There is strong evidence that the brains are wired differently. Dr Julia Atkins—she may have given a submission to this inquiry, I am not sure—is very well known in Australia for understanding the way the brain functions in learning. It is quite clear that, from a physiological wiring point of view, the brains are different. Boys in the simplest terms are more out there and they respond better to physical things, to movement and to overt activities involving risk taking and competition. Girls are more inwardly focused in their learning. Girls can sit, can take things in and can manipulate images in their brains without being as physically and demonstrably active. So an ideal classroom for a boy will have movement, will have people moving around, building things and creating structures, and have little groups competing one against another for some task or topic involved with the learning. This is just a very quick stereotype. In a co-ed school we believe it is very difficult to accommodate those different learning styles. We are fortunate in a boys school in that we can concentrate just on the boys. We can create learning environments where we believe boys will respond best.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In terms of learning styles and in terms of measures of assessment, would you like to comment on the differences between how boys and girls perform?

**Mr Cook**—Girls are clearly outperforming boys at virtually every level in this country and worldwide. The statistics are very clear about that. An analysis of New South Wales HSC—

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am asking whether that is because of different learning styles. Is it because learning styles suited to boys have been eliminated from schools or reduced? What is the reason?

**Mr Cook**—I think the reason is a change in education relating to things like gender of teachers. There has been a clear shift in the last 10 or 20 years from male to female in the teaching force in this country and probably internationally. I think females teach differently from males. I am not saying they are bad at teaching boys—some of them are excellent, and boys need to have female teachers—but I am looking at the fairly subtle shifts which I think have disfavoured boys.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What about measuring attainment? Has that changed to favour one group or the other?

**Mr Cook**—There are some suggestions. I am not sure about that. In Queensland we have the QCS test. This test is a state-wide monitoring instrument that is used largely to determine finally tertiary entrance outcomes for year 12 students in Queensland. All year 12 students in Queensland sit it if they are to be eligible for tertiary entrance. It is a very important series of examinations.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Does it take into account any continuous assessment or is it just an examination?

**Mr Cook**—It is a single series of four papers and it is used to moderate the internal assessment that has occurred for two years over the senior course. That examination has been allegedly gender biased. I am not saying it is, because I have not read enough about the statistics involved. But I know the board is constantly trying to show that it is not. I think there are quite a few people in academe in Queensland who have questions about the gender bias of the QCS—the Queensland core skills test. The suggestion is that boys may be disadvantaged in doing that. For example, there is a very important paper called *The writing task*. In general, boys aged 16 and 17, internationally as well as in this country, are less facile, are less able to write well than girls. This is a generalisation and it is to do with stages of development, but it is suggested that boys suffer because of the writing task of the core skills test. They use stimulus material, too, which people have suggested is gender biased—ballerinas, people dancing and things like that, which boys might not respond to as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—At the end of your submission you state that there is a dearth of quantitative research.

**Mr Cook**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Why are you saying there is no analysis? Why is there no quantitative research?

**Mr Cook**—I am not saying there is none. I said there was a dearth of quantitative research.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is there any quantitative research that you refer to? And what is it?

**Mr Cook**—Yes. Dianne Hulse produced this monograph. One example which I refer to in the submission is titled *Brad and Cory: A study of middle school boys*. This is an analysis of two boys. In fact, it is talking about boys generically but she ascribed single names to the two types. Brad is a boy in a boys school. Cory is a boy in a co-ed school. She did research on just those two schools which produced the outcomes that I have listed in—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is this Australian or American?

**Mr Cook**—This is American, hence my own research which picks up some issues relating to that research but which is much wider and looks at a number of different issues. My research thesis is called *Motivation and other behavioural characteristics of boys: a contextual comparison*, so I am looking at motivational aspects of boys and a whole lot of sub-issues there. I am using the school motivation analysis test. I am using internationally validated and reputable psychological tests for these. I am looking at coping strategies as measured by an

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Australian instrument, the adolescent coping scale, because there is a suggestion that boys and girls have different ways of coping with concerns and we want to find out more about that. I am looking at self-description or self-concept—self-esteem, if you like. I am using the SDQ2—the self-description questionnaire 2—which is another Australian instrument.

**Ms GAMBARO**—I notice in your submission you talk about a pilot study, the Toppin study—you have just covered it—relating to the level of perceived confidence and you state that US students have a higher level of perceived confidence.

**Mr Cook**—Yes.

**Ms GAMBARO**—At a school that we visited yesterday, we interviewed girls and boys and asked why boys need to exhibit extremely disruptive behaviour. I think it was mentioned at the time that boys needed more praise than girls. What is your opinion of that? Seeing that you are looking at it in your research, do you feel that the teaching curriculum does not address those self-esteem issues and that those self-esteem and lifestyle things are needed more greatly in boys education than in girls education?

**Mr Cook**—It is certainly greatly needed, but I would hesitate to say boys need it more than girls. I think all students need praise. I am not aware of any quantitative research that has differentiated out that particular aspect, so I could not really say more than that. I think praise is terribly important but I think it is important for boys and girls.

**Ms GILLARD**—One of the things that motivated this inquiry was looking at attainment levels between girls and boys over, say, the last 20 years. Rod is the expert on the statistics but, put broadly, you could say that 20 years ago they were basically equal or boys were slightly in front.

**Mr Cook**—Yes, they were.

**Ms GILLARD**—Now we have got attainment levels which show that boys in some states particularly are very much behind. I have been trying to focus on the things that have changed. Certainly, we can say boys' perceptions of labour market destinations have changed, and that is undoubtedly right. With respect to the presence of male role models—what dad does or whether there is even a dad—we would be able to track that and say that has changed. I am just trying to fit in my head a few other things about what has changed. For example, you have said to us that movement is good in boys' education.

**Mr Cook**—Activity, yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—I was educated 20 years ago. My clear recollection of my state school education was that you did not move very much because you got hit on the head with the duster if you did. As a result, you tended to sit very still for long periods. The boys were forced to do the same. On the stats, you got better boys' attainment in a more rigid culture. I would be interested to hear your comment on that.

We have been told as well that you need literacy texts that engage boys, and that might be around adventures, racing cars or whatever. Once again, my clear recollection of education 20

years ago is that we were forced to bash our way through Shakespeare and John Steinbeck—things that I liked, but you would not have said on the surface that it was necessarily boys' stuff. I am not saying that they are not the solutions, but I am just struggling to see how that fits in with explaining the change between 20 years ago and now.

**Mr Cook**—What is obvious is that the answers to those questions are extremely complex, and nobody is going to be able to give a simplistic answer—'That was it,' sort of thing. I think the rise of feminism is a very important factor in what has happened to boys. I think feminism was right; don't misunderstand me, I am very supportive of females and their roles in society and what had to happen, because what was happening to females 20 or 30 years ago was not right and it had to be corrected. But I think it has undermined the confidence of our manhood, our malehood, generically in this country and in many other countries worldwide. To me, that is the underlying factor in all of these things that has made the change. Twenty-five or 30 years ago, boys thought they were superior; they were better than girls; they were the stronger sex. They went to war and they did all these things. They worked and women didn't. Roles were open to them that were not open to females. All of those things were quite wrong, but that was the status quo. That was the understood way things worked. That has all completely changed, and I think it has pulled the rug out from underneath the collective male feet.

**Mrs ELSON**—The reputation of the academic achievements in your school is well known throughout most of Australia. A lot of parents that I know in low income areas want to get their children into your school because they think that is the answer. What is the ratio of female/male teachers? Do prospective students undertake an entrance exam? Do you take the brightest and best, in other words, so that your academic level is going to be up fairly high, or do you take in disadvantaged children? What is the success rate if they do go to an all boys school?

**Mr Cook**—Out of 100 teaching staff in the whole school from primary right through to secondary, off the top of my head, it would be close to 20 or 25 females, I would think. Most of those females are in the prep school, but there is a good half dozen, 10 or 15 in the senior school. That is the percentage. It probably could be more, but I am not apologetic about that because it is terribly important for boys to have male role models in the classroom. I think we must always make sure that that is there.

To answer your other question, no, we do not have an entry test. We take any boy who applies by order on the list and that includes a very wide range of academic ability from the most able to quite disadvantaged academically or borderline intellectually disabled. We are a non-selective school by policy because we believe that mirrors the real world and that is what boys are going to be part of when they leave school. So we are not a hothouse of intellectual endeavour. We have some very bright kids; they do very well. We have a lot of other kids who struggle. We give them a lot of support. We have learning support teachers, just as we have gifted and talented coordinators. Those 180 boys will leave year 12 at the end of their final year. Most of them, if not all of them, are proud, pleased to have been part of it and feeling successful about themselves. Ninety-five per cent of them go into tertiary courses when they leave school and the others move straight into the work force. That is the sort of school we are.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Thank you for your submission. Julia mentioned the relative decline in performance of boys at matriculation level particularly. Are you aware of any research that

would compare the rate of that decline between mixed co-ed schools and boys' schools, accounting for differences between the private and public system?

**Mr Cook**—Sure, and background factors like socioeconomic status?

**Mr BARTLETT**—Yes, trying to filter those out.

**Mr Cook**—That is right. Do you know of Dr Ken Rowe?

**Mr BARTLETT**—Yes.

**Mr Cook**—You have had him? I think he has done some pivotal research in this kind of area.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We have had him appear before the committee, but we have not had him.

**Mr Cook**—Okay. I am not quite sure what that means.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I just thought it was a shortened phrase that I did not understand at all.

**Mr Cook**—That is all right. I think he has done some very important work which is looking at boys and girls, but also the single sex versus co-ed thing. I stress again that we are not out trying to show single sex schools are better or anything like that. We are just trying to find out what works for boys. He has done some very important work, as has ACER—he is, of course, the principle research officer for ACER—that has conducted this longitudinal survey of Australian youth which I think you ought to see, if you are not aware of it already, because that certainly tracks Australian schoolchildren over a number of years. I am not sure it would go back far enough for you to answer your questions, but that is the only work I am aware of that is tracking kids over a fair period of time.

In other countries I can give you some more detail. The United Kingdom has done a lot of extensive quantitative research because they all do A levels. Every child does those exams and they have tracked that for some time.

**Mr BARTLETT**—Does that UK research show that the decline has not been as marked in single sex schools?

**Mr Cook**—It certainly does.

**Mr BARTLETT**—That is interesting, thank you. You mentioned here in your submission that in your school boys feel more comfortable about their relationship with girls and have a more egalitarian attitude towards women's and men's roles. What sort of research do you have to back that up? How do you actually measure that?

**Mr Cook**—Those statements there are from the Brad and Cory study from New York.

**Mr BARTLETT**—So they are not related to your school?

**Mr Cook**—It is related in that my own research is looking at about 400 kids in the study: 200 from co-ed schools and 200 from single sex boys' schools. I am afraid we are five months early for the data to be in. I have tested them, but I am still analysing it. Anecdotally, I can say that there is a suggestion that our boys are showing the same sorts of patterns. Boys from single sex schools, anecdotally as I go through the data, look as if they are more comfortable about themselves and their levels of friendship. The boys from co-ed schools seem less secure about that and more concerned about the way girls feel about them. In other words, my data is looking as if it is going to mirror this.

**Mr BARTLETT**—That is interesting. I would have intuitively thought perhaps the opposite would have been found.

**Mr Cook**—Most people do. Dianne Hulse did a very interesting piece of work in this—I think it is mentioned there—using the sex role egalitarianism scale, which looks at gender concepts. She found that boys in boys' schools actually have a more balanced understanding of the female role than boys in co-ed schools. The reason, it is suggested, is that a boy in a co-ed school, living, learning and working alongside girls for eight hours a day or whatever—this is a generic statement—is thrown into exuding quasi-masculine, macho type characteristics in order to secure his own male identity. This leads to an almost grossly over-masculine demonstration of what we would think were fairly nasty macho kinds of things. In a boys' school those worries are not there. They do not need to worry about performing for the girls to establish their own masculinity.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You said there is an international coalition. Are there any international trends towards boys' schools?

**Mr Cook**—There are trends to single sex classes in co-ed schools. That is happening, as you would know, in this country. It has been mirrored in some places overseas. I am aware of work that is going on in the United States and in England. Would I expect a massive trend back to single sex schools? No, I do not think so. But I think we have to get smarter about how we handle boys in whatever kind of school we have them. If it is a co-ed school, which is the vast majority of boys, then we have to look very closely at things like separating the classes at some levels and for some subjects.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do some of the parents who go to your school give you any reasons as to why, or do you ask them why, they chose your school?

**Mr Cook**—Our own market research does. Yes, we have to.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Does that show any dissatisfaction with comprehensive schools or dissatisfaction with state schools? Are there any issues in there?

**Mr Cook**—There are a lot of issues.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Could you name some of them?

**Mr Cook**—Yes, but they are not just related to gender. Some of them certainly choose a single sex boys' school because they feel that is best and perhaps they have read our own

marketing stuff. They also choose the school because of—I am sorry to say—concerns about state education.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What sort of concern?

**Mr Cook**—Their concern is about discipline and those sorts of issues. They are looking for the values of a Christian and Anglican school.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Even though they may not be Christian themselves?

**Mr Cook**—Absolutely. They are looking for something—and this is more subtle—that will challenge their boys to understand concepts of service. We have a very strong service program, as do a number of boys' schools, teaching boys how to serve because we believe you have to serve in order to learn to lead. For the whole day today at the Southport School there is no-one there. They are all out helping with Meals on Wheels and in old people's homes. That is regular through the year. They are not there because of a benefit to an old persons' home; they are there because they are learning what it means to serve other people whom they would not normally come into contact with. They are some of the factors involved in why they choose schools like ours.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed for coming all the way down. Can I just make one observation?

**Mr Cook**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—In the little books you have, every photograph is a romantic view of the past.

**Mr Cook**—Yes, it is.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Strange, I would have thought.

**Mr Cook**—Even that medieval shot. Yes, that is true. That is one of the mysteries of life, I guess. We will just have to let that one go.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I take your cue. Thank you very much indeed.

**Mr Cook**—I should say we are not locked into the past, if that is the implication you are making.

**ACTING CHAIR**—No, I was not drawing an inference.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.30 p.m. to 1.44 p.m.**

**EVERETT, Mr Garry, Deputy Director, Queensland Catholic Education Commission**

**GARDINER, Ms Judith Ellen, Curriculum Executive Officer, Queensland Catholic Education Commission**

**JEFFCOAT, Ms Leesa, Assistant Director (Curriculum), Rockhampton Catholic Education Office, Queensland Catholic Education Commission**

**NUNAN, Mr John, Secondary Teacher, Chair of Boys' Issues Committee, Marist College, Queensland Catholic Education Commission**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome everybody. Thank you very much for being prepared to put in a submission to the committee; we appreciate that. Thank you, Garry, for being prepared to come along and give evidence at this public hearing. You might want to make some opening introductory remarks and supplement them with comments from John, Judith or Leesa. Then we will open it up for questions.

**Mr Everett**—Thank you for the invitation to come and talk with you this afternoon. I want to make a couple of introductory remarks about the structure of Catholic education in this state. It has a number of independent authorities, about 32 at the last count. Five of those are diocesan education authorities, regional authorities, one controlling up to 150 schools. Others are single, stand-alone schools that are independent authorities in their own right. We do not have a single system in which you can make a single statement that would cover everybody. We cannot impose anything on the 32 independent authorities either, so there is a considerable degree of diversity and flexibility within Catholic education, which is both a strength and a weakness. Our submission tried to capture some of the flavour of what those independent authorities were telling us were important things to put into the submission. This afternoon each of us will address particular aspects of the submission and elaborate upon some of those elements.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission is an overarching agency established by the Bishops of Queensland to coordinate and develop Catholic education across the state. Three of us are members of the commission's curriculum committee, which happens to be meeting today, which is fortuitous. John is from a large independent boys' boarding college here in Brisbane. They are the introductory comments about the structure and where we are from. In a sense, our submission was derived by dialoguing with those independent authorities who achieved some kind of overview submission. With those comments, I would be happy if Leesa might take up a particular issue.

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Thank you for the opportunity. I am going to comment on a couple of matters that were flagged in our submission, and then afterwards answer questions, if there are any. The first area is professional development. I will link this with another, and that is the engagement of males in the teaching profession. A particular interest of mine is English, or literacy education. There has been a whole range of fairly significant research done. Within the Queensland scene, the work done by Pam and Rod Gilbert from James Cook University indicated to us some of the approaches to teaching either subject English or literacy practices



that may be better suited to engaging boys in the take-up of literacy. That research, while it was significant at the time, in some quarters has had a fairly narrow view.

Some universities have picked up that research and some of those teaching styles as appropriate to both boys and girls. I am not saying it is exclusively looking at boys. I feel that there should be, for teachers presently engaged in the teaching profession, some additional opportunities to reflect on practice, particularly in the aspects of literacy and numeracy, and then to challenge them on the approaches they are using in the classroom to reflect on their practice, to look at whether they are using appropriate strategies that appeal to boys' interests and to the styles of learning that we have indicated are predominantly male. Are they choosing texts, for example, that are representative of boys' interests? A whole range of materials is highlighted in the research. If that were encouraged throughout the profession, or if professionals were encouraged to reflect on that, just by reading the information they would certainly be challenged in this approach. So, professional development is one area.

I mentioned the pre-service area. I am fascinated by the statistics regarding the number of males who are choosing not to enter the teaching profession. I did for a time teach in an all boys' school and at one time I was the only female on staff. So it does offer one a different perspective to the teaching of boys. Within our sector in the Rockhampton diocese we embarked on a program—albeit on a very small scale—to attempt to make contact with year 12 students, or students exiting our system, to open to them the possibility of choosing teaching as a profession. One step we took was to encourage male teachers in primary schools, which was fairly easy because there were only three in Rockhampton. We sent them around to a few different schools to say, 'This is a profession certainly worthy of consideration.' Primary teaching seems to experience different concerns from secondary. For whatever reason—it would be interesting to investigate those reasons—boys are not choosing primary teaching as a career path.

Principals within our Catholic sector are indicating to us that that is some cause for concern because in some of our rural and remote areas there is a high proportion of separated families, and there is no 'significant male'—whatever that term means—in the lives of many children. At one school, in particular, in a rural isolated area there are no males on staff and no male ancillary support staff, and there is a high proportion of single parent families at that school. Some of our schools are indicating that that is a cause for concern.

That probably leads me to the other area, which is role modelling and the appropriateness or the breadth of role modelling in relation to either literacy or what is a commitment to lifelong education that boys in our schools are having an opportunity to engage in. Another of our schools actually embarked on a different type of affirmative action: during one week they focused on literacy and brought in from the wider community both men and women who highlighted the importance of a commitment to lifelong learning. The males—I will focus on that—they came from a variety of different pathways. For example, there was the captain of the local football team. They spoke about aspects of literacy and why engaging in lifelong learning was important to them in their lifelong careers. They are just a few of the areas that I would like to highlight.

**Ms Gardiner**—My concerns or the issues that I would like to raise are very related to Leesa's of course. I know we are talking about the education of boys, but I would not like to see

the concerns for boys as ‘problematizing’ boys. I have a very strong sense that we should be really investigating the particular attributes, strengths and talents of boys and valuing those, and sometimes I think some of the literature is making boys a problem. Even though it is clear they are not achieving on some of the literacy tests and educational indicators, I think there is a social problem for us down the track if we keep regarding boys as some kind of a problem in our society that we have to fix. So I would like to put a more positive spin on looking at education of all children and looking at those things that might be of value in each gender.

Part of that leads me to, if boys have particular attributes and talents and strengths, do they have particular kinds of literacies and are we then testing those or picking those up? Do we have a situation where our tests are not testing the whole range of things that we would like to test? And while it is important that boys certainly achieve on the tests that we have got, are there other kinds of tests that we could be doing to really look at the way boys are engaging with schooling, and particularly their literacy practices?

The other thing that leads from that—and it has come up in the literature of this committee a few times—is the notion: which boys are we talking about? Are there particular groups of boys who are not achieving or who may be seen as a problem in behavioural or literacy terms—problems in regular classrooms—and why do we have those particular groups of boys? My feeling is that it is attached to the claims of masculinity that our society constructs. Some boys are in situations of poverty and high unemployment in their family situations. The dominant masculinity that might be portrayed in media—say, in football or video game culture—may become the dominant masculinity that they then display in their social interactions. And they may not be the most appropriate ones in school.

I have some concerns there about the ‘which boys’ and that leads us to the ‘which girls’. When we look at the education of boys, I do not think we should be doing it separately from the education of all students, including the girls, because I still have a sense that it is not only boys who might be disengaged from learning. I think there are still significant groups of girls who are disengaged from learning and who are not performing in tests who have significant health issues as young women. That will often lead to them not even showing up in some of the tests and statistics because they have already dropped out and they are not actually in the labour market; they are not in the unemployment figures. So, we get whole groups of lost kids all around the place, and they are boys and girls. We have some significant issues there.

I would just like to make sure that we take up those issues of masculinity and how that affects the kinds of literacies that we do have in schools, taking up Leesa’s point that we might need to have lots of different kinds of people looking at the kinds of literacies that are in play in classrooms and not perhaps the very narrow range that we might be testing at the moment. That is my presentation for the moment, and I will answer any questions.

**Mr Nunan**—As Garry said, I teach at Marist Ashgrove, which is a school of 1,500 boys. I taught in the state system before that, for 15 or so years. We still have our own challenges in Marist Ashgrove—very different from some of the state schools that I taught at; however, they are genuine and maybe sometimes of a different nature. What I would like to speak about for a short time is getting parents involved in the college and, secondly, some of the issues that surround competitive sport, particularly in the private school system.

The college is run by the Marists, and part of their ethos is family spirit, family involvement. I am head of a college committee that looks after boys' issues, but the first thing that we did was get a parents committee going at the same time. We wanted parents to be involved; we were wasting our time doing a whole lot of work at the college unless parents were involved also. So we have got a very active parents committee going. They have been wonderful supporters for us in a whole lot of initiatives in the school, the most recent being to bring Richard Fletcher from Newcastle University to run a whole staff day and then do a session with the parents at night, trying to create some awareness there, I think, of the issues that are involved.

Interestingly enough, on the night I was surprised, first of all, by the large number of parents who turned up, and also by the large number who really were asking for assistance on how to manage unruly boys, or adolescents who were out of control. That leads me to think that there is a real area, maybe within our school, that needs certain support in assisting parents at this stage on how to parent, on how to be responsible and support their boys.

We have investigated quite a number of ways of bringing parents into the school. We had a situation recently where I was involved in getting a parent, a father, to report and be involved with his son, who was about to be suspended and possibly expelled. The father was too busy at work—he worked for a major company, it was a very busy time—and unfortunately he could not be there. We are investigating the possibility of having a link-up where we can have them on the phone while the child is being disciplined, or even rewarded, because we need to make sure that fathers are involved. In fact, some schools are insisting that the interview does not take place until the father is there.

We have used fathers quite a bit to be involved in our outdoor education program. A number of our parents are in the Army and are quite comfortable in that sort of atmosphere, so we try to get them involved there. We try to get parents also involved in coaching. However, we need to be particular that they understand the ethos that we are trying to put across when we coach the teams because we do have a bit of friction there with their idea of winning and success.

We have had a number of days when we have had activities arranged for men to be involved with boys. We are trying to get them also involved in tutoring and trying to get fathers to come in and read, particularly to the primary school boys. I think it is an area that we certainly need to investigate more and then there is an area where we need a lot of assistance.

I would like to move to the area of competitive sport just briefly. We need in our Catholic schools to have a clear vision of what masculinity is. Sometimes competitive sport can focus boys towards success, power, strength and winning at all costs—if you do not win, then it is not worth competing. Sport can be an incredible vehicle for actually reversing those values. One of the sad things that we are starting to see in top level private school competition is professional coaches coming in. They do not share the school ethos and are paid money for success. We are reinforcing a very narrow view of what it means to be male. In that area we need a lot of assistance in training coaches, in imparting to coaches the school philosophy and ethos again, and in using it as a vehicle for change. It is one of the few areas where boys now as a group get to rub shoulders with adults, and adult males generally, and it can be a very valuable learning experience.

The other area, which is I suppose aligned with sport, is outdoor education. Boys need—as the saying goes—wide fields or wide paddocks and strong fences. I think that is a term that is thrown around a bit now.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That might reflect a whole range of things.

**Mr Nunan**—So we have to give them space, but we have to give them very strong rules. Outdoor education for boys is a wonderful area. Unfortunately, because of legal implications and worries about lack of care and inexperienced teachers, it is sometimes an area that is the first to go. They do not have the finance in some schools to employ competent outdoor education experts, and the area is trimmed. Our school at the moment is having a very successful program for year 10 students. They leave the school in small groups and an expert husband and wife team look after them. The boys have a large choice in what they do. It is an area we should not be trimming but be looking at more seriously.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Garry, unless you want to make an overriding comment—maybe you do not need to—we will go straight to questions.

**Mr Everett**—I would like to make one or two quick comments if I might, but I will keep them brief. In fact, they are rather anecdotal. Last year I went to a number of our remote and rural towns and visited state and Catholic schools in the area. It was following the testing program conducted throughout this state for years 3, 5 and 7. I was talking to teachers and parents about the test items. One of the test items went something like this, ‘If 12 cars go past a school on a Sunday afternoon towards the river in an hour, how many will go past in three hours?’ The first question the kids asked the teacher was, ‘What is happening down at the river?’ She said immediately it occurred to her that they are not really interested in the test item, the mathematics does not really concern them; they are more interested in what is going on in the local area. There was a similar question about pies at the tuckshop: ‘How many pies would you sell in three hours?’ They said, ‘It depends whether you have had enough to eat or whether the pies are any good.’ They do not really engage with the test item as a test item.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But who was saying that—boys or girls?

**Mr Everett**—In fact, a lot of them were saying it.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Boys or girls?

**Mr Everett**—Boys in particular. I then went and interviewed the local sergeant, the local publican and the local curator of the historical museum and asked, ‘What do you think about the education of boys? How is it going?’ They said most of them would rather not be in school. When I asked why, they said, ‘Because they would rather be out in the scrub with dad knocking down trees, building a dam or doing whatever. Their life is centred around their father and the land, and school it does not really engage them by and large.’ So there are a number of pedagogical issues in this. If we look carefully at it, it is: which boys are disengaging and not learning, and what pedagogies do we actually use? If we continue to use the same pedagogy with every group of boys no matter where they are in this world, we are bound to fail because the same pedagogy will not suit every bunch of boys. We have to do more serious research into which pedagogies suit which groups of boys.

On Saturday, I went to an all-day seminar for experienced infant teachers. I was the only male in the group, not surprisingly. There were very experienced women teachers. They were looking at a program from Perth, which you may have come across, called Letterland. I had never seen it before, but the people who were presenting it from Perth claimed that it appeals more to boys than most other programs. When we asked why, we were told it was because it has a strong kinaesthetic approach to the teaching of reading. Normally you do this visually and aurally. This has a very strong kinaesthetic approach which appeals to the boys. The authors were claiming that it has a much higher success rate with boys than most other programs. Again, this is just a little window into what pedagogical approaches we use with not only boys in general but various groups of boys.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You are asking the question I am going to turn back on Leesa.

**Mr Everett**—This is the area that I am concerned about. We have tended to use a fairly generalised pedagogical approach and I think we need to be much more specific when it comes to that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Leesa, yesterday we went to a public primary school and a public secondary school where they were doing some excellent work in boys' education. Boys and girls learn differently according to these people. Boys need a much more structured approach, according to the information we got, and they like a lot of activity. The primary school had monitored their work, particularly in literacy, where they also had involvement at a teacher aide level—that is, masses of people for short periods of time. Instead of employing someone for 30 hours a week, they employed a lot more people for two hours a day, eight hours a week. So there was the impact of adults and, while not necessarily small groups, smaller groups of children. They had monitored the results. The differentials between the achievements of girls and boys were pretty minimal, more like the results that you would have expected 20 years ago. Some of the people who presented information to us seem to be in denial about the fact that boys and girls learn differently. Do you believe boys and girls learn differently?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—My belief is that, if you have 30 students in a class, you will have 30 different approaches to learning. In my teaching career I went from teaching English in an all boys environment to teaching it in an all girls environment. So I can only really comment from my own experience and observation of others. I think there is a danger in any form of description that states, 'This is how boys learn per se and this is how girls learn.' You can say, 'This is how many boys learn and this is how many girls learn.' From my experience and from the experience of the staff with whom I deal, there are some boys who adopt different learning styles from the majority of boys. They need to be accommodated and to feel that their distinctive learning styles are acceptable. So I think it is fraught with danger because we could fall into a trap of reinforcing views of masculinity that would alienate or continue to alienate some males.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The teachers and the students we talked to do not use terms like 'masculinity' or anything else. They used terms like 'structure' and 'The boys fed us back information that they like to know what is going on.' They do not like soft discipline. They would rather be put on the hot seat—for example, in an examination; Sydney or the bush, fail or whatever. They like those sorts of things and certainly they are generic. But, in the main, boys at school do seem to have better gross motor skills. Girls have better fine motor skills. They are

different. In terms of teaching practices and how we construct curriculum these days, are we actually acknowledging those differences or are we all trying to make them into something else that does not necessarily suit girls either?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—I think we will try to make them into something else if we stereotype and see a particular approach as the only approach for the education of boys or another approach as the only approach for the education of girls. If we go into those particular restrictive practices, then that could be a potential disservice for those boys who will not fit into what might be the majority view.

**ACTING CHAIR**—One of the criticisms of departments which is a constant thing you get around Australia is the lack of flexibility, the uniformity, the conformity, the lack of risk taking and the lack of contact between the middle level of the bureaucracy and what actually is going on schools. The people in the field are giving a very different message from that of some people in academia and people within state education departments around Australia. I find that quite remarkable.

**Mr Everett**—Were those schools in what you might call disadvantaged areas?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Everett**—We have to be careful not to say that those processes that worked for those kids are necessarily the best processes for all kids. You can go to a high socioeconomic area where the boys prefer independent learning, less structure and less direction because they come from social capital wealthy families.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We went to one of those schools in Melbourne. They said exactly the opposite. They said they liked the structure. It was one of these schools that actually used the Letterland approach in the junior school. They used the Spalding method in terms of literacy.

**Mr Everett**—We have to recognise that different kids will require different approaches.

**Ms Jeffcoat**—You will find a particular approach will work for a particular student. It needs to be individualised. Structure can still be there within an individualised program.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We have had information on boys choosing to be teachers fed to this committee. There is a whole range of reasons, some in terms of the intimidatory feeling of being seen as inferior or a suspect if you work with young children. But the most substantive reason given, and one that we give credence to, is that boys simply do not see the status of teaching as being important or valued within our community anymore—not that it is necessarily a female thing. It is to do with status, power and earning capacity. It has nothing to do with those other things. In fact, the principal of Scotch College in Melbourne, which has a fairly big contingent of boys, asked, and there was not one boy in the school—not one—who wanted to be a teacher. That is an indictment in terms of our own future.

I have one last question before I hand over to my colleagues. John, with regard to competition, there are positive aspects and you have pointed out some very negative ones. In the submission, collaboration is mentioned. No-one actually mentions the negative parts of

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collaboration. There are negatives. It can reduce to the lowest common denominator. It can be conforming and result in absolute uniformity. Yet no-one seems to be writing about that in the literature. On that matter under 'Contextual observations' it goes from independence to interdependence and from hierarchies to webs or teams; I understand a lot of them. The last one says 'from parts to the whole'. I would have thought it was exactly the opposite way around, that in fact we have gone from the whole and are now dealing with the parts. Is that a misprint or deliberate?

**Mr Everett**—The reference there is to the emphasis on systems learning—to learn more about the significance of interdependence of a whole set of parts in a system. It is important to understand the whole system and not just a little part. The system is, in a sense, more than the sum of the parts.

**ACTING CHAIR**—If I gave you the words 'synthesis' and 'analysis', tell me which one goes where.

**Mr Everett**—Analysis is on the left and synthesis is on the right.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is interesting. I would have thought that was exactly the opposite.

**Mr Everett**—An analytical approach is looking at the parts; the synthesis is an attempt to see the whole.

**Ms GILLARD**—My colleagues are going to get sick of this, because I have framed the question the same way. It is a question that I have been asking most people who have come before this inquiry. One of the things that motivated this inquiry was retention rates and the literacy performance of boys and girls. If you go back 20 years there is not much of a difference or, to the extent that there is a difference, it is a difference that favours boys. Twenty years later there is a difference and it is a difference that favours girls. So it seems to me we need to try to concentrate on those things that have changed in the meantime. We have had a lot of people say to us, for example, that boys prefer more active methods of learning. But presumably if that is true today it was true 20 years ago. People say that boys struggle to sit still and stay on task. I think that was probably true 20 years ago. They also say that in very young children, literacy development is different in boys than it is in girls. But that must have been true 20 years ago as well because those things have not changed. I am trying to get people to focus on the things that have changed, and clearly boys' perceptions about labour market outcomes have changed, because the world has changed and they are aware of that world change—they are probably more keenly aware of it than we are in some senses. Family structures have probably changed with more single-parent female headed households than there were 20 years ago. I think we can isolate those factors, but are there other factors that you would isolate that have changed? We have had people put to us that the curriculum has changed in a way that inadvertently advantages girls over boys. We have had people put to us that assessment methods have changed in a way that inadvertently advantages girls over boys. I would be interested in your comments as to whether they are right or whether there are other things that you can point to that have changed in that 20-year cycle?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—I think the notion of literacy has changed significantly. To go back, say, 20 years, the dominant form of information communication within education may still have been

the written text. Young people's opportunities for engagement with written text was far greater than it is today. I agree with some of the comments about assessment. I am not sure, though, if I take it to the extent of your comment. But if illiteracy is computer games—I will choose one you have probably heard a lot about—and boys' and young people's fascination with that particular mode and medium, if we were to engage them with written text using visual means or via information technology I wonder what sort of implication there would be. I think there would be a fairly significant implication there. The literacies, I believe, have changed, so perhaps there sometimes is a conservative narrowing of literacy. The parents say, 'We can't get them to read anymore at home; they are not reading anymore.' You ask the question: is it modelled at home how much reading and writing is done by adults and significant role models around the young people? If that is not happening, no matter what you do in the classroom from 9 to 3 I am not sure that it is going to have much of an impact. Literacies is, I think, one other area that I would add to that.

**Ms GILLARD**—And why would that have had a differential impact on boys? Because their engagement with new technology is higher?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Yes, and I think that possibly, through role modelling, expectations and a whole range of social circumstances, it is a little bit more acceptable perhaps for girls to be involved in passive activities—and one of those may be reading—than it is for boys, or perhaps it is seen as being valued. It is a dynamic element. I am not sure if there is any one hook that we could hang the reasons on. I think it is across society, not the least of which are role models for youngsters, men and women.

**Mr Everett**—I would like to make an observation. I think technology is one of the factors. There is no doubt the rise of technology has been a big change over the last 20 years. Boys tend to engage more with that. If you go to the fun parlours you will find that they are mostly filled with boys playing some kind of video game, largely by themselves. The other point, then, is that girls tend to sit in groups and talk, and oral language is very important to education. If boys do not tend to sit around in groups and talk—and they do not, by and large; they tend to be involved in other activities that keep them involved just with themselves and the machine or whatever—then you will not get the oral language development which is also important to their whole education. The third one for me is the short message service on the phone. Watch a group of teenage kids manipulating that phone in a way that you and I have no understanding of—you could not read the message if you saw it. Boys and girls have an incredible flexibility, but mostly boys, because it is a game thing that they can play with and so on. I think those technological factors which have come in in the last 20 years have had a big impact on the way boys engage with learning or disengage with learning.

**Ms Gardiner**—I would have also said that even the print texts we use in school and the kinds of writing we expect students to do in school are at a more complex level than they used to be. Once the literary canon that we used, the kinds of things we asked students to read and write, was fairly straightforward. Now, because of the whole information explosion, we are needing students to read and write in much more complex and sophisticated ways. I think girls have become better at that, partly because the oral language that they have developed as a social thing assists them in being able to take apart the print text and look for the subtleties that perhaps boys have not been encouraged to look for. There might be just something in the nature of the texts that we use in school.



**Mr Nunan**—I think they are also bombarded with so much information now, where certainly 20 years ago they were not exposed to anywhere near that amount. They have very short grabs of information; they do not spend long periods of time assessing it and working through it; at the same time as they are doing little bits and pieces of information they are probably doing something else, or have their Walkman on or something. They often do a lot of their work with the TV or music in the background. Quiet time, reflective time is not very much part of boys these days. We have to somehow find that time and also teach them to be able to differentiate and spend time on important information, rather than grabbing a bit here, a bit there and a bit somewhere else.

**Ms GAMBARO**—You have a lot of coeducational schools and single-sex schools. Is the uptake of humanities and arts better in single-sex schools, or about the same across the board?

**Mr Nunan**—At our particular school we have more boys playing music than rugby.

**Ms GAMBARO**—At Marist Brothers?

**Mr Nunan**—Yes.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Marist is a big rugby school. I would not have expected you to say that.

**Mr Nunan**—It also happens to have the top music stage band in the state, but no-one knows that.

**Ms GAMBARO**—You have dispelled some myths here for me today, I can tell you.

**Mr Nunan**—And why is that so? Some people prefer to perpetuate it that they are a rugby school. We are looking seriously towards performing arts complexes and we are encouraging our kids to get heavily involved. We were the only all-boys school in the Rock Eisteddfod, and we were highly commended for that. All the boys were involved in it. But that somehow just gets shoved down the bottom somewhere—not by our principals, but maybe the community outside does not value that quite so much.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Do the boys value it versus rugby?

**Mr Nunan**—It is very hard to beat that. Once you start getting accolades, then success breeds success. But it is very hard to establish. Once you do that, then it is different.

**Ms GAMBARO**—It sounds as if you have had good results in the musical area. I asked Queensland Education today what strategies they had in place for ensuring that they recruit more male teachers into the system, and I might ask you the same question. Do you have a strategy or a policy? Do you look at gender issues that way? What is your policy on this?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Probably that is where our particular structure is significant. I mentioned the initiative we had taken within our diocese. That would be very much something at a diocesan level that would be responded to by the diocesan authorities.

**Ms GAMBARO**—So in each diocese you would look at your male to female teacher ratio?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Yes.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Did you say that you sent three teachers in the Rockhampton area on a mission?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Yes. We actually identified primary male teachers for our area. When we looked at the statistics in the Rockhampton diocese, there was about an even balance, male to female, in the secondary sector. In the primary school, however, last year when we were looking at teacher graduates, we made some affirmative action decisions in terms of selection of candidates. If you were looking at purely academic results, for example, male graduating teachers were not performing as well, but we felt it was important to ensure that in each group of first year teachers there were at least some males. It was interesting that only 12 males for primary teachers applied to us. We offered to six of those.

**Ms GILLARD**—Can I finish on the ratio of country primary male teachers versus city primary male teachers? Are the percentages about the same, or are they a little better in the city dioceses?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—Many of our country areas are also isolated areas, so it would be difficult to compare that. It would be difficult to make comparisons.

**Ms GILLARD**—Do other factors determine males going into primary school teaching in the country versus the city?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—No, I do not believe so. I think it would be going into primary teaching that they would make some decisions.

**Mr EMERSON**—I just wanted to be sure that we were barking up the right tree here. What is it in your view that has deteriorated in relation to boys over the last 20 years? If it is absolute retention rates, they have not deteriorated; they have improved. If it is relevant retention rates they probably have deteriorated a bit—there is probably now more of a gap in favour of females than males. But retention rates themselves probably do not tell us that much. We were talking to boys at Woodridge High yesterday. A number of them did not want to be there anymore. We said, ‘Why are you still there?’ They said ‘You can’t get a job if you leave at year 10’. They were going to stay to year 12 so that they could say that they stayed for year 12. I do not want to generalise, but it was not clear that the boys who answered that way were keenly learning a lot extra in those two years—it was a better qualification to leave at year 12 rather than year 10.

Let us go to literacy, which we all seem to be talking about. How do we know that boys’ literacy in absolute terms is worse now than it was 20 years ago? I do not know that we do. We did not have a U2 diagnostic net. I was just talking to Julie and she said it might be an older level of English attainment or whatever. Maybe a lot of the problem is measurement: what we are measuring now is different from what we were measuring then—if we were measuring at all. Maybe their literacy has not deteriorated at all. If it has not, then we had better reassess why we are having the inquiry.

**Ms Jeffcoat**—If you are looking for a measurement, it is almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you design a test to identify aspects of literacy and the students are not going to

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engage with the basic text for the sorts of reasons or the scenarios that Garry was giving, is that one point in time test really going to tell you about literacies? There would be a whole range of literacies. For example, students in isolated areas would have literacies in mixing chemicals or a whole range of things that students in cities would not have. So what are we testing and why are we testing it?

**Mr EMERSON**—And has the test changed? If there had been a U2 diagnostic net we could fairly objectively measure any changes in literacy over 20 years, but there wasn't one and there hasn't been one—

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am sorry, but there has been—the ACER. You can look back over 40 years and you can look back 20 years ago and you can look back now. The way the questions are constructed is different. Garry alluded to that point just a while ago.

**Mr EMERSON**—Let us now go back to the retention rate. I know that in 1982 the year 12 retention rate was 36 per cent across the whole system in Australia. It is now in the high sixties; it has been 74 per cent. How can we say that boys literacy is worse now when twice as many are staying on to year 12?

**Mr Everett**—You are admitting it yourself: they are staying for the wrong reasons. They may well be struggling in the system, they may well still be illiterate and they may well be failing by all sorts of measures, but it is better to be at school than to be out there job hunting because there are no jobs. They told you that story themselves.

**Mr EMERSON**—Yes, but the reason nearly two-thirds of kids left in 1982—and I think we have kind of established this—is that there were lots of manual jobs.

**Mr Everett**—That is right.

**Mr EMERSON**—How can we say, 'Their literacy was really good, even though they left to join manual jobs,' when now they do not leave to take up manual jobs but their literacy is worse? Who were all these incredibly literate boys who became carpenters and bricklayers?

**Mr Everett**—They may not have been literate either.

**Mr EMERSON**—That is my point, thank you—they may not have been.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But the more important point is that the basic intrinsic intellectual abilities of girls and boys have, I believe, not changed from 20 to 40 years ago. I think other things have changed. I do not think boys or girls are intrinsically more able or less able than each other. That was true 40 years ago and it is true now.

**Mr EMERSON**—That is what I am saying.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So there are other things that have changed. We are not too sure what those things are.

**Mrs ELSON**—A number of coeducational schools are trialling single-sex classes and having some fairly reasonable results. You have been practising that for some while. Have you been monitoring that and seen whether or not there is a difference with the students who are in a single-sex class?

**Mr Everett**—I do not think we have been monitoring it. But having talked to principals who manage large single-sex secondary schools, most are firm in the idea that girls, for example, will learn better in an all girls school than in a coed school. Interestingly, a number of principals tell me that boys learn better in a coed school than in an all boys school. I found it interesting that they said that. My four sons went to an all boys school and they had a range of success stories. It is very hard to generalise, I think.

**Ms Jeffcoat**—I have a contrary view. I think some boys will learn better in an all boys school and some will learn better in a coed school. I do not think you can make a generalisation. It is horses for courses.

**Mrs ELSON**—I just wondered why you did not monitor it or look into it. It must be because of results that parents choose to put their children in that sort of classroom?

**Ms Jeffcoat**—I believe the element of choice is important—that different approaches are there for different families and students.

**Mrs ELSON**—John, you said before that you were encouraging parents to be more involved with the school. I notice there are a lot of schools trying to do that, but they are not successful. Is Catholic education successful?

**Mr Nunan**—We are not in Catholic education as such, but we are a Catholic institution. I think we have been successful and we have still got a fair bit of ground to go. For example, we will run an afternoon for boys in year 8 and their fathers in a couple of weeks time and we will get over 200 there. Around 300 parents came to listen to Richard Fletcher. A lot of it has to do with the parents committee, which is very active in contacting fathers and mothers and getting them to be active. We now need school policies to make sure that fathers turn up to parent-teacher interviews. A lot them do not. Mum does all the work. We need to be proactive in almost insisting that fathers are present at a lot of the interviews.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am sorry to cut you off. I am sure we could have continued for a lot longer. Thank you very much, Garry, Leesa, Judith and John.

[2.37 p.m.]

**McCULLOCH, Ms Julie-Ann, President, Queensland Teachers Union**

**McFARLANE, Ms Lesley, Assistant Secretary Research, Queensland Teachers Union**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome to this public inquiry. Thank you very much for the production of your submission and your willingness to appear at this public inquiry.

**Ms McFarlane**—I have prepared an opening statement, which I can give you a copy of, if you like. In our submission we have emphasised the different experiences of schooling for both boys and girls and the results in different educational, social and occupational outcomes for girls and boys. We have emphasised the effects on both boys and girls of limited versions of masculinity, which are supported by society in general, and also by schools. We state that we would not endorse the introduction of any separate initiative to address boys' education, but strongly endorse the proposals in the DETYA publication *Gender equity: A framework for Australian schools*. I guess you have seen that.

There are five strategic directions in that. First, there is an understanding of the processes of gender instruction at all levels of schooling by educators—teachers, parents and kids—we feel is very important. The kids themselves have to be brought in on the secret. You just do not act upon kids in schools; you tell them what is going on and what societal influences are upon them. The second one is curriculum reform to acknowledge and address gender equity principles in meeting the needs of both girls and boys. Then there is addressing gendered violence and providing a safe and supportive environment in schools; addressing the factors that promote gendered pathways in post-secondary education; and supporting change by the provision of professional development for teachers and leaders through systemic reporting and accountability processes and by partnerships with parents, industry and the wider community to support the needs of girls and boys. We urge the inquiry to recommend the full implementation of this policy by federal, state and territory governments. We think it is a very well researched document and very inclusive. I do not have to go any further really.

In our submission we have addressed specific curriculum issues, including curriculum participation issues and their effects on different groups of boys and girls. This sort of culminates in upper secondary education. You can see quite clearly what those participation issues are.

Our submission looks in some detail at violence, sex based harassment and bullying at schools. We highlight the need for boys in particular to understand the construction of gender and its effects on them. And while I am there I will say that behaviour management in schools has not been informed by insights into the construction of gender because they come from two different theoretical bases: one is sociological and one is psychological. The one that predominates in schools is the psychological, individual approach to the naughty boy.

Lastly, we address the issues surrounding gender and literacy. We refer to the need to disaggregate test scores for different groups of boys and girls, the limits of the testing

technologies themselves, literacy and economic advantage—is there a nexus—school literacy programs and, lastly, the influences of fathers on the literacy of their sons.

Throughout the submission we emphasise—and we would again emphasise here—that girls and boys cannot be meaningfully treated as homogenous groups. The different groups of boys and different groups of girls have different experiences of and outcomes in schooling, and these different groups and their different needs must be recognised and addressed separately.

Actually omitted from our publication is a point made by the Association of Women Educators that we are aware of—the need to address issues related to boys' sexual behaviour and sexual responsibility. We would endorse the paragraph in their submission about those issues. We have been supporting some work that they have been doing recently in looking at how to support pregnant and parenting girls at high school, so we would say that there is the other side of the coin, that boys need to be aware of their sexual responsibilities and their sexual behaviour.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Julia, do you want to ask your 20-year question?

**Ms GILLARD**—You have probably heard the question, but so much of what we hear in this inquiry relate to things which are no doubt true in whole or in part about boys, but they are things that must have been true in whole or in part about boys since Adam was one, and it does not really help us explain why we are here with this inquiry. And why we are here with this inquiry is the perception, and perhaps the reality—and there is a whole lot of sort of statistical stuff around that—of the concern about boys' performance vis-à-vis girls' performance on current testing measures in school. So if you use retention rates, the literacy stuff in school today will say that there are substantial differences, and perhaps widening differences, so what explains that. So I would be interested in your focus on that rather than a focus on things which would always have been true to a greater or lesser degree about boys and girls.

**Ms McFarlane**—To start with, I have brought along a paper by Erica Bell, who is a senior officer at the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, that was published two years ago. I will table the paper. It might come as some surprise to a lot of people. In one point it says:

Although females on average have higher overall academic achievements than males in 1998 data –

It was published in 1999 and we are talking about the tertiary entrance results, senior secondary. This has been the case since 1987 in Queensland when we look at subjects included in tertiary entrance—

... the males in the top third do much better than the females in the top third. The males at the very bottom do much worse than females.

So in the top third of your OP schools here in Queensland, the males are doing a lot better. It is a misconception that the girls are doing a lot better. What happens with girls in years 11 and 12 is that they tend to choose the subjects that they are good at and interested in. Boys tend to choose subjects that are good for their career. So it means that when the population of girls going into certain subjects—maths and science, say—does well it raises the girls' average.

Because you have got these boys going into the subjects where they do not do well, it lowers the boys' average.

**Ms GILLARD**—What explains that subject selection, though? We interviewed some boys and girls at Woodridge High yesterday. Certainly one of the things that struck me—I think it struck all of us—was the degree of sex stereotyping around subject choice. It is as bad as when I was in school 20 years ago, and you would have hoped that some things had moved. There is this perception that boys are better in maths and sciences. You could see that the kids were going to make a whole lot of subject choices not necessarily based around an accurate assessment of their own abilities but around other factors. The capacity to distort choices obviously distorts results. Why are we still stuck with that? Why is that happening now?

**Ms McFarlane**—It is a gendered phenomenon. In the last 20 years girls have made a foray into maths and the sciences but, as I said, it is the girls who are good at those subjects who go into them. Maybe you can say that girls are a bit more realistic and choose what they want to study—I do not know—and that boys are still steered into the things that are seen to be masculine subjects and a bit more traditional for boys to study. They are certainly not there in the humanities and the arts in great numbers. They are not seen to be masculine things. If you are interested in acting and dancing, for instance, you are not a real man.

**Ms McCullough**—The other thing that Lesley has looked at in this submission is the particular groups within boys or girls. I think an important point that Lesley has already made in the submission is that it might be certain boys who are finding difficulty—as I think there might be certain girls who have particular difficulties in subject choice, results or whatever. I think that is probably quite borne out when you visit schools and have a look at some of the wonderful work that is being done. But at the same time what might occur is very different between children from particular socioeconomic backgrounds or, as I just said, indigenous students or whatever. I think that is another point that has appeared in that submission.

**Ms GILLARD**—What about literacy attainment in the early years of schooling?

**Ms McFarlane**—I was interested to hear what you had to say, because boys have always been the ones who get the remedial attention. I started to teach in 1967 and nothing has changed in my personal experience of looking at the tail end of the literacy class—it is always the boys.

**Ms GAMBARO**—In your submission you talk about fathers and literacy, and the fact that where fathers are observed reading it is often functional reading rather than literature. I want to talk to you about that, because traditionally it is the females that read to the preschoolers before they go to school. Do you think that has a lot to do with the fact that, when we went around the table—I think we were at Woodridge—and asked the boys who had volunteered to come and speak to us whether any of them read or whether any of them read any literature, we had maybe one person who said that they read any book of substantive note that was not a rugby league magazine or a motor magazine or whatever? I notice you had fathers coming into the classroom, but are there some strategies that can be developed for use at home and are you trialling any of those to get fathers to read?

**Ms McFarlane**—We are not in schools, so we are not trialling it. But we have mentioned one school that was doing some work there.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Real Fathers Read?

**Ms McFarlane**—Yes.

**Ms GAMBARO**—How many men out there believe that, though? In your perception is that a problem with early literacy particularly—you just mentioned that most of the boys tend to be in the remedial classes—and do think that that would be addressed if males were a more active role model in preschool reading, for example?

**Ms McFarlane**—Boys have to see that reading is something important. If you think about what they see at home, how often do they see their father sitting down reading a novel, for instance? They might see them sitting down reading the paper or reading a magazine. If a father does something with his son, what is it usually—to go out and kick a ball around? So the masculinity that they are seeing—

**ACTING CHAIR**—You are stereotyping there.

**Ms McFarlane**—I know I am. Reading is seen to be feminine and being active is seen to be masculine. When we talk about the construction of gender that is what we are talking about. As kids grow up, they are seeing what it is to be feminine and what it is to be masculine, and reading is definitely on the feminine side.

**Ms McCullough**—There has been a document produced by the Queensland School Curriculum Council around preschool and literacy. It is more functional, but it is about the sorts of things that parents can do with their children, both male and female, in terms of reading before they go on to the formal years of schooling. I believe that a few things within the department are being trialled or looked at, but I suppose with all of those things it is pretty difficult until you actually get into the school system. You cannot really target too much of that, but there are a few of those sorts of things being done. Of course, there is a whole range of activities that children will do once they go to preschool and from year 1 onwards around reading at home. But, again, I suppose it is more than likely the mother who will fill that role—although I do know of some fathers who go in and do the reading programs before school or whatever, and I suppose that could be encouraged. I do know of both male and females who go in and provide that help.

**Mrs ELSON**—Looking at your submission here, you mention in-service education for teachers and that teachers must reflect on their disciplinary methods. From what the people before this inquiry have told me and from what parents have told me in my electorate, they seem to be opting out of state schools because of the lack of control and discipline in the classroom. I did bring this up at another inquiry and spoke to some teachers there. You mention here in-service education for teachers, but most of those who came before the inquiry said that their governments only gave them about \$2,000 per school to do these services and, of course, it was more important to put that into other areas and to teach the children that were behaving in the classroom rather than the ones that were misbehaving.

At Woodridge High School yesterday there were some male students who said that they wished there was more disciplinary and control actions within the classroom. I wondered whether the teachers union would see that as an important area to be looking at. Looking at the



teachers in my family who have opted out of the system because of the fact that they have no direction with the control of children in the classroom, I wondered if you were looking seriously in order to support the teachers that want to stay in the system but have no support there to control the classrooms.

**Ms McCullough**—It is certainly is one of the largest areas that we campaign on.

**Ms GAMBARO**—Are there no funds there for that?

**Ms McCullough**—There are a whole range of issues that we could talk about with regard to behaviour management. I actually believe that state schools do an excellent job in relation to behaviour management. There are a whole lot of work practices that are in place. There are obviously still issues within state and private schools.

**Mrs ELSON**—I should rectify that because most primary schools, within my electorate anyway, are very successful in the primary years. It is probably the secondary years that I am looking at.

**Ms McCullough**—It is a big issue and there is no doubt about that. But I believe that it is more of a perception thing, although perceptions are still important. At the same time, Queensland teachers are indicating that behaviour management is a big issue for them. Without going into a debate about all the political machinations about what and why, certainly it is an area that we campaign long and hard on with regard to resourcing. It is not necessarily just about money: it is making sure that the funding or the teachers are in the right places. One of the big areas that we are looking at at the moment is reduction of class sizes, because we do have 200 behaviour management teachers in the system. We are not saying that that is enough but they are not actually teaching the kids—they are there for behaviour management programs. Maybe if you start looking at reducing class sizes and looking at some of those issues that could actually reduce the behaviour management issues, it may well be of some substance. They are the angles that we are attacking. We are looking at other options apart from just pouring a bit of money into behaviour management. I think the strategies do have to be innovative and so far they may not have been.

It is the same thing for all kids. If you have a lot of kids in a class who want to learn and a couple of students who obviously do not, that can be an issue. It may be a bit of a perception of state schools as well, acknowledging or highlighting that it can be a major concern in some schools or in some classes. It certainly is something that we focus on very clearly. The department itself—I do not know if they spoke about it this morning—in their 2010 strategy identify all of those issues. They look at some of the research—the surveying of what people who send their kids to state schools and people who do not believe is actually occurring in state schools. They have a lot of that information as well that might be of interest.

**Mr EMERSON**—You might have heard my meanderings with the previous witnesses but that is because there are more questions as we go through this inquiry as to why particularly we are looking at the education of boys. The whole reasoning for that is supposed to be that they are doing appallingly now compared with girls. I am really following what Julia was saying. How can it be that boys are doing worse than girls when the year 12 retention rate for boys has doubled? How could those boys who left school in the early 1980s—about 70 per cent of them

left school before year 12—have been more literate than boys who are now leaving school at year 12? You have raised the question in here about testing and asked, ‘What is the longitudinal basis of comparison that we are basing our confidence on in saying boys are doing worse in literacy?’ Low socioeconomic boys are doing badly; low socioeconomic girls are doing badly. I think that is a really big problem.

**Ms McFarlane**—That includes a lot of indigenous kids as well.

**Mr EMERSON**—Indigenous kids, kids in remote communities and so on. They seem to me to be far greater predictors of performance than gender.

**Ms McFarlane**—Some non-English speaking background kids are in it, too. It is really difficult to compare the types of literacy 20 years ago with the literacy that kids are expected to be competent in now. Even if we do have the test figures, you are talking about testing different things. Testing aside, clearly, what we are teaching kids now is very much more complex than what we were teaching them 20 years ago. I agree with you that we have got no way of knowing whether the kids who left were literate. The job markets have changed. Manufacturing has gone down the chute, so to speak. That contributes to this panic about the poor boys, because the jobs that they could be siphoned off into, if they were not any good at school, are not there any more. That is a big factor that makes society panic about things.

**Mr EMERSON**—With respect to whether remoteness, non-English speaking background and low socioeconomic status are the sorts of problems we are encountering, we do know right now that, overall, boys do not do as well as girls in literacy. More boys are picked up in the year 2 diagnostic net. I am not saying that there is not a problem in relation to the performance of boys now, but is it any worse than the problem would have been 20 years ago? It requires a whole lot of different remedies if it is not. I heard you say, ‘We’ve got to do something about class sizes.’ I commend the Queensland Teachers Union for its emphasis on needs based funding for schools. The question, therefore, is: are you advocating a cut in class sizes right across the board irrespective of the location and wealth of the school? This seems to me to be a very blunt instrument—that a state school in Ascot should get the same cut in class sizes as a state school in Eagleby or Woodridge. Or are you saying that you need more one-on-one attention or intensive attention for kids in low socioeconomic areas or for indigenous kids?

**Ms McCullough**—I will give you an example. We have got 800 additional teachers over and above the general model for introduction over the next three years. This is just for class size reduction. Realistically, 800 teachers amongst thousands of students is not going to represent a huge amount. What we are looking at doing at the moment is identifying particular needs and particular groups. Obviously, in some of that we will have to look at a whole range of reasons or issues as to where those 800 teachers go. But it will be about specifically identifying areas. It could be remote rural or indigenous, although a lot of the indigenous communities have a range of issues apart from class sizes. You are right: a lot of the time kids do not turn up. It is a matter of getting them through the door in the first place, not necessarily the class sizes. In other areas, class sizes are the big issue.

It would be lovely if we had the 2,700 extra teachers that we were promised prior to the state election, but it is not going to happen and probably would not realistically have been able to be delivered, anyway. It would be nice across the board, but certainly we see that there should be

identification of particular needs. Obviously, it is about students, and it is about teachers coping in classrooms as well. That is where we will be looking at the delivery of these 800 additional teachers.

I have an example of a school at which I used to teach with a class size of about 32, which is obviously too high. But they had an additional teacher nearly all of the day who did a whole lot of work with some of those students who were integrated into the system. There was another teacher for most of the day, with 32 or 33 integrated kids. There could be examples where you might have an early childhood group with particular learning needs; you could have a double teaching space, with one person coming in for half of the day to take particular groups. It could be like that or just a straight reduction in class sizes, depending on what the needs are. Realistically, that is where we are going to have to focus those additional teachers, and that probably will be the way to go. We would love to see that continuing so that we can focus on particular needs of students and on what teachers are asking us to look at.

**Ms McFarlane**—One of the other things that we are concerned about for our very young children is that they enter a formal curriculum at too young an age. We have been advocating for a long time for an extra year in between preschool and grade 1, which is what we used to have. It was abandoned in about 1955 or so because of the shortage of teachers. When I taught little kids, and boys in particular, I wished that they had not come for another six months so they would be a little more mature. But I think there is something to be done there. As I said, we have been advocating for a long time to have an extra year before kids get into the really formal curriculum which they are not ready for. It sets up a pattern of failure, and I think that probably affects more boys than girls.

**ACTING CHAIR**—One of the great things about inquiries in education is that everybody has a view. One of the bad things about it is that the views are so disparate that they are all over the place. In this inquiry they have ranged from conspiracies on one end of the spectrum to absolute denial on the other. I do not think education has changed terribly dramatically. The basics of education, the fundamentals, have not changed a great deal since Socrates and Aristotle.

I do not think that *Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*, if I can refer to that, has been superseded in regard to the list of differences in terms of education and what is valuable. I will just list a few things that I have got out of the submission from Education Queensland and from your own. The word 'synthesis', the word 'intuition', the words 'description', 'interpretative', 'qualitative', 'expressive', 'presentation', 'continuous assessment', 'conforming', 'safe and sure' and 'collaborative passive learning' are all in Bloom as well and they are often regarded as feminine styles of learning. I will take another list from Bloom, and it is in here as well: I can use the words 'analysis', 'insight', 'comprehension', 'quantitative', 'listing', 'examination system', 'creativity', 'risk taking', 'competition' and 'activity', which are seen often as male skills. I would have thought that all of those skills are in fact valuable for boys and girls. In this inquiry there are negative aspects of competition, for example. There are very positive aspects of competition. There are negative aspects of collaboration in the sense that that can reduce everything to the lowest common denominator.

I find great difficulty with the balance, and I find, even in this submission, that it is written from a synthesis point of view—in other words, it identifies all the parts and puts them into a

whole. Maybe the most significant longitudinal study in the English language was produced by the inner London education authorities in the mid-eighties, and it has continued to be upgraded. Their big recommendation was that the determining factor in the success or failure of boys and girls in school was not gender, was not race, was not socioeconomic status, was not religion. It was none of those things; it was the quality of the educational program that was offered. That is not to say that those other issues are not important. In other words, it is a different approach. In other words, when we go out to schools—and we went out to a couple of your schools yesterday—none of the teachers speak about all those bits and pieces; they speak about the educational program, they speak about structure. When you mention things like sexuality or race or religion you divide people. When you use the term ‘homophobia’ you divide people. When you use the term ‘educational program’ you bring people together on common ground.

The teachers and the principals that we come across in schools—and sometimes the people in the bureaucracy who are at the level of director or who actually deal with the schools as inspectors—seem to have a very different construct on what is important in the education of our children from that of the teachers’ unions around this country, the state education departments and some aspects of Catholic education. I find that quite confusing.

**Ms McFarlane**—When you go out to a particular school and you talk to the people in that school, they are taking for granted that they have constructed the program to suit their kids in their context whereas people who are looking at it from a systemic or bigger picture point of view can see that there are different contexts, that there are different groups of kids, that they are in different circumstances and that they have different needs. Do you know what I mean? The teachers are down there with the kids.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is valid. I do not have a problem with having a synthesis approach, in terms of a framework, to any problem in education. I do not have a problem with that at all; I think that is valid. But what you do not see coming from any teachers’ union in this country or any state bureaucracy is the other approach, which is equally valid—that is, to start off with a whole analysis and then identify the constituent parts. You do not see that at all. You do not see that argument in here or in Queensland education. If you are going to be involved in education, surely you take all the information that is available. You do not just use what is convenient for your argument and leave out what is not convenient.

**Ms McCullough**—I actually disagree with you. You do not know how the Queensland Teachers’ Union operates, aside from possibly what is in this particular submission. I disagree with the idea that we do not speak on the level of our members, because I think that, with 96 per cent membership, we do. We deal with a whole range of particular issues day to day. This is only one of them. I would not go out to schools and mention this. I would not go out to schools and ask, ‘What about the sexuality of boys and what about the gender issues?’ In fact, surprisingly enough, these sorts of issues are not necessarily raised with us by our members, either, when we go to branch meetings. More of it is the stuff that I have been talking about, which I think is very valid—industrial things and the sorts of things that we deal with as a teachers’ union, like class sizes and advocating on behalf of behaviour management. I am talking about all those resource issues. This is work that we do with the assistance of our members and specifically with people who have an interest in these areas.

I do not think that we would go and talk to our membership about this. I do not even think that our council would discuss these particular issues. We have groups of people who look at these sorts of things. But there is still a time and a place for these sorts of submissions. Yes, we do look at the whole on a range of particular issues. We look at them from very practical positions and the Queensland Teachers' Union, particularly, is a very practical union in representing its membership. At the same time, when you turn up to an inquiry like this, you believe that you have to talk about those sorts of issues, which you still think are valid and responsive to the inquiry but not what you would necessarily respond to in a staff meeting with your members. But it is valid as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is not always easy to teach in disadvantaged schools. You have to confront a whole range of problems, and many teachers find it almost so intimidating that they fail. Yet there are some teachers who are able to work very successfully in those sorts of schools. I always find in education that, when the kids are being blamed, there is always an adult reason why there is a problem. It can be not enough funding; it can be all sorts of things. In fact, kids at the school yesterday identified the funding issue, which was quite interesting.

**Ms McCullough**—They have heard a lot from us lately. They actually know what is going on.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Go back to the question that was asked by Julia and Craig at the beginning. There are differentials occurring at the current time in boys' and girls' achievements. Some people would criticise the education departments and the teachers unions by saying that their response is almost a denial. How do you respond to that?

**Ms McFarlane**—I do not think we have been denying anything today. We have just been trying to analyse it.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think you are trying to synthesise it, but that is a matter for argument.

**Ms McCullough**—I would really hate to think that this inquiry was going to come out with a response that says that it is the fault of inadequate teachers, because I would vehemently disagree with this being a teacher problem. I certainly do not think that it is a student problem either. You are right; it could be funding issues or inservice issues like ones that have been identified in here. But I certainly do not believe that it is a teacher problem. Again, the question is, 'What is the problem?' I suppose I am still coming to terms with what necessarily is the problem. I notice in your statements that you have mentioned that this is about the overall objectives of students in schools, not necessarily about boys or about girls—

**ACTING CHAIR**—We are not into winners and losers.

**Ms McCullough**—or the comparisons, yet I still hear questions regarding comparisons, so I suppose that is—

**ACTING CHAIR**—You used them yourself in your submission.

**Ms McCullough**—Because that is exactly what has been—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Queensland education.

**Ms McCullough**—That is right, and that is what I think was—

**ACTING CHAIR**—The comparisons are used immediately in both of the submissions.

**Ms McCullough**—That is right, and I do not necessarily think that—

**Mr EMERSON**—But they also say, Rod, that they do not think that there should be particular emphasis on the education of boys. They are responding to the terms of reference, which is about the education of boys and in responding to it are saying, ‘Well, it is not particularly about boys, it is about—

**Ms McFarlane**—Groups of boys.

**Mr EMERSON**—Yes, groups of boys and groups of girls.

**Ms McFarlane**—And there are groups of girls who have similar problems and different problems. In this submission, we have highlighted the areas that we think should be looked at for groups of boys and, at the same time, if we were responding to an inquiry into gender, we would talk about the girls’ issues, like I was talking about the pregnancy one before. We would talk about the health issues.

**Ms McCullough**—I also would not like this to be seen as us apportioning blame to particular individuals or groups of students. I think, as Lesley said, it is just identifying the sorts of groups of students that may need assistance and that may not be accessing that assistance at the moment for whatever reasons, as opposed to saying that these are groups of disadvantaged children and that is their fault. I do not think that is what we are saying at all.

**Ms McFarlane**—If you are going to help a group, you have to identify what the circumstance is that is mitigating their success.

**Mr EMERSON**—I have one quick question, which is not about boys versus girls, or anything like that. We learned yesterday that when you are measuring the year 12 retention rate, we know you can measure it year 10 to year 12, and you can measure it year 8 to year 12, but there is no measurement of year 7 to year 12. What that means is that an unknown number of kids could leave primary school and disappear—that is, not go on to secondary school at all. There are no statistics on that at all. There is no way of tracking them. I will use a local example in the Woodridge area. If kids leave Mabel Park State School, there is a high school there but there is also Woodridge High. Some of them might go to Woodridge High, some of them may go on to the streets. There are no statistics to tell us what is happening there, which I think is frightening.

**Ms McFarlane**—You would not be able to identify the individual kids, but I would have thought that the education department could identify the numbers of kids leaving year 7 and the numbers of kids going into year 8.

**Mrs ELSON**—You can identify whether they turned up at that school and track them.

**Ms McFarlane**—That is right.

**Mr EMERSON**—Johnny, Thelma, Amy and Jason could all leave Mabel Park primary school and go on to the streets and no-one would know.

**Ms McCullough**—That is one of the good things, I suppose, about the middle schooling proposals that are being developed by the department. There is that locking in, and that is what the idea is. There are some fairly important reasons such as market share as well, but that might well assist in some of those kids actually wanting to stay on as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is there a big movement from public to private in Queensland?

**Ms McCullough**—Not as significant as in other states. One of the reasons why the 2010 proposal was put up was to try and compete with the private schools and actually do some of the work. Varsity College down the coast, for example, and a few other schools at the moment are doing the middle schooling sort of thing and kids are flocking to them. They are coming in through the gates.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Recently in the United Kingdom—they are in election mode as well—Tony Blair came out with a statement about giving comprehensive secondary schools the boot, basically, in the United Kingdom. What is your quick view on that?

**Ms McFarlane**—And replacing it with what—technical schools and academic schools?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Maybe technical schools in the context of 2001, but a whole different variety of schools, rather than having the same sort of system.

**Mr EMERSON**—That is consistent with differentiation.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Differentiation—having a diverse system, rather than having a uniform system.

**Ms McCullough**—We are advocating for a system that can differentiate. We are only very slowly going down that track. Differentiation is something that unions have slowly come to terms with. We have over a few years. We support the ability to differentiate, but that is obviously within fairly tight constraints at the moment. Certainly that may evolve as we all become more comfortable.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Dr Woodridge certainly is exploring the concept of the enterprise school as elicited by Peter Turner and Salisbury in South Australia.

**Ms McCullough**—Those sorts of things are becoming more able to be done with unions talking to the departments about those sorts of approaches.

**Ms McFarlane**—The only thing we would be concerned about would be the residualisation of those schools that are not seen to be badging themselves as something special.

**Mr EMERSON**—You do not want a home brand school. You do not want Surf, Omo and Persil out there doing well and the kids who do not have the money or live in the wrong area ending up at the home brand school.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Lesley and Julie-Ann, thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.22 p.m. to 3.34 p.m**



**LINGARD, Professor Robert Leslie, School of Education, University of Queensland**

**MILLS, Dr Martin, Research Fellow, School of Education, University of Queensland**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

**Prof. Lingard**—I am a professor in the School of Education at the University of Queensland, and I am appearing as an academic with an interest in boys' issues and schooling.

**Dr Mills**—I am also appearing as an academic with an interest in boys' education.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Would you like to make an opening statement and then we will ask questions. I would like to flag that I have a speaking engagement in Sydney and I need to leave at 4 o'clock. Teresa will take over in the chair from that time.

**Prof. Lingard**—I know that you have been here all day. You have got our submission, so I will make some very brief remarks and Martin will complement those. We understand that the inquiry is about the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys, with specific emphasis on literacy and socialisation, and that you are interested in strategies. Martin and I are not experts in the literacy field; our expertise is a broader question of boys and schooling. I have worked in the development of gender equity policies with the state department over a large number of years. Martin has worked with schools on the issues of boys and schools, particularly boys and violence. But what we want to put to you—and what we have tried to say in our submission—are some contextual comments and observations which we think might be useful in broadly framing policies about the education of boys at system and school level and practices in school levels.

Having said that, I want to make a couple of comments to try to pull together the first bit of the submission that we put to you. I always say about this issue that with every complex problem there is a simple solution—and it is always wrong. I think that is the case with the boys issue. We want to reject a view that talks about all boys, all girls and in actual fact sees 20, 25 or 30 years of policies for girls resulting in all girls being successful and all boys failing, which is patently nonsense. In that way we would want to argue for gender equity policies, not specific boys policies and girls policies. Yes, you could have those, but they must play against each other and be complementary to each other. We reject the all boys, all girls approach—which in the literature is called the 'essentialist' approach—which sees all boys as the same and all girls as the same. We want to argue strongly the question: which boys and which girls? That is really the case when you look at performance and at literacy. If you look at literacy we know it is indigenous boys; particularly if, say, you look at the Queensland data, it is indigenous boys in the remote areas of the state. It is working class boys, it is low socioeconomic boys, in the edge cities and rural communities. That is the case around the country.

There are other aspects of being a boy and other aspects of masculinities and femininities which play there. We commend the DETYA commissioned research paper by Dr Cherry Collins, Professor Jane Kenway and Dr Julie McLeod, 'Factors influencing educational

performance of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school', documenting that 'gender jigsaw', as they call it. The question of how one measures success and gender against that in terms of schooling becomes quite a complex and complicated problem. We also want to argue that schools have broader social purposes beyond and in addition to the academic ones. We believe that schooling should prepare all males, all boys, all girls, all females, for further education, employment, participation in the social, cultural and political life of the society and for equitable participation in the domestic sphere in relation to housework and child care. We believe that traditionally schooling has not done that. There have been some positive changes in that, I think.

With regard to the literacy question in respect of boys, I think some of the problems—particularly for boys in low socioeconomic areas, indigenous boys and so on early on in schooling—are played out when you look at subject choices at the end of secondary schooling: you see that girls, young women, have a broad subject choice but that our young men have a much more narrow subject choice. The girls doing, say, maths and science at year 11 and 12 are particular groups of girls: middle-class girls who compete with middle-class boys. But there is a very complex picture here and, in my view, the fact that boys have this narrow range of subject choices does not prepare them across those sorts of goals of schooling. There is an interesting question about how one measures equality of opportunity in this respect as well. The report I mentioned—by Collins et al.—documents very nicely the post-school options question and how boys who leave school early have better chances of getting jobs than girls who leave school early. Indeed, young women have to have more education to compete with boys with lower levels of education. There are different ways in which males and females fit into the labour market and in how school transitions work there.

The next point I want to make is that I think we need to learn from the 30 years of feminist framed gender policies in Australia rather than operate within a backlash context, because I think many of them, particularly the more recent—the national action plan which flowed from the review of the national policy for the education of girls in Australian schools 1987—deal nicely with the notion of construction of gender and the construction of masculinities. We think that that is a very important factor.

Before passing to my colleague Martin, I want to make three summary points. We think that boys' issues, and specifically literacy issues for boys, need to be looked at and thought about in relation to girls' issues and girls' educational issues. So the two need to be thought through together in a relational sort of way, and these must be addressed at system, school and classroom level. There need to be framing policies, educative roles, around what the patterns of performance are.

Finally, we have to be really careful that we do not operate and play with a sort of backlash version of boys' schooling. I have documented over the last 15 years the media representations of the debate. A lot of it is not very useful and I think much of the public debate is not useful—it is acrimonious and it does not get anywhere. I think we need to stand back and take a sort of reasoned and research based view of what is going on and look at what the purposes of schooling are.

**Dr Mills**—I would like to situate what I am going to say within the context of what Bob said and say that there are also some very gender specific issues that we need to think about in

relation to boys. All the time, what must be kept in mind is that backlash politics should not be adopted. It strikes me, when I go into schools on a regular basis to work with teachers around issues of boys and to work with boys generally, that what teachers or schools are often looking for is a quick-fix solution: what can we do in period 1 on Monday morning with the boys in our classes? I think that a lot of the backlash texts, the various books on boys, seek to provide some of those answers. They seem to be easy answers in some cases, and I think they are very dangerous answers. What is needed is more of a reculturing within schools, rather than quick-fix solutions.

Part of that reculturing is looking at some of the attitudes displayed by both boys and some of the men within schools in relation to issues of girls. If you pick up on some of the dominant ways in which boys construct their identities within schools, there is this negative attitude towards girls—that they are not going to do anything that girls do or that they perceive girls to do, and they are not going to do anything for which they perceive they will receive homophobic abuse if they engage in these activities.

From my research, and the research of Wayne Martino and so on, with respect to a lot of the literacy issues, there are boys who are saying, 'I don't like English because faggots like English,' or, 'I don't like English because that's what girls do.' Part of reculturing needs to be actually a valorising of what girls do in schools and saying that the humanity subjects—English and so on—are valuable types of activity. That means actually playing up and reinforcing the things that girls have done well as being valuable activities. In the last 20 or so years there have been important moves to get girls into sciences. I think that has been really important. But what it has also done is valorise the subjects that boys have traditionally done and devalued some of those subjects that girls have done, and they need to be revalued.

I would say that two of the things that really have to be part of reculturing within schools are the challenging of misogyny and challenging of homophobia. My experience is that those—particularly homophobia—are the things that schools have not been prepared to tackle. It is something that many teachers feel uncomfortable with as well. Until we start engaging in saying that this is a real problem in the school, we are not going to get very far down the track of improving both outcomes for boys and behaviours for particular groups of boys—and I take the point that it is not all boys.

I would also like to stress two more issues. One is male teachers and the emphasis there has been on getting male teachers to work with boys. What kind of male teachers do we want? In some schools, it is almost a case of, 'If they're male and vertical, they'll do.' I have research which shows male teachers working with groups of boys against the girls—'We can do this better than the girls'—and I think that is very dangerous.

With respect to literacy, I have just been analysing texts from a private school—recommended readings for boys. If you look through these texts in terms of the male roles that these boys are playing out within these texts, they are very dominant constructions of masculinity. The boys in these texts are not the sorts of boys who are going to be sitting down reading; they are not going to be the sorts of boys who are challenging those behaviours which I think disrupt some boys' education and a lot of girls' education. In summation, my two points are that we have to think about misogyny and homophobia in relation to boys' education.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Okay, let us take the homophobia thing first. We are only in the first three months of this inquiry. Basically we have only been to Melbourne, Victoria; and Sydney. We have been to Canberra and seen a few schools, and we have conducted some public hearings. This will probably go into the next parliament. When we go out to schools and talk about successful pedagogies and teaching styles and what schools are doing, they do not mention anything about homophobia. Now that may not be unusual. They mention structure; they mention keeping boys active. In fact, we went to a public school yesterday where for the last three years they have initiated a program of literacy which has been highly successful. They have monitored it—it is in a working class area—and they have been highly successful. The differentials between the attainments of boys and girls have been minimal. I would have thought that would be a program that we should be extolling and perhaps further examining.

Earlier in the inquiry today Teresa Gambaro made mention of a help line that students have available. There are two references here. In one reference, one per cent of the calls were to do with problems about homophobia, and in the other it was up to 10 per cent. That is not to say that these problems do not exist, but sometimes, I think, people think that maybe they are being overstated and that perhaps there are better ways of describing problems like that rather than by using that horrible term ‘homophobia’, which divides people. Your comments, please?

**Dr Mills**—I guess I would be concerned about the silences. I think that sometimes we try not to divide people by keeping silent about issues. I think that that has been a major problem in a whole range of areas. I think we have to speak out about that. When I talk to teachers and talk about the insults that boys use against each other, the homophobic insults, they recognise them and they know about them happening all the time—‘Don’t do that; you’re a girl, you’re a poof.’ It is a common part of their vocabulary and a lot of boys, I know, and a lot of kids at schools perceive that to be just joking. This is what I have got from a whole range of interviews that I have done with kids. One interview that springs to mind straight away was with a boy who talked about it being just a joke when he was teasing this other boy. When I interviewed the boy they were teasing he broke down and sobbed. He kept up his front that it was just a joke, but once he had a chance to talk about it he was sobbing. I think there are issues there that we do need to deal with.

I know the school that you are talking about. I know the ethos of that school: it completely rejects deficit models of kids. I think that is brilliant and I think that is really important. I think that part of some of the problems with the boys’ issues arise through treating kids in deficit models. I think that that school is very successful because it does not do that. Some of those kids, the boys who are not doing well, are often, as Bob mentioned, indigenous boys, working class boys and so on. In some of those schools there are deficit models of indigenous kids and deficit models of working class kids in place. I think that those boys are not achieving because they are indigenous boys and so on. So the deficit model plays off against that, I think.

**Prof. Lingard**—I confirm the first point that Martin made about homophobia. I think it is something that is not talked about. I think teachers have difficulty talking about it. I think the community does. I think systems have not taken it on board. If you look at the data on, say, youth suicide—and I know that is some distance from where we are—there are some arguments which would suggest that male suicide in rural towns is closely linked to issues of sexuality and so on.

Coming back to your example of the school, we know the school well. We have done research there for a couple of years. I think what Martin says is absolutely right, that it rejects the deficit view of the kids and the community. It works with the community in particular ways. I think there are some other schools in the Queensland context in similar locations doing similarly outstanding work and getting outstanding sorts of results. I think an important element of it is a particular pedagogy, particular teaching, which I think is intellectually demanding, which is supportive and which recognises difference, so it actually encourages and enables boys and girls to be boys and girls in multiple and different ways. It does not work with deficit views.

In our research—and this school has been one of our research projects—there is an Aboriginal community school that I have worked in where they have a motto, ‘Strong and smart’, which seems to work perfectly in that school. The ‘strong’ is about identity, positive identity as an Aboriginal boy, an Aboriginal young man or Aboriginal young woman, and the ‘smart’ is about academic performance and trying to have the two things complement each other. I think that pedagogy is centrally important in it but that a particular sort of framing of systemic and school policies and educative roles about a range of these things is really important. I know, from the research that Martin has done in several schools in programs around boys and violence, that certainly the schools were replete with homophobia. Homophobic put-downs were very often ways that boys related to other boys.

**Dr Mills**—An important point there is that it is homophobic abuse as a controlling mechanism to be a normalised type of boy. It is not necessarily directed at boys who do identify as gay. It is actually a controlling mechanism to ensure you behave. It is a policing mechanism to ensure that you behave in a particular way that is identified with a normal or normalised form of masculinity. I have got so many transcripts of kids saying these sorts of things—‘I could not do that because they would start to think, “What is he, a gay?”’ So there are these kids who are very articulate but there is no way they are going to do this stuff of talking about feelings and emotions and so on. Also, they identify that with English, for instance. They are not going to do that because people will think they are gay.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Everyone has an opinion about education. We have all been to school and we are all experts.

**Prof. Lingard**—The problem is we are not all experts.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is exactly right. There are a very few people who know very much about education in the world—which is unfortunate—but there are some fundamentals about education that have been absolute givens over centuries, and some of those absolutes are that boys and girls do learn differently. In some of the information that was presented to the committee, there seems almost a mood to ignore all of that, to deny that that is the case and to go down a singular road. Robert, you mentioned, for example, being aware of differences and not taking deficits. I totally agree with you but that is not what this committee is having put in front of us.

**Prof. Lingard**—I think, though, that in your account of boys and girls learning differently, there is an underlying assumption that all boys learn in this way and all girls learn—

**ACTING CHAIR**—No, I am not saying that at all.

**Prof. Lingard**—No, but that is very often there in that argument which then very often falls back on a biological reductionist sort of argument which I would want to reject. I think the point is recognising difference amongst both the categories of boys and girls, and there is a lot of overlap in terms of the way different boys and different girls learn. There are differences and so on, and it is taking that into account. I think that is really important.

I think there is a way in which you are a boy—you perform being a boy, you perform masculinity—or a way in which you are a girl, the way you perform femininities. What schooling needs to do, in terms of opening up opportunities, is to open up and destabilise some of that as well. I think it is unfortunate that we get subject choice patterns around male and female at the end of secondary school. It is interesting that the contemporary focus is on literacy and on boys and literacy. If you look at numeracy results—I know the Queensland data quite intimately, so if you look at the Queensland data on primary school numeracy—there are no differences in the patterns of male and female performance in numeracy. It is inflected by social class and so on, and indigenous students not doing as well, et cetera, but it is interesting that the debate about, say, more girls doing maths and science in years 11 and 12 has disappeared. There are complex patterns and we do need better data and better research, and I think what that will show is how nuanced and complex the plays of being a boy—and a girl—are with the other factors about what sort of boy that would come to bear. They are important in terms of what schools do for boys and girls.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There was an article in the *Spectator* a couple of weeks ago on the debate that is happening with the forthcoming UK election and Professor Madison Curry, who you have probably heard of, put forward an argument about the examination system of 20 years ago and today, and he actually used two questions in history as an example in the article.

In the article, the question of 20 years ago in History was to list the main arguments of the Bill of Rights as they were established in the United Kingdom in the 18th century and write about their effect on Catholics. That was an actual question. The question from last year was: write about what it would have been like to have grown up in Nazi Germany as a young Jewish girl. That was an actual question. Those questions are very different constructs. What he was arguing was that one examination system favoured boys, because they are more prepared to list things and so on, whereas the other one was more girl friendly. He gave a whole range of other examples of how some of these things have changed. He was arguing that there are a couple of attributes in education that are missing. I notice one of them is yours, but maybe it is a different definition of risk taking. He was saying that risk taking is being eliminated from education in the United Kingdom. I notice in a that bit about behaviour, when we talked about misogyny and homophobia, you also put in risk taking. There are different ways to interpret risk taking.

**Dr Mills**—Yes. There are multiple ways of talking about risk taking. One way is to talk about all those very courageous girls who went into manual arts and science 20 or 30 years ago or the boys who are going into some of the non-traditional areas for boys. That is an element of risk taking. There is risk taking in terms of learning: we need to give kids opportunities to actually take risks with their learning, and let them know that failing at different times is as important as actually being successful. Again, that means a whole lot in terms of changing assessment regimes and so on. Even though there are assessment items there, have a look at the rich tasks in Queensland. There are much better kinds of assessment for both boys and girls. You talked

about absolutes before, and the thing about the new era is that there are no more absolutes—not even safe seats. We live in a time of uncertainty—

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is a contradiction in itself.

**Dr Mills**—Yes, I noticed.

**ACTING CHAIR**—At least you understand that. You just eliminated half the world in one fell swoop.

**Dr Mills**—Yes, but I think that part of what kids do need to see is that there are multiple ways of seeing the world and that some of the old certainties that we worked with are no longer certainties. As Bob often says, the only dead certainties are dead certainties. You talked about particular learning styles where many boys look for right and wrong answers, and that is the kind of learning which will not do them much good now. They need to actually work in a world where there are multiple answers.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think economies in the world need entrepreneurs and risk takers and they need people who jump to new paradigms. One of the great criticisms of education around the world, not just in Australia, is that it is conforming, uniforming and—

**Dr Mills**—Yes, we agree.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You agree?

**Dr Mills**—Yes, that is the point.

**Prof. Lingard**—Can I just make one point about risk taking?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Prof. Lingard**—For boys, very often the transitions from boyhood to manhood and all of that are associated with particular forms of risk taking which I think are dangerous to the lives of boys. There is speeding in cars, taking drugs, drinking large amounts of alcohol and all those things which are dangerous things.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Like everything, it has got positive and negative things; and they are the negative parts of risk taking—but there are very positive things.

**Prof. Lingard**—Yes, I agree but I was just putting it in relation to boys and their sorts of experiences.

**ACTING CHAIR (Ms Gambaro)**—Please continue, Professor Lingard.

**Prof. Lingard**—There has been quite a substantial debate in the UK about forms of examination, testing and assessment and how that links to boys' and girls' performance. There is quite a complex and complicated argument about that. There have been some arguments put

which I am a bit doubtful about as to how particular forms of examination and right answer models favour boys and more assignment work which wants more nuance and reflective stuff favours girls. I think that still works with two essentialised notions of boys and girls. In actual fact, the things that are wanting opinions, views and so on should be skills that all the kids get. I think that is where the literacy stuff on boys plays.

I think that in some schools in Brisbane subject choices in year 11 and year 12 are organised so that everybody has to choose subjects from the humanities, social sciences, languages, and the sciences. In my view that is a good thing, even though the paradox of that of course is it appears that boys' narrower subject choice, compared with the broader subject choices of girls, privileges them and benefits them in labour market terms.

**Ms GILLARD**—I agree with you about the assessment stuff, having gone through my school and university career cramming for exams—it worked for me. One of the things we are trying to explain in this inquiry is that, if you look at the data over time, it appears boys' levels of attainment are diverging from girls' levels of attainment. In part I think that is because, when you look across the data, you do not end up comparing apples with apples, so you have got to be careful about those conclusions. In part you would expect, too, girls' attainments to have lifted as we have consciously taken the weights off girls that used to keep them behind.

But if you look, for example—we were talking about this in the break—at the retention rate data from the early nineties, we know that retention rates are falling, particularly for boys and particularly for boys of lower socioeconomic status. If that was explained by economic recovery and better labour market outcomes it would not be a problem, but I think we all know that it is not explained by that. I am interested in your view about what has changed in that time period that would explain that change. While I do not know if I would use the term 'homophobia', I understand what you are saying in terms of the kind of viciously enforced sex role stereotyping in schools. But I think we would have to say that that is not a recent phenomena, is it?

**Prof. Lingard**—There is more awareness of it now.

**Ms GILLARD**—Yes, there is more awareness of it now and maybe the terminology in terms of abuse changes from generation to generation, but I suspect you could track homophobic terms of abuse—calling someone a 'girl' or a 'poonce', for example. You could track that over 30, 40, 50 years if you talk to people about their own school experiences. As unacceptable as that is, that cannot be the explanation for changes over time.

**Prof. Lingard**—I think there is a lot that needs to be said in trying to answer the question. One point I would make is that I think with all the testing we have had on boys' and girls' performance on a range of things over a long period of time—and this might be an artefact of the test instruments as much as anything else—you get the broader spread of results for boys than you do for girls. You get boys at the top end and boys at the bottom end, and girls' results have tended to be crowded in. I think now that there is some sort of convergence between school performance and career aspirations, and indeed life aspirations, particularly for middle-class young women and men—that is, if you look at law faculties and medicine faculties around Australia or anywhere around the world—you get as many young women there as young men, and their aspirations are similar to those that young men have. So there has definitely been a change in that respect. I think that ought to be celebrated and often it isn't. We hear, 'Poor boys,



now they have got competition.' We ought to celebrate those positive changes, which have come from good policy and the good work of teachers at schools.

The other thing is that the transitions between school and work are much more attenuated and much more complex than they once were. I think that is to do with the changes in the labour market, the globalisation of the economy and so on. If you look at Queensland, secondary education came very late. If you go to my parents' generation, most of that generation in Queensland had primary schooling. Now we are trying to keep kids in longer but, in labour market returns, even a university degree does not count for what it did 30 years ago. So there is this upward spiral. In fact I think if you are a disadvantaged boy—and some of the old transitions to apprenticeships and particular sorts of skilled work have gone—you have got to stay there a long time. There are a lot of things you have to forgo to actually get through and there might not even be the returns. I think we have got changed labour markets.

Ulrich Beck, in his work *Risk Society*, talks about choice biographies. He says that once our lives—my life—involved going to primary school, secondary school and then university then getting a job and having a career in which you stayed. He argues that there is much more choice around all of those transitions and they are much more complex. There is even more choice about how you are going to be a male and how you are going to be a female in practices of masculinities and femininities. So for some groups of middle class young men and women there has been a convergence. It is like what is happening in the broader society, the growths in inequality and their concentrations, marginalised communities—the results of which I think you see in election results and so on. There are all of those things and the broader uncertainties—Giddens, the British sociologist, talks about the manufactured uncertainty of the present.

There is not the certainty that our parents' generation had about school and transition into work. It has become much blurrier, and I think the things you are talking about are a result of that. The fact that young women have to engage with schooling for longer to have some choices in the labour market is really an important observation. That is why I think that Cherry Collins study—I do not know whether you know it; the DETYA one which was released a short while ago, before Christmas—is outstanding in that it talks about those attenuated transitions and the pay-off for young men and young women in terms of amounts of schooling, entry into the labour market and so on.

**Dr Mills**—I always worry about some of the arguments. They are always dangerous in terms of how they can be used. I think we need to recognise post school opportunities and pathways still very much favour men in most institutions, most organisations and so on. What is different now in terms of the homophobic stuff is that the cost for those boys 20 or 30 years ago were different from those costs now in relation to the occupations that are available and the types of skills that are valued in the market place. So once upon a time where grade 10 boys went after school they did not need those great communication skills and so on. Whereas now some of those boys who may have left at grade 10 need those communication skills and so on which they are not acquiring for some of those reasons that I talked about. So I think there is this difference, but again it is that dangerous argument of saying that the boys have got it tough in the marketplace. I think some boys have, but not all boys.

**Ms GILLARD**—That is one of the problems that we were talking about earlier. During this inquiry we have had put to us that boys have lost their reference points and that a lot of images

of attainment are now images around women. You do have to say you can put that far too highly. We still live in a society where the Prime Minister is a man, the Premier is a man, the Chief Commissioner is a man, et cetera.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And in the business community.

**Ms GILLARD**—Yes, Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer.

**Mr EMERSON**—Has boys' literacy deteriorated over the last 20 years?

**Prof. Lingard**—I do not think so, because I think it is a question of what literacy is and how you define it. What literacy is is a really big question and I would want to go into a broader definition. It is interesting to note that, if you take things like IT into account, it might be that you get different patterns in terms of literacy skills in terms of gender and so on. I think that was the point that you were making in actual fact. There are greater demands in a way. It seems to me that what you could get away with once was a lack of skills, in terms of particular labour markets, and now you cannot. I think there is an upward push of what is demanded and required—

**Mr EMERSON**—So less literate.

**Prof. Lingard**—That is what I would think.

**Mr EMERSON**—I think there is a misconception in the community that boys are less literate now than they were before.

**Prof. Lingard**—Yes.

**Mr EMERSON**—Now on some objective tests they seem to be less literate now than girls are now, but they all could be more literate than they were 20 years ago.

**Prof. Lingard**—That is really true for Aboriginal boys. If you look at the ACER data, the big thing that hits you overall is that literacy levels of Aboriginal boys are way below the rest of the student population but they are better than they were some time ago.

**Mr EMERSON**—I have a question which follows from that in relation to homophobia. As Julia says, homophobia was common 20 years ago. You might be interested in this: we asked boys at Woodridge high yesterday whether they got intimidated, bullied or in any way pressurised for trying hard and they said, 'No, not at all.' They do not get that at all. Maybe they just said that in front of us because it would reported back, 'Bill went in there and told the boozes such and such.'

**Prof. Lingard**—We know Woodridge High really well, and it is one of the two excellent schools that you have seen. They are schools that are doing fantastic stuff. There is excellent leadership in the school, there are excellent people at the level of heads of department, there is excellent teaching and there are excellent programs. Do you know what I mean? The education is good.

**Mr EMERSON**—We know that homophobia was there 20 years ago and we know it is there now. As you said, boys are apparently over-represented in the top 30 per cent of educational attainment and in the bottom 30 per cent. Homophobia sounds to me like it is an SES—a socioeconomic status—thing. How could boys who have been over-represented in the top 30 per cent have been barraged with the same homophobia and have brushed it aside and achieved excellency in terms of academic achievement—or maybe they do not get it? There may be amongst them, in high SES areas, a reward structure where one boy says, ‘I’m going to do really well at English,’ and another says, ‘No, you’re not—I’m going to beat you.’

**Prof. Lingard**—Yes, and I think homophobia is only one of the factors; not the whole explanatory factor. Social class stuff and the disadvantages of, say, indigenous communities play a part, and homophobia might be lower down in the order of causal factors. In terms of subject choices, say, boys do not do foreign languages or modern history or biology in the same way that girls do. The subject choice is narrower. I think that is linked to dominant constructions of masculinity and so on. There is also a question about coeducation versus all-boys schools and how that works; and I think SES intersects with those two factors in really complex and interesting sorts of ways. So homophobia might not play as strong a part in middle-class, coeducation schools as it might in all-boys schools of particular sorts. The bullying at Trinity Grammar, which has been in the media, is a case in point of some of the negatives that can flow from all-boys environments.

**Dr Mills**—The leaflet I mentioned before that listed books for boys was from one of the most privileged schools in Queensland which does not have the problems that other schools have. One of my concerns is how the boys debate is being used by privileged schools and by privileged boys as a marketing tool for all-boys private schools. I think that that really diminishes and detracts from issues that relate to indigenous boys and to boys from poor socioeconomic backgrounds.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I have a question about the top achievers: could it have something to do with the fact—again, we are talking about literacy issues here—that the people at the higher end of the scale in Queensland, those who tend to get OP1s, tend to study maths and science based subjects as they tend to have a higher grading point, and that that is why boys are excelling there? What are your views on that? Or are boys in your research getting OP1s with humanity type subjects?

**Prof. Lingard**—You should talk to the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies about that because I think the picture is more complex than you have represented it, and I don’t think it is the case that only those who do maths and science and orientation get OP1s. It depends as much on the group of kids that does a particular subject and the way the core skills test moderates the school based results; so if you have a group of outstanding kids who do economics it is likely that they are going to get OP1s.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is still averaged out—yes, I know what you are saying.

**Prof. Lingard**—Do you know what I mean?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, I do. It is pretty much the same sort of system: a grade point average type thing.

**Dr Mills**—I think there is a way, at the school level, that students who actually do very well at school are encouraged to go into the maths and sciences after grade 10. They might be told, ‘Don’t do the humanities, you could do well at science,’ as if science is more valuable and valorised than those other subjects.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think everyone who has been here has asked you about homophobia and I do not want to disappoint you by not asking you.

**Dr Mills**—I was wondering what your question was going to be.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am going through this at the moment. I have a 12-year-old son who is at an all-boys school and he had to make some choices about what sports he would do. I will give you an example that came up. Does he play rugby or, as he is very petite and very good at gymnastics, does he choose that? He went to choose gymnastics and his sister said, ‘Oh, don’t do that; that’s a gay sport,’ or whatever. You have spoken about males being hard on other males in their peer groups. Do girls tend to inflict those same sorts of judgments? He is at an all-boys’ school, but I just wonder if you have done any research on what the female stereotypes of males are.

**Dr Mills**—I guess it varies. No, I have not done the research; only what I have read. From reading the research, often girls will buy into boys’ games at times, and so it does come from some girls. But I think it is more prevalent in all-boys schools.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You would say that in all-boys schools—

**Dr Mills**—I do not want to generalise. I am getting away from what I started to say.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, we have that problem. I just want to ask you a question about boys dropping out of school. How do we stop them? We had a group in here, a private training consultant group from where I represent, who said that 13- to 15-year-old boys are slipping through the system; the school tracking systems are not finding them—they get expelled from one school and they might be expelled from the whole region. Is there anything we can do to stop boys from dropping out of schools? I guess that is one of the things that we are looking at in this inquiry as well. Why are boys more prone to drop out of school than girls, or am I generalising here?

**Prof. Lingard**—No, the retention of girls is much higher than boys.

**ACTING CHAIR**—They gave us some figures about who was going through their literacy courses and it was 10 boys to two girls.

**Prof. Lingard**—The same is true about behaviour issues in schools and so on.

**Dr Mills**—I think there are a whole lot of curriculum and pedagogical issues that need to be addressed. It is not just for boys, but things like trying to make the classroom work more connected into people’s world—more meaningful. That often means upping the intellectual quality of work that is done in schools. Bob and I were sitting in a classroom that was all boys. It was a sort of a de facto streaming class and they were filling in work sheets. It seemed to me

that this was a group of kids that really needed to be doing work of high intellectual quality that meant something to them and that was not just filling in work sheets about—I have forgotten what it was now—the Industrial Revolution or agrarian society. It was so meaningless. Why would you do it? Why would you stay? I wanted to muck up—truly. I was sitting at the back of the room. It is about changing pedagogic curriculum to be connected into kids' world; thinking about—and I guess we would stress that—increasing intellectual quality for some kids in a meaningful way. A lot of kids do talk about being bored. That does not mean thinking that we will give them incredibly abstract work to do. It can be high intellectual quality that is connected into their world, and that is probably a whole new area for us to go into.

**Prof. Lingard**—In relation to your question about your son, I think pedagogically it is the whole culture—what the school actually publicly, and formally and informally, appears to value and deems to be important. I think there can be schools which create cultures where doing well academically, and doing well at drama, music and so on, is valued in the same way as doing well at rugby, et cetera. Not that I am not saying doing well at rugby is necessarily bad, but it is valuing, so allowing—

**ACTING CHAIR**—More than doing well at music or something.

**Prof. Lingard**—Yes. You can often see that in terms of the way schools spend money on things—on this rather than that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And it is the school's curriculum that more or less brings through this culture.

**Prof. Lingard**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Martin, I would like to thank you and Robert very much for your submission and for appearing before the committee. We have enjoyed your submission. Thank you very much.

[4.20 p.m.]

**PERCY, Mr John David, Deputy, St Joseph's Nudgee College; representing Edmund Rice Educational Services**

**TUITE, Mrs Kerrie Patricia, Principal (Acting), St Brendan's College, Yeppoon; representing Edmund Rice Educational Services**

**ACTING CHAIR (Ms Gambaro)**—I would like to thank you both for appearing before the committee. I invite you both to make an opening statement.

**Mr Percy**—Thank you very much for inviting both Kerrie and I to appear today. We thought we might focus on a few practical issues. That is what we are able to bring to the table, being both teachers and involved in the school system. We represent the Edmund Rice schools. It is a very diverse group of 10 schools across Queensland, involved in a diversity of boys' education. That brings us to the first point that we would like to make; that is, boys are a diverse group and when we consider boys' education we are talking about a multitude of strategies and pathways in our schools to make it successful—not just relating to some image of what a boy is that suits everyone.

The second point is that we do not see it as a boys versus girls issue. We see it as being a case of saying: what can we do best for boys? We have focused on that. So there are three things that we would like to talk about. You mentioned in your outline socialisation. We probably interpret that as pastoral care in the classroom with the students. With respect to literacy, we can talk a bit about how we handle that at our different schools. If you are interested, we can discuss boarding issues, bullying and those sorts of things that sometimes get associated with schooling in general. We could start by looking at our vertical pastoral care system and focus on that.

**Mrs Tuite**—One of the reasons that we provide vertical pastoral care is so that you get the idea that students are mixing right from the word go. At St Brendan's—it also applies to Nudgee—when a student arrives at the college he is put into a pastoral care group which ranges from grade 8 to grade 12. They stay in the pastoral care group for the whole time they are at the school with the same carer. I say 'carer' deliberately because at our college we invite and involve everybody in the school community, so it could well be that the maintenance man is also a pastoral carer. They meet with the boys every day that they are at the school, from the time they arrive until the time they leave. It creates that sense of belonging within the group.

Another thing that we do within the school is to pal-up our year 12s with the year 8s. They have a big brother system and they meet regularly, particularly in the first six months of the year, to create some sense of belonging. We feel that our schools are successful in the variety of forms that they come in, from our Centre Ed., which is very much an outreach school, to fairly mainstream schools like St Brendan's and Nudgee. We try to provide the boys particularly with a sense of belonging to a group, so that sense of belonging gives them some sort of framework to work within.

We are also acutely aware that boys do not come without problems, and particularly in our boarding schools we have kids who come to us from very different family backgrounds. Some

are very mainstream—the usual mum, dad, brothers and sisters—but we do have a number of wards of the state. We also have a number of indigenous students who come from far away. We have a number of students from sole-parent families. We try to provide them with some sense of belonging to a group, to counter that alienation that boys often feel. We also have counselling services: at both the schools and right across the system we have counsellors to work with kids who have got problems.

**Mr Percy**—Are you all clear on the vertical pastoral care system? It means that a student who comes in at year 8 will be with that group for five years. If I were the pastoral care teacher, I would get to know that student for five years and meet with them every morning. It also means that in that group we have got three or four year 8s, three or four year 9s, three or four year 10s that are with each other every morning as well and they interact, so it breaks down.

**ACTING CHAIR**—How many in the group altogether?

**Mr Percy**—There would be about 25, something of that order.

**Mrs Tuite**—As the grade 12s drop off, everyone moves up.

**Mr Percy**—The interesting thing about that is the year 12s are the big brothers, as Kerrie said, for the year 8s, so they are also learning a role there. I suppose you could call it a fathering role in a way; we call it Big Brother in our place. So when they first arrive, we think it is really important to have orientation programs where everybody feels comfortable. We have a large boarding contingent as well, and their families come in and meet with staff, with the other students, the other families, so they get to feel very comfortable. We try to reflect that straight through in our pastoral care.

The first port of call could be the pastoral care teacher. We had such a case recently: I knew a student for three years and I could just sense something was not right with that student. It was very difficult to draw it out, but because you know the student continually over a period of time, you see how they are growing, how they are interacting and you have got that sense of contact with the student, you can actually talk about issues with them and pick up early if something is not going right for them. I like to look at the positive side, too. It is also easy to give good credit and contact with their parents and feedback when things are going right for them, perhaps going exceptionally well.

The counsellors are an area that you might be interested in. I think it is a growth area and really needy, so much so that we tend to try and put our budget where our thoughts are on this. We employ four full-time counsellors for our school, to be there for the students. They look after them individually. They can go and talk through issues—worries or major concerns. They have got a way of dealing with it and we have a way of dealing with it as well. The counsellors not only give one-to-one advice, they also go into classes and they might talk about things—as I would like to get onto later—such as career advice and options for their own studies and things of that nature. So they are seen not just as an isolated counsellor but as people with, perhaps, credit: they are in with the students, they go into classrooms, they are seen to be practitioners and part of the whole community.

**Mrs Tuite**—I would just like to pick up on that. We are a smaller school, but we basically follow the same model in terms of counsellors, so we have two at our school. Our numbers are about 700, whereas Nudgee is a little larger than that, and so we work on that level.

To go back to getting the parents to belong: we have been trialling over the last couple of years an initiative whereby the parents, when they bring their students to boarding school, come and live in. They come in early so the parents actually get to experience a whole day of boarding life. They arrive with their students—the grade 8s particularly, but it happens for the others as well—and get them settled into their residences. Then they go off and sleep in another residence, and they get up and they experience the whole thing. I recall a lovely letter I received from a mother a couple of weeks back, saying that she was really tentative about sending her son to boarding school, but after the program of orientation we put them through, as she left the gate she knew that she had done the right thing for her son. So she went home and she wrote this letter. That happens to us fairly frequently, and we like to keep that sense of community that extends out past the student to their family. One of the things that we feel boys particularly need is to know that they belong, that there is somewhere where they can belong to counter that alienation that they do feel, particularly when they do not experience success.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you have anything further to add?

**Mrs Tuite**—No—although we could talk for ages.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I was chuckling when you were talking about the care of your students, because I know of friends who have sent their children to Nudgee College who have complained that their boarders did not want to go home! You treated them too well. So that is a very good recommendation. In the context of this inquiry, we have had various presentations from people about the level of literacy. Is there a big difference in literacy today as compared with—taking your question—20 years ago? Do you have early intervention programs, particularly in the grade 8 area? How do you deal with the literacy issues in those early high school years at Nudgee and also at St Brendan's?

**Mrs Tuite**—It is certainly a growth area. We were discussing that before. This is my third year at St Brendan's. We now have two full-time teachers in the learning support area and six aides just to support the students. It may well be that our population is somewhat atypical, because we are a country school and also because our students come from the bush, where their primary education could involve home schooling or having to travel for quite a long time to get to the school. We do have a number of students who come in, and I would have to say to you that it is growing. Whether it is growing because we are now identifying these things or whether it is growing because the numbers of students that we are getting is also growing, I do not know. But it is fair to say that, according to my experience of the last 20 years, there are more students who are in need of one-on-one support and individual education programs than there would have been before.

That may be because of the way we teach now. In my first year teaching in 1971—I hate to admit the year—I had 39 grade 2s in a class. That is not unusual. You talk to any person who has taught over a number of years and it is not unusual to have had classes of 45. The reality is that you cannot teach individually 45 kids or 39 grade 2s. The fact that most of my grade 2s could read at the end of the year was probably more of a testament to them than it was to me.



The teaching styles have changed remarkably. For instance, we now have very much smaller classes than we had. We would have no class in our school over 28. Some of our senior classes are down to 15. Some are even down to 12—in subjects that we keep going because there are students who are interested in them but in which we do not have any push to have huge classes. So it is quite different.

I do believe that we are identifying them more and we are spending more time helping them, recognising that learning and literacy are really vital parts of their lives. I have two sons and two daughters and they are all readers. Whether that is because their parents are readers, I do not know. Some parents do not pick up a book. We have a push every year for what we call reading week. One of the most valuable things that we get to do is get our men, particularly, to read in chapel every morning. They pick a chapter or a section from their favourite book and they read to the boys. We promote reading as something that people do. But there are some kids who really are frightened of books.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is the example we had when we visited Woodridge State High School the other day. We went around the table and asked how many students read novels. One of the boys there admitted it freely amongst the group. Can I just ask about the encouragement of humanities and literacy based subjects—what is your policy on that at Nudgee? Is there a high uptake of those subjects? Are they actively encouraged? Just give me a run-down.

**Mr Percy**—Our priority is mainly giving students choice. Following from the last issue—and this is related to the one you just brought up—when the students come in at year 8, if that is their entry point, we keep them in house groups for the pastoral side of it for the first term or so, we do testing and then, where the need is identified, they actually receive education in that literacy group in small groups. So there are groups of about eight, or less in some cases. We identify the need and try to match up the need with what we can do.

We do not see that building in failure is one of the things that we want to do. We look at whatever we need to do to get success for those students and we come from there. So, when it comes to humanities, from the second semester of year 8 on the students are given a fair bit of choice. Over years 9 and 10—it is not set in concrete—they put a plan together of where they want to head. It is not just a smorgasbord; it is done with consultation and it is done with a lot of professional help so that it has a purpose to it. We were saying before that students are helped to understand when they choose subjects. We use the AIM, which is an acronym: ‘A’ if they have some ability in that area, ‘I’ for interest, and ‘M’ if they are motivated to do it, if it is going somewhere. In the junior area it is a little more directional. We say within this choice that they have to do, at our school, a religious education subject and they have to do English at one level or another, and that could be from literacy through to more advanced analysis in English and so on. In the mathematics area there are four levels, one that goes beyond the syllabus and gets into all sorts of things that meet the needs of those students, and I suppose at the less academic level there would be numeracy. They are given guidance into those. It is not seen by students as a put-down in any way because I think it is all part of meeting their needs. If one student is in the numeracy group they will not necessarily be in the literacy group. It is designed so that any class in any area will meet their needs.

So, in answer to your question about the restrictions we have put about for humanities, over the four semesters in 9 and 10 they need to choose a minimum of three semesters of a humanity,

and that could be two history and a geography or two society in the environment subjects and a history. There is a range of topics that they can choose in any one semester so they are not locked in to perhaps studying an ancient history topic. They might study wars or something like that. Giving students choice and a bit more control about their study seems to give them a lot more ownership and a lot more self-esteem and a bit more direction on tasks. That seems to have worked well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It sounds like it is a gradual process. It is not distinctly, ‘This is the literacy stuff, this is the numeracy stuff; you shall do one of those.’ You are graduating them through that. That sounds good.

**Mr Percy**—You mentioned our choice of novels and what do we do to promote reading. An interesting thing that we have been trialing that seems to be working very well in what we call our NITEC , which is a library with a lot of electronic aid so that they can research on the Internet and so on, is that all the assignments that staff may set across any of the subjects goes through there. We employ a research assistant to find really good sites and quality materials, either in written form, whether it be newspaper articles or Internet sites that have documentation in them. They bookmark all of those, and that is accessible by parents who might be wanting to help their son at home, or it could be used by the boarding staff who take students from the boarding side down there to do the assignment. So they are not spending a lot of time trying to find appropriate sites even though they get taught those skills in those subjects. The focus is then on taking that information, analysing it and then synthesising it and getting a good quality product. I think the change has been, with modern technology and word processing, to now expect four or five drafts before you have got it right, and we come at it from that angle.

An interesting sideline we are developing this year to help break down preconceived ideas about masculinity and what boys like to read and so on is that we have now linked themes. So if you are reading a novel which might be talking about whales or something, it will have a hot link so that you can link and then find out interesting things about that type of whale from the science department or science books. It could then link to geography to see what they have been talking about as well, so a student is now no longer being pigeonholed into just studying geography or just reading a particular novel. They are seeing the links and getting information as they need it, and I think that is the benefit of where we are with the information age. It is really focusing on bits of information and pulling them together into a theme. That seems to be working well.

**Ms GILLARD**—I have two questions. We have been told during the course of this inquiry by some people that changes in assessment methods have impacted on boys’ attainment, and it has been suggested that, as a generalisation, boys do better with exam based, short, sharp assessment methods than they do with continuous assessment methods. Do you have a comment on that?

**Mr Percy**—Yes, I have a comment on it. I have not found that to be particularly true. I find the short, multiple-choice type responses often tap into a lower level, a knowledge level, of thinking, memorising facts and so on. When you get to the assignment based things you are getting more into exploring information and what it can mean for you around certain frameworks so you are not only giving your personal response. We are trying to encourage students to look at things. If, say, it is an ethical issue, we are encouraging students to look at it

from different ethical frameworks. From your perspective, if you were, perhaps, liberal minded you might see this issue and this would be important to you. But the same student would also have to say, 'If you were looking at it from a Labor point of view or whatever this would be the framework you would be putting on to see the same issue.' We would be encouraging them to see multiple perspectives to broaden their way of thinking. That cannot necessarily be done through a quick exam so I do not see that being particularly the issue for me.

The issue to me with a lot of tertiary entrance and so on is that our structures seem to value that sort of education where we can test something and what you test is what is most easily able to be tested and probably not what is most valued in our schools. That is where we thought we had a bit to say. But we want to say that we were on about the full development of a student, whether it be a boy or a girl. You do not get that just from focusing on accreditation or on what type of assessment or syllabus is written. I think if we can make some headway in this inquiry it would be to look at our structures that might be supporting the pastoral development or the socialisation. We are looking at statutory bodies in Queensland at the moment, and a big hole in that is that statutory bodies are, again, all focused on accreditation, certification and those sorts of things. But where is the support?

We have a tertiary entrance procedure but that is outmoded because students now access school based apprenticeships and school based traineeships—at our school at least. They might leave for a while, they might be doing part-time at our school, so the dynamic about schooling has changed hugely. But our support policies from government are still back 20 years and probably largely have not kept up with that development. So, rather than tertiary entrance, we should be talking about transition policies and processes that can change more readily rather than being locked into a hierarchy that seems to be what happened in the past.

**Mrs Tuite**—I was just reflecting about a conversation I had with our learning support teacher the other day on that particular thing. Her particular focus is kids with learning difficulties. She would say that you need to basically chunk down the information so that while your end result may well be an essay according to the child's needs you need to set the assignment task differently. What we were saying before is that you simply cannot treat each kid as part of the sausage factory. We are not in our schools trying to turn out the same child at the end; what we are trying to do with all 10 schools that we are associated with is provide the best education for that particular child. I say 'his', but we also have girls in our co-ed school—St James here in Brisbane. We try to provide the best education for the particular child. When you look at the statistics of our college, for instance, we have 137 year 12, of whom 70 are OP-eligible and 67 are doing voc ed. At our school we basically have a fifty-fifty point of view so we really need to develop different structures for the students who have no aspirations to university.

A good case in point was our top student last year who, rather than going to university, took an apprenticeship with Hastings Deering as a mechanic. He knows that once he gets in there, because of his good marks, VHAs, they will see his merit and they will put him through university. There are options, and I think that is something we should be exploring constantly. Not all boys are the same, not all boys have the same needs, not all boys come from the same context. For instance, both of us have similar numbers in our boarding school, but the students in our care are quite different. One of the things that needs to come out of this is that, no matter who the students are, those of us in the education system need to look at the student as one person, as an individual with a whole lot of different things, and we concentrate. Their literacy

is one area, but it is also about the holistic approach, about their spiritual and their personal formation. I think it makes a difference if you look at each child and you see them as a child and not just as a number.

**Mr EMERSON**—I think we are getting that message very strongly, but does it then have resource implications that cannot be achieved? That is, I suppose in the ideal world for every child you would have a teacher. Isn't that not the ideal one-on-one intensive treatment and so on?

**Mrs Tuite**—No, I do not think so. We are a group and we are social beings. I think the one-on-one may be useful in particular circumstances. As a teacher I would have to say that teaching takes place best—and I have been a practitioner for a long time—with more interaction. In my experience, I have taught classes of less than 15, particularly in the senior school. You would think to yourself that it is going to be better if there are smaller numbers. It is not. People need to feed off each other—just like we are doing around this table here. While I do not believe the problem will be solved by throwing money at it—that is not going to be the solution—I believe that you need to look at the context that the students come from and, in our case, that the boys come from, and you need to look at their particular needs across the group.

For instance, we are, for whatever reason, having a number of indigenous kids come to us from outlying places. We have students from Duan Island in the Torres Strait, from Doomadgee, from Woorabinda, from the Northern Territory and wherever. They come with particular needs and we need to be able to address those needs for them, bearing in mind that we also get the students who come from small schools where they have not had the same access to resources and we need to deal with them. I do not think throwing money at it is going to be the answer. What you need to do is to look at what schools are doing in that particular context that works for them and encourage them to continue to do that.

**Mr EMERSON**—But how do you cater for the individual needs of each student in a class of 32?

**Mrs Tuite**—You get a good teacher.

**Mr EMERSON**—One teacher can do that?

**Mrs Tuite**—Yes, one teacher can do that. I believe that. Studies show that the real difference in learning in a classroom is the enthusiasm, the energy and the idea that the teachers are there for the kids, and that goes right across. I believe that a teacher can, if they know their class well enough, walk into a classroom and tell how a student is feeling, and I think that happens. At our school—and I am not blowing our trumpet, but this is my area—we deliberately choose teachers who are not only good teachers but also good people. They are interested in the whole student. What we find is that teachers who do not have that same holistic approach do not stay. They will stay for 12 months or 18 months, but kids in a boarding school have extra needs. Because ours is predominantly a boarding school—with two-thirds of the students as boarders, which is unusual—if you are not interested in kids, you cannot stay because they are just everywhere.

**Mr EMERSON**—What if you were in a state school in a tough area where, let us say, the class size is 32 and seven to 10 kids have real behavioural problems? How does a really excellent teacher deal with the behavioural management problems and the class disruption of the seven to 10 kids while giving the other 22 individual attention?

**Mrs Tuite**—It is a challenge.

**Mr Percy**—I think it is part and parcel of schooling. You do not isolate the classroom from the philosophy and the way you immerse kids in your college or school. You need to have a good pastoral care system and good support. You need to have processes to deal with students so that when they get to that room they are not behaving in that way, anyhow—they know the expectations and parameters of what is acceptable and what is not. If it is not acceptable, we have ways of helping people to process that antisocial behaviour and to help them realise the way in which you relate to people. We talked earlier about the vertical pastoral care system which helps them.

We expect our staff to be very much involved in co-curricular activities. We can never recompense them adequately, but it is part of the philosophy of working with students to do that. Students will try you out at first, but if they see that you put parameters around it, you give of yourself and you are prepared to take on a co-curricular activity—it does not have to be sport; it can be a whole range of things—and you involve them in those different activities, there seem to be a lot less problems.

**Mrs Tuite**—I support that. The classrooms do not exist in isolation. One aspect is, for instance, to have a good behaviour management program that everybody works towards. Having a whole school philosophy helps. I do think that happens in a lot of schools. It does not happen in all of them, but I think that is the way to go. It is not easy—you need people who are committed to making that work. Schools can be really difficult. The first time I walked into an all boys school, going from a co-ed school, was an interesting experience. It took me six months to become ‘accepted’.

**Mr EMERSON**—What do you say to the argument that in a Christian Brothers or a non-government school system you get to pick and choose and in the government school system you do not?

**Mrs Tuite**—No, we do not. We are not selective at all.

**Mr Percy**—We do not even have one by default, by saying, ‘You have to do this curriculum,’ which by default means you have got to be a certain type of student. Part of our ethos is that we do not do that. We were saying before that our curriculum structure is unitised. Students have a lot of choice. By giving them choice, they have ownership of what they want to study and how they study it. One interesting thing is that we have personalised learning units that students can choose. When you give students that option, it is amazing—they always do better than you would ever think they were capable of. We have had students who would work with, say, a PhD student on Internet laws and the issues there, or space travel, or with a vet or a physiotherapist, and use their own interest to do research at a high level. Once you have those sorts of curriculum structures, you are not saying, ‘You’re not welcome.’ You are saying, ‘Everybody is

welcome, and you have a choice of how you want to learn,' and the method of learning, to a certain extent within that, and more ownership.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I have one question regarding parental involvement. I note that you have a retreat program very early in the year. Can you tell me what your philosophy for the retreat program for grade 8s is?

**Mrs Tuite**—That is mine.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you also do it at Nudgee?

**Mr Percy**—We do. We have retreat programs that are targeted at different age levels that are appropriate to them, to get students to think about how they relate to others, as well as to develop their spiritual side and to reflect on right relationships. Whilst they react very well to retreats and to other pastoral care initiatives, what we are finding is that it is a little bit like what Craig was saying—unless that is the philosophy and they are immersed in it in everything they do, including the classroom, it is no good going to the retreat and saying, 'Okay, we can say good things about each other and we know what's expected. Then when we get out in the playground we pay out on each other.' It is important, even though we have the retreats in years 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, appropriate to the age group and what they are ready for, that we try to translate that through our pastoral care system, in the classrooms and out in the playground.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It is filtered through the system?

**Mrs Tuite**—If there is a secret, that is the way. Whether we are Christian Brothers schools or any other schools, government or otherwise, there needs to be a whole of school approach with people committed to the job that they have been given to do, which is educating kids.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You tackle that right at the beginning of the year? You get the philosophy right and take it through?

**Mrs Tuite**—It is quite funny because you often hear the kids verbalising it as the year goes by. Someone will be bullying another one and someone will say, 'You can't do that, that's not fair. You can't do that to him. Everyone is supposed to be treated well around here.' You will hear that from the kids. I like to think it is not just words.

I will share a little incident with you because I thought it was beautiful. We meet every morning in our chapel for prayers and reflection and whatever. Every morning the pastoral care groups get up to do a little prayer, a little reflection. For instance, this morning I think we had Split Enz booming out over the microphones. It was supposed to be something deep and meaningful, but I am not sure what it was. There is a dear little boy in grade eight, who is an Aboriginal boy with real difficulties in reading. His group organised it and he was not game to tell them that he had difficulties reading. So he got up to the microphone and he attempted to read. It became fairly clear after the first three words that he could not do it. The whole chapel went silent. His year 11 in his PC group went up and put his hand on his shoulder and they read it together. There was nary a dry eye in the place.

While I do not want to sound sanctimonious and virtuous and whatever, I think whatever your philosophy is, you need to keep that philosophy and keep it moving through. It might be the respect that teachers have for students with learning needs taken right the way through. It might mean you have to deal with parental needs and be always on the phone. I am sure we have got mobile phones. Everyone has a mobile phone, so parents ring you at any time of the day to find out. It might be inconvenient, but it is worth it.

**Mr EMERSON**—My son just started at St Laurence's and we went to a parents and teachers night last night. It promised to be an hour and it was only two and a quarter. The priest there was good. He was saying, 'You need a direction. You need to work out why we're at school and all that.' He used as an example a drive he went for with his friend in search of a meteorite site in South Australia. After about four hours his friend said, 'I have to tell you, we're hopelessly lost but we're making good time.'

**Mrs Tuite**—That is actually how we feel at times in schools: we are hopelessly lost but we are making good time.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Kerrie and John, thank you very much. We have certainly enjoyed your presentation. I would like, on behalf of the chair, to thank James for today's hearings and *Hansard* staff. Also, we have had quite a large contingent of people coming in and out all day; some of us have stayed longer. I did not get a chance to meet you, but thank you very much for staying with us for the whole day; you have got lasting power. To all of our visitors, thank you very much, it has been a pleasure having you observe our proceedings. Thank you all.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Gillard**):

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

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

That this committee receive as evidence and include in its records as exhibits for the inquiry into the education of boys, the documents received from MW Consultants, *Boys' education and training statistics*; from Education Queensland, *Enterprising futures for boys in regional Queensland*; from Mr Bruce Cook, *All about boys*; and from the Queensland Teachers Union, *Gendered differences in participation and outcomes in Queensland senior secondary schooling*.

**Committee adjourned at 4.59 p.m.**