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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

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CITY BEACH, WA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Thursday, 22 March 2001

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

Members in attendance: Mr Barresi, Mrs Elson, Ms Gillard, Mr Sawford and Mr Wilkie

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

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

WITNESSES

Committee met at 10.12 a.m.

FOREMAN, Mr John Murray, Drama/English Teacher, City Beach High School

HUGHES, Mr John, Deputy Principal, City Beach High School

LILLICO, Mr Ian Patrick, Principal, City Beach High School

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations inquiry into the education of boys and thank Mr Ian Lillico for agreeing to host the committee's visit to City Beach High School today. I also thank everybody else involved in this morning's visit to City Beach High School and those who are about to give evidence, and certainly thank you for the hospitality extended to us this morning.

While we are your guests, I am obliged to remind you that the 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 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. I invite Ian to make some introductory comments, perhaps to be backed up by John and John. Then we will open up for questions.

Mr Lillico—I presented to the committee my Churchill Fellowship report last year as a result of travelling the northern hemisphere and visiting various schools throughout the world where boys were under-achieving and seeing some of the strategies and so on there. I will also be putting forward my two latest booklets on boys' education, which I produced here in Western Australia and which give a much more global view of boys' education, as I see it, from my travels.

Mr Hughes—What I have been trying to do is bring, as much as possible, a lot more activity within the program, within the school. Certainly what we find with boys—and not only boys, but girls—is that the more they are involved in activities and that sort of thing and the more they link with staff, the better results you get in the classroom. One of the really valuable things that we have done this in school has been the fact that it has been strongly supported by all staff. We have had fantastic results from students right across the board.

ACTING CHAIR—We will perhaps ask you some questions about that later to expand on that active learning.

Mr Foreman—There is not really a great deal more to say. I am certainly aware, and have been aware historically, of the absence of boys in drama. Knowing how important drama can be for boys, I am interested to see how we can boost their attendance in drama, for their benefit.

ACTING CHAIR—While we were having morning tea this morning, we talked about what I call the 50 per cent ballpark. In other words, a lot of the current orthodoxy in the education of both boys and girls seems to refer to a convenient half of the debate. In the programs for girls, qualitative research was taken to a great degree but a lot of quantitative research was ignored. Disaggregated information was used but aggregated information was dismissed. Analysis of

work was dismissed; literal interpretation of work was accepted. I must put on the record that, when we were in Adelaide yesterday, a principal of a Southern Vales school, Mr Adams, praised your 52 recommendations. He dragged them off the Net and is beginning discussions with parents and his teaching staff. I thought you would like that feedback because they were delighted with your work.

Mr Lillico—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—I want to refer to half a dozen of your recommendations—11, 19, 26, 28 and 35. The question is essentially the same. In recommendation 11, you discussed the difficulty of boys expressing their feelings and emotions. That is only half of the debate. Many people would write that repressing your feelings and keeping your mouth shut at times is in fact more appropriate behaviour than just babbling out. In recommendation 19, you focus on reflection. But I wonder whether that should be balanced with projection. In recommendation 26, you talk about negativity, but you do not talk about the promotion of positivity. In recommendation 28, you say that boys ought to be more expansive in terms of their writing. But can I put to you that quantity is not always quality. That needs a balance as well. In the last one, No. 35, you talk about explicitly explaining, as a style—and, of course, I accept that. But what about implicit styles? Aren't they equally as important in the debate? Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Lillico—Basically speaking, the Churchill Fellowship report had a focus out of the Churchill Trust of looking at boys education. From my overseas research and also from my local research, I put it all in the vogue of looking at what boys are doing. What I need to make very clear is that an overall balanced summary of the report is contained in two booklets that I have now produced, which I would like to table for you. The first one is called *Boys and their schooling*, which has been out since about July last year, and the latest one, which has been out for about a month, is called *Australian issues in boys' education*. And they do give balance.

One of the things that I need to make very clear is that every one of the 52 recommendations that I have made here—which some schools, teachers or parents could put in place tomorrow; some would take a lot longer—that would improve boys education would improve girls education just as much. If we did anything in Australia that resulted in boys doing better and girls doing worse or staying the same, then that is abhorrent. It cannot be done.

ACTING CHAIR—I assure you this committee is not into that at all.

Mr Lillico—I know. I tried to make it succinct. I think by making it succinct, I have left out some of the balance that you refer to. But I actually expanded on it in a great deal of depth in those two booklets. But I agree with what you say.

Mr WILKIE—If a school here runs around a lot of middle school principles, what are the most important of those principles?

Mr Lillico—The first one that I believe is important is the size of the school providing a very personal education for kids. Boys, in particular, thrive when they have good relationships with their teachers and in a smaller community where they can actually feel as though they are valued. When they become anonymous—as schools get very large or have larger groups of people operating within them—they tend to move into an anonymity type phase. I found this

very clearly in some schools in the United States and the UK. Where the schools are based on the student being the centre of education, which is my philosophy, rather than on the subject, boys thrive. When we look at their needs, we can identify very quickly what their needs are, what their weaknesses are, what their strengths are, and then we can tap into those. We all get to know them very easily; with 150 students currently, I know virtually all the students in the school, and their parents.

The first thing is that they have to be in a smaller environment. They can be in a big senior high school but divided into smaller sections as well. It is an advantage for me as a principal in order to get to know all the kids. The second principle is safety: they have to feel safe and they have to feel as though their property is valued and that they are going to be free from intimidation, bullying, put downs and all those types of things. The third principle is that they have to have territory. In the middle school structure that we have developed and are proposing with some new buildings, each student group or home room will have their own basic classroom, which no other class ever uses. It is theirs: they have their own locker, and they have their own common room.

Children move from being in one classroom, particularly in primary school, which they believe is theirs. They proudly bring their mum and dad to their desk and chair and say, 'This is my work around the room.' They engage. In secondary schools they often lose the territory, and the most important need for males in my research is territory. They need to have somewhere in the high school that they feel is theirs, and they need to feel valued. If they do feel valued, they tend to engage with the school and believe that they have a home in the school. If they do not feel there is somewhere in the school that is theirs, they disengage, they vandalise, they graffiti and, whatever the rules are at the school, they systematically test them out and try to break them. I think those are the three premises.

Mr WILKIE—Is this school unique in adopting those principles, or are they being adopted elsewhere?

Mr Lillico—They are being adopted to a lesser extent in some other middle schools around Australia. But I believe we are unique in deliberately setting out to do activities with boys—and girls; this applies equally to girls—and giving them territory. In the building plans that you see, it was not a compromise. Every year group must have its own area, and every year group must have its own common room. They must have their lockers built into their rooms, and we must have enough room so that no other class ever needs to use another group's home room. In some of the other schools they take little bits of that, but they are based more on a curriculum basis. Ours is based on a student basis, and the curriculum flows around it. We are unique from that point of view.

Mr WILKIE—I see that you are very fortunate in that you can choose your staff. When you are choosing staff, what attributes are you looking for in particular?

Mr Lillico—Just to clarify that, we are talking about senior staff in the school. The Education Department of Western Australia, because of the massiveness of the state, has to be able to place staff at any time, so that is a given. But, yes, we will have a say in promotional positions. What I want most is a teacher coming here as a teacher of students, first, and a teacher of mathematics, English, or physics, second. They have to be able to relate to students, and they

have to be very fair. They have to have fair dealings with the students with very clear boundaries but within those boundaries a very open, close association with kids. But the boundaries should not ever be moveable. Boys have no problems with rules; they have problems with rules that move and boundaries that change. So that is probably the most important aspect.

Mr WILKIE—How do you monitor performance?

Mr Lillico—I spend a lot of time actually in the yard and in the classes. The paperwork and administrivia that principals are given these days count against their being present with the kids. But, because you are there and you know all the children and all the staff, you see them every day. We wander in and out of classes, not inspecting but looking at the students' work, commenting on it. We are involved, we get to see them and talk to them in the yard, so we basically know what is happening. That is a critical aspect of it.

Ms GILLARD—We have had a number of people come along to this inquiry and say, 'Boys need to know where the rules are.' Then people have gone a step further and suggested that boys would be better off if we moved back to more traditional educational settings: more traditional discipline structures, uniforms and those kind of things. Looking through your school today, I see that you obviously do not subscribe to that philosophy. I am interested in your comment about rules and going back to the classroom structures that perhaps you and I knew when we were growing up. How would those two concepts work together?

Mr Lillico—School dress code is an issue, and most of our students wear uniform. As we went around you were seeing the daily fitness. Consequently, you might have seen a lot of students who were not in the uniform, but most actually do like the dress code. Because they have had the choice of coming here from other areas, we think the dress code is part of the ethos and part of belonging to the school. There is no real negotiation on that one, and the parents realise that. In terms of the traditional education, kids have changed. Boys and girls have changed dramatically over the last 100 years. The old idea of the teacher sitting there with a cane at their side, ruling by fear—the loud, strong male teacher that we think of as having control—is no longer the case.

I often find that, with boys, a very mild teacher, but one who really cares for them and with whom they have a relationship —particularly women who are very gentle and soft in their voice and men who talk about their lives to boys—who lets them realise that they are actually humans and who makes a connection with them, can control them much better than some of the old standover tactics. Some of the work I do with many of the private schools—

ACTING CHAIR—Are you saying that kids have changed or are you saying teaching has changed?

Mr Lillico—I think kids have changed.

ACTING CHAIR—You are supposed to be giving examples of how teachers have changed.

Mr Lillico—I know, but I think the kids have changed in response to that. There is a lack of respect for authority in society by children. Now in order to learn from somebody you actually

have to know that person. In the past when we had corporal punishment, et cetera, you learned because if you did not learn you got a whack. These days—I believe with Steve Biddulph—boys never learn subjects; they only ever learn teachers. If they can connect with a teacher, the teacher can have them eating out of their hands and they will do anything for them. That is why the teacher is an important aspect.

I still believe in rigour. I still believe we need to have certain things drilled, like tables et cetera. But we also need to have the flexibility to actually deal with situations as they arise. The curriculum has to be relevant. The idea of teaching some of the things that we have learned, and maybe have never used since school, is very difficult to get across to kids these days who want to see how it applies to their lives. Boys, in particular, cannot make the connection between what they are doing and how they can use it. They tend to dismiss that as an important area and consequently do not do as well. So I am partially traditionalist, but I also believe we need a bit of flexibility.

Ms GILLARD—There is one thing that I have been asking almost everybody who has appeared before this inquiry. The motivation for this inquiry was, in part, that if you looked at data about educational attainment 20 years ago, boys and girls were basically the same—boys were perhaps a little bit in front—and if you look at the data today, on a whole series of criteria, boys are behind the girls. I have asked people if they could list for us what they think has changed in that 20-year period. I have done that specifically because people have told us things about boys liking active learning and that they need to have sport to burn off a bit of energy, but I would presume that, if that is true today, that was true 20, 40 or 60 years ago. It is not the change factor that is explaining the difference between 20 years ago and now. Could you focus on what you think those change factors are and list them for us?

Mr Lillico—Within education the major change has been to the curriculum—away from the closed, structured, information dense tasks to more open ended reflective ones that are interpersonal, et cetera. Many people would call that an effeminised curriculum because that is the way that girls traditionally learn. As we move more towards the paper and pencil—

Mr WILKIE—Would you call it effeminised?

Mr Lillico—I would not. I believe that is unfair, and I do not really accept that. All my research shows that girls are natural students in terms of learning reading and writing and their literacy and verbal skills are far superior. For years up until 15, boys—

ACTING CHAIR—In view of what we were talking before about the 50 per cent of the ballpark, that is only 50 per cent of the ballpark, too, is it not?

Mr Lillico—I suppose it is. But the curriculum has changed. Where boys used to proudly have around their lounge room things that they had made in manual arts and say, 'I've done this and I've done that,' it is now much more of a design—make a little bit, but also appraise and evaluate. In my fellowship report one of the most important things that I expand on is the fact that boys do not think before they act—they do not reflect enough. Our modern curriculum requires a lot of reflection. It is not negotiable, because they are the skills that we need of our people in the future. Those closed structured jobs have changed and therefore our curriculum has changed.

That leads me into the second issue, which is that the actual world of work for men has changed. Boys, particularly those who maybe did not have the ability to go on to tertiary education, et cetera—used to leave school and they used to pump petrol, be a teller in the bank or did those manual type labouring jobs. They are gone forever. As we talk, another few ATMs will be produced in Australia and more petrol stations—as in the ones I saw in America—will have no people working in them. Many car factories in Germany had 160 people employed—about 140 or 150 men—and now have four. The only person who does anything other than push the button is the quality assurer. The world of work has changed and boys are looking at what may seem—and I have mentioned it here—a fairly grim outlook in terms of employment. Therefore, they are actually beginning to realise that and become a bit disaffected.

The family structure has changed as well. Boys need a very close family type structure. Whether it is single parents or different ethnic groups makes no difference; it is about the structure and the communication within that. Many of our boys are going through schools, even if the father is present, without a male role model in terms of how they are supposed to behave. If that happens—and this is based on my work and what I found in the US particularly—they tend to then start to misbehave and try to act out in what we call a hypermasculine way. So, from the time they reach puberty, if they do not have some firm family support and if they do not have a male role model to look to, they behave in a very hypermasculine way and start to take risks and misbehave and so on in school. They are probably the main ones. There are lots of other issues as well, but they are probably the ones that impact the most.

Ms GILLARD—In your view, the lack of appropriate masculine role models means that boys then struggle to manage their masculinity and act out in a—

Mr Lillico—Yes. Often dad is not the one anyway. I have three sons. In terms of being a mentor and a role model, often I am not the one. There needs to be another male, and it could be a male teacher. It used often to be the person with whom they had an apprenticeship that gave them a little bit of an idea about life and what you are supposed to be. But, if they do not have some other male somewhere in their life as they are going through puberty, it is quite a great likelihood that they will act in very hypermasculine ways—that is based on all the research that I have uncovered—and that is an issue.

But, by the same token, if we had a school with all male staff, that would not solve a thing. It is too simplistic to say that more male teachers in schools is the answer—it is the right type that we are after. Boys say to us that the problem with male teachers is that they do not talk enough about their lives. They say, 'We cannot often connect with them.' When they do, as in the case with these two men beside me, it is fantastic. But if they do not, the man keeps a bit separate. Men have always been a bit competitive, a bit hierarchical—I have to be better than you because I am the teacher and you are the student. Girls learn from female teachers much more about how to be a woman than boys do from male teachers how to be a man, so it is about having the right type of people in our schools.

Ms GILLARD—We took evidence in Adelaide yesterday, including evidence from a teacher at a school where vandalism and discipline issues were such a problem that they actually had a full-time security guard at the school. You have obviously thought about these vandalism issues and, in part, think the solution is creating territory and ownership for boys. Is there any quantitative research or anything you can point us to, apart from your own experience, that on a

more broadly based way would show that that is true, that vandalism is reduced if boys have a sense of territory and ownership?

Mr Lillico—I did some work with the Anthropological Association of Canada and America. They very clearly show that where someone has ownership in an area where they believe, 'I belong in this particular spot. This is part of mine,' they tend not to vandalise their own. In terms of the student common rooms that they are setting up now, they need to choose the curtains, the furniture, et cetera. If they have had an input in terms of what they want in there, they are much less likely to actually graffiti or vandalise because they have chosen it.

I believe also that if you want boys and girls to actually look after something, they basically have to put some blood, sweat and tears into it in terms of doing it themselves. I can go and paint all the rooms for them, but they need to do that. Once they have had ownership and input into it, they are far less likely, from all anthropological research, to mess their own. They will go somewhere else and do next door, but not their own. That is very strongly put forward in all the research from both sociological bases and anthropological bases around the world.

Mr BARRESI—I will pick up where Julia left off in terms of getting more males into teaching. This has been part of the evidence which a lot of witnesses have given to us—that there are not enough male teachers, particularly in the primary education sector. I take your point about boys learning that teachers are not subjects. If that is the case, and we do need those extra teachers, why aren't we able to attract more males into the teaching profession? What do we need to do either at a federal or at state level to attract more male teachers?

Mr Lillico—It is a big issue. Certainly I am not saying we do not need more male teachers, because we desperately do. I think that both our governments and departments have a bit of a difficulty because you are not allowed to say, when advertising a job, that only men can apply for it. So we have an equal opportunity issue here, and that is probably the main one. In terms of boys looking at teaching as a career—and this is based on my research for probably nine years. When I talk to them—and these are very bright boys—and I ask, 'Why didn't you choose teaching, or have you ever thought of teaching?' They are very up-front, and they say to me, 'I asked my teacher in grade 5, "Do you like teaching? I am thinking of becoming a teacher. What do you think?" My teacher said, "You could do better than that. Don't be so silly."' If a teacher is not feeling valued, and if he is talking to a male teacher, then often the door is closed for the boy because that passes through them to the student.

We believe—I have got it in the booklets here and my research shows—that boys tend to choose careers based not on what they have been counselled to do and based not on what they have read, but based on people they know, both males and females, who do that particular occupation. So it is a vicious circle. If they had actually connected with male teachers back in the primary school whom they had admired, they would have a far greater likelihood of becoming a teacher than if they had not. So we almost need to get some males in there and then boys may connect with them and think, 'I really admire this person. I would not mind becoming a teacher.'

So I say to parents, 'Every time somebody comes to your household, it does not matter what job they do, introduce them to your son'—that is male and female—because, the greater range of people the boy has met who do those occupations, the more chance the boy has of choosing

it. I think that research will take another five years to become fairly prominent. We need to make sure that we do not just give boys books on different careers and have advertisements on the television and the radio—that will not get males into teaching. They have to meet the people who do the job.

ACTING CHAIR—In New South Wales the number of young men in primary teaching has fallen in the last four or five years from 37 per cent to less than 17 per cent.

Mr Lillico—Disastrous.

ACTING CHAIR—That is just amazing.

Mr BARRESI—So you are saying it is an issue of valuing the profession?

Mr Lillico—Valuing the profession.

Mr BARRESI—So that is at the heart of it, rather than perhaps, say, a remuneration issue or perhaps even, at a more sinister level, the fear that males have of going into the teaching profession because of possible concerns of being accused of harassment?

Mr Lillico—I believe those two have an impact as well. I think the most important one is the fact that boys choose jobs based on people they have met. The second one is a relevant one. I have said in recommendation 10 that we have become paranoid about the sense of touch in Australia. Many schools—and this is true certainly in Western Australia—have attempted to put some of their grade 7 male teachers into the pre-primary and into grades 1 and 2, and the parents have pushed them back out and said, 'What is a man doing down there with those kids?' There is almost an unhealthiness in Australia that any males involved with kids are somehow out there to hurt them.

One hundred years ago parents would say that in a playground situation, 'If there is a man there they will be safe; they are not going to be harmed.' These days they will say, 'There's a man there. Let's get the kids out of the playground.' A bit of unhealthiness has come through that males are very aware of. They think, 'If a kid falls over in the playground now do I dare pick him or her up and, if so, will I be accused of molesting them?' So I think that is a secondary factor, but it is certainly there as well.

Mr BARRESI—In regard to recommendation 52, single sex education, you say that there is still a role for co-education, but that within the co-education environment you can have single sex classes as well. What are you doing here in that regard? Do you have single sex classes and how are they working out?

Mr Lillico—We have not at this point because we have a big imbalance of boys to girls. If we had single sex classes we would have classes of 25 boys and five girls. So in terms of the formula and spreading it across the school we have not got it. However, down the track I find that boys tend to not choose what are traditionally considered girls' subjects because if they are in those subject areas, particularly during puberty, they tend to compare themselves with girls who speak much better and are neater, et cetera. They start to think 'Maybe I am not as good' and so they start to withdraw. If a girl puts her hand up and answers in a very well constructed

way, the boy thinks, 'If I put my hand up I am going to stutter and sound a bit of an idiot', so he withdraws. So, if you have a co-education environment and you want boys to excel in subjects like music, dance, drama, English—

Mr BARRESI—Poetry.

Mr Lillico—Yes, absolutely—poetry. Often in a single sex class they can do that much better because they are not showing off in front of the girls and they are easier on each other. Even though they might think, 'We may as well give each other a hard time', the research shows very clearly that they take their masks off much more in a single sex environment and are actually easier on each other. Rather than a boy calling another boy a nerd when he puts his hand up and says, 'I have done my homework', if that was an all-boy class it is much less prevalent because they are not trying to show off in front of the girls.

Mr BARRESI—So are the skills such as reflecting, being in touch with your feelings, interpersonal communication the sorts of skills that you would recommend go into single sex classes?

Mr Lillico—Yes. And again, the critical person is the teacher with that class.

Mr BARRESI—We had almost a reverse of that situation evident in a school that we visited in Victoria, in fact in my electorate. It is a boys' school and a girls' school both under the same control but on separate campuses, and they actually come together for coeducational classes.

Mr Lillico—That is interesting.

Mr BARRESI—So it was a reverse situation.

Mr Lillico—Geoff Hannan's research in the United Kingdom says very clearly that boys do not reflect enough and girls do not speculate enough, and I think I mentioned that there. When you have the genders together, you have 35 times better communication, because when you are talking across gender, boys are forced to reflect and girls are forced to speculate. So the likely gender disadvantages are taken care of. Single-sex boys' schools understand that. They need to actually connect with girls and do certain subjects and get together mainly for communication purposes.

ACTING CHAIR—I have a couple of questions involving the two Johns—perhaps John Foreman first. You mentioned dance and expressive arts, but if you look at the whole expressive arts areas, a number of witnesses—at primary school level more than anywhere else—have said that, because the curriculum has just been added onto and added onto, putting more and more pressure onto teachers, they do not have the flexibility within primary schools and that two casualties of the curriculum have been expressive arts and physical education. They may have other factors in terms of age or whatever. You mentioned drama. Is it important that all boys and all girls have an opportunity to be involved in a creative class where spontaneity is valued? That can be in art and craft, design, dance, jazz ballet, ballroom dancing, rock and roll eisteddfods or whatever. Isn't it offering the range that is important and making sure that both boys and girls have an opportunity to succeed in one of those areas, even if it were Australian rules football or netball? Does it matter?

Mr Foreman—I am sure that a range of activities being available is fantastic. I am aware that certainly in our primary schools, we are starting to get specialists coming back in—specialist drama teachers and specialist music teachers.

ACTING CHAIR—But if your school is under 300, you do not have the staffing formulas to do that.

Mr Foreman—No. In a school like this, we do not have a tremendous range. But one of the things that Ian and the staff in general have really tried very hard to keep is as wide a range of subjects as possible for the kids to choose. So if their bent is towards the visual arts, then we have got visual arts, media and photography available. We have actually now got a small group of boys who are breakdancing in the corridors at lunchtime. I am investigating ways to channel that and get some people in to do some work with them. I am thrilled. It is the first time in 26 years that I have seen boys in schools that I have been working at—and I have been a drama teacher for 15 years—spontaneously engaging in dance. I am not a dance teacher, but it is something that I think we need to foster and say, 'Okay, guys, let's run with this.'

ACTING CHAIR—Do boys need to be encouraged in a different way to participate in expressive arts compared with girls?

Mr Foreman—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—What are the differences?

Mr Foreman—I am not really sure how we would encourage them. Girls tend to opt for drama especially. I have had classes in the past where I have had one or two boys in a class of 20. I am very lucky this year; I have got almost fifty-fifty in the year 10 group. In the past, quite often it has almost been a choice between drama and sport. It is more manly to do sport and the boys will tend to head in that direction.

ACTING CHAIR—But gymnastics can be very creative—

Mr Foreman—For sure.

ACTING CHAIR—But it is also a sport.

Mr Foreman—Things have turned when I have had a couple of boys whom the others look up to who said, 'Hey, I'm going to do drama.' In the following year, another group of boys who have seen this role model within the school will say, 'It might be okay to do drama. He's doing drama,' so there is a flow-on effect there. Sometimes it will last two or three years and then it will die off again.

ACTING CHAIR—What about films like *Billy Elliott*, that sort of genre? Boys respect courage. They admire courage in everybody, both men and women. That would be a good film for boys. It is not so much that he becomes a ballet dancer at the end of the story—I have seen boys react to that—but that the young kid in the film had guts. This was what the boys admired. It was not that he finished up as a ballet dancer that they admired—he could have finished up as

anything—but that the kid had courage in the face of his family and friends. That was what the boys admired.

Mr Foreman—I could go out there and ask how many boys had seen that film, and I think I could count them on one hand.

ACTING CHAIR—You have answered your own question. John Hughes, you mentioned active learning. I did not want to get into the physical activity—because that is straightforward—but, other than the half-hour physical activity in the morning, what other things do you structure into your school day or into your school week that reflect active learning?

Mr Hughes—There is no doubt that boys and girls, but boys in particular, will learn from teachers only if they have a good association with them. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind about that. They display themselves more adequately through activities where they stand out. They love doing that.

ACTING CHAIR—Can you give us some examples?

Mr Hughes—We have built into our overall school framework a house system that gives students the opportunity to organise and present activities. It gives the staff the opportunity to set up activities for them that we know they enjoy and to build that into the curriculum. Without a doubt, if they enjoy what they are doing and mix with staff and get a good quality linkage, when they are taken into the classroom they will respect what the teacher has to say. They will probably accept what is presented a massive amount more than they would if they had not first had the opportunity to get that link.

ACTING CHAIR—Some people would say that a house system is a reversion to a more traditional stance on education. Other people would argue that that system was 'boy friendly' in its structure. How do you do it?

Mr Hughes—We have those in years 8 and 9 on a Wednesday, and they work from the beginning of school until 10.30. Through those meetings, they can present things to us that they would like to do. A simple avenue is to use sports activities, because they enjoy those. I have a fishing component, because boys are interesting in fishing, and I went around and surveyed kids and asked, 'Which of you would be interested in learning the skills of fishing?' It is activity based, it links with staff and they love it. If they are coming here and enjoying things, they will be happy to be involved in those sorts of things.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you have an outdoor education program in this school?

Mr Hughes—We do, but we have linked it into the house system so that it involves all staff and is not seen as being purely phys. ed oriented. You mentioned that possible casualties in the current curriculum have been the performing arts area and the phys. ed area.

ACTING CHAIR—In primary schools—and in high schools that fall under the magic number. In most other states, it is 600. When you go under 600 the staffing formula mitigates against having flexibility in what you can offer.

Mr Foreman—With having a house system, as I call it, we can put in activities that the kids want. We will also work through that to establish a common room framework where kids have their own territory and can organise what they want to do there. We deal with the school socials through that program. Kids love school socials. They come to me and say, 'Can we have this?'

ACTING CHAIR—What are the main elements of the school social here at City Beach High School? Are they the same as a normal social or do you focus on something?

Mr Hughes—Kids present a theme—they like a theme—they set it up and we work with them on that basis. They are very successful. They are just an opportunity for girls and boys to enjoy one another in a social environment, and the boys love it.

ACTING CHAIR—Do they choose a grunge band? I am reflecting my own children's tastes.

Mr Hughes—They have had disc jockeys, in this case, but they do the choosing. I have been to the discos, and they actually choose music that I think is reasonable.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you just saying that you are a modern dad, John?

Mr BARRESI—I will accept it if you do not want to answer the question. I have been amazed by the response of the education departments in each state that we have gone to. We are seeing this state's education department this afternoon. I will not ask you a politically sensitive question, but do you think this is going to be a case of you, as a progressive principal, and principals and teachers in other schools, leading the system and the education department following? I do not see it the other way around at the moment. There is talk of it but I do not see them doing it.

Mr Lillico—I say yes. I think people want to see that things are actually working. I can preach that these are the things you need to be doing, but unless I am actually doing it in a school and it is working, I think both departments and governments are saying, 'Well, it's all theory, but show us how it works.' I think that is the case. I think they want to see good practice; they want to see their students doing well. We could put all these programs in place, but unless we monitor it and show there has been a change, that the kids are doing very well and boys are participating in things like dancing, and we have got girls doing well as well, I think the departments will be very hesitant and will say, 'Let's just do this because if we put all these things in place, will it make a difference to student outcomes?'

I can understand their hesitancy, but I believe Australia is leading the world. I know that from my research overseas, certainly in terms of individual schools doing various things. What we do need now is some coordination of that and some acknowledgment that these things are working. But I tend to agree that they are standing back at the moment and just waiting to see what people are doing and what the outcomes are.

Mr WILKIE—In recommendation 48, you talk about boys learning teachers, not subjects. You have touched on the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the students, which is evidence that we have received from other sources as well. Do you think that the

training of teachers needs to focus more on that? Is it adequate in terms of teaching teachers to relate to children, or do we need to introduce more in the curriculum to encourage that?

Mr Lillico—I think we are still training teachers to be teachers of English, mathematics, science, or whatever. We are not training teachers to be teachers of children. I believe that often people in their training go right through and, when they come out to schools, the hard reality is, 'We're actually not teaching mathematics as these kids are not behaving; we're out in the middle of nowhere in the desert; what are we going to do?' I believe we should focus more on teaching the whole student. I have said this to our training institutions in Western Australia, and I must admit that they have given me access to all the graduates this year to talk about a few issues, just before they graduate. I would like to see a change there because the days of teaching a subject—

ACTING CHAIR—They do not do that, do they?

Mr Lillico—No.

ACTING CHAIR—They do not do that in any another state either.

Mr Lillico—No, it is very traditional, but we have moved away from subject based teaching, particularly in my school, years 8 to10, to student based teaching. That is a major shift.

ACTING CHAIR—Does that need to change dramatically?

Mr Lillico—I think so.

ACTING CHAIR—Other people have fed that same information to us.

Mr Hughes—I think the only way trainee teachers will learn that is by spending time in schools. They will not learn it in the college. They have got to actually be involved in it. In fact, we have just had trainee teachers here who have been involved in daily fitness, and they came up and thanked us for being given the opportunity to be involved with those kids at that level, and look forward to coming back. You cannot teach them that at college.

Mr WILKIE—It is a little bit hit and miss, though, isn't it? If they do not go to a school where there is a positive role model that they can pick that up from, they can go right through college and come out not knowing how to relate.

Mr Hughes—To some extent they will get it, though, but not to the same extent as if it is a really high focus in the school.

Ms GILLARD—Given that we have been on about boys education all morning, is there a difference in achievement levels between boys and girls in this school?

Mr Lillico—There is; it is changing. I am waiting for the results at the end of the first semester. When we go back historically—I was here back in 1989 as head of mathematics—it was probably almost even. When I first arrived last year, the girls were dramatically

outperforming the boys—not just academically but also in terms of behavioural issues and all the rest of it. I have a feeling, but I have not got the hard evidence yet, that we are finding much more participation by boys in the non-gender typical subjects and they are actually doing much better. I will take another couple of months to quantify that, but I think so.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you familiar with the state results in WA?

Mr Lillico—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—What are they showing?

Mr Lillico—We do not have upper school; we do not have year 11 and 12 so we do not have a yardstick. The middle schools around Australia and around Western Australia are beginning to get together so that we can have our own measure of comparison, if you like. At the moment we are lacking in our planning—that yardstick—and in saying how we are going compared with other schools. If you are going to use upper schools, we do not have any, so it is difficult.

Mr WILKIE—When you have done that analysis, I think this committee will still be sitting with regard to the same areas, so it would be good to receive that information.

Mr Lillico—I will do that in a very quantified way, yes.

Ms GILLARD—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—I have one last question and we are running out of time. Are there any comments that you would like to put forward to us in forms of recommendations or your own observations that we ought to be taking into consideration about boys' education in the future? We may not have covered everything.

Mr Hughes—Our focus has been on the fact that they need activity based programs to link with teachers or adults, and if you have those you have a chance. If you do not have those, it is much more limited. That, to me, is the most significant thing—that that be built into the curriculum framework and not to just follow on with the way it has traditionally been done, because it does not work. In relation to what Julia mentioned, my reaction to that was to think about how things have changed from when we were in schools 20 years ago to what they are now. I think that the key thing for boys is that they come from a totally different social background—families are different. That is crucial and does not link—

ACTING CHAIR—Single parents have increased by 300 per cent.

Mr Lillico—And we see it in schools with the boys.

Mr Hughes—Very, very clearly.

Mr Foreman—I am not sure that I have anything further I can say.

Mr Lillico—I would just like to add that, again, I think it is about being aware, and I really believe that we have only really discovered over the last, maybe, 30-50 years, that boys and girls learn differently. Girls tend to learn much better from the written word and from oral communication than boys. Boys tend to learn when they are actually doing something, when they are being shown. If we go back to the cave era, he was outside the cave grinding the corn, making the spears—he learnt that way. He did not learn it by reading it from a book. Neither did girls, but they do tend to take notice much more of the oral instruction than boys. So I am just saying to schools and to parents: if you want your son, or your male student, to remember something, you have actually got to be there doing it. You do not have to do the activity so much, I suppose, but show them how to do it and let them actually do it rather than telling them about it or letting them read about it.

ACTING CHAIR—That is interesting because that is contrary to the orthodoxy presented by every education department—

Mr Lillico—Absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—We have not met the Western Australians by the way; we do that this afternoon. But that is against the orthodoxy that every other Australian state department is promoting.

Mr Hughes—If you show boys how to cast a fishing line and not get a bird's nest in it, and then they throw it after you have shown it and they do not get the bird's nest, they get the same thrill as if they had discovered it themselves—in fact, they get it better.

Mr BARRESI—We had a good example of what you are saying yesterday when a teacher said that his son was asked to do a chemistry essay.

ACTING CHAIR—It is a bit of a worry, isn't it?

Mr Lillico—To be employed, they are going to need those skills, but we have got to do it very slowly and lead them bit by bit rather than throwing them in.

ACTING CHAIR—About a month or six weeks ago I read some articles in the *Spectator*. There were a couple of articles about boys' education. It is interesting that the United Kingdom is much further down the track than the United States, Canada, New Zealand or us. I think they recognised the problems with comprehensive secondary education and boys' education around 1994. We are only just starting to grapple with it now. Madison Curry, who is a Professor of Philosophy at Oxford, made a comment in the *Spectator*. Basically he was talking to one of his colleagues about the distinctions that were given to the philosophy class. A young man and a young woman got equal distinctions. 'How did you do that?' he was asked. He replied, 'The girl missed the point but got all the details right; the boy got the main argument but was deficient in all the details.' That was an interesting way of doing it. But I thought afterwards, what a loss to both of them. In fact, I would have thought both of them had lost something.

Mr Lillico—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Basically the boy had not been encouraged or helped to do the detailed work, which I think is a relevant thing, and the girl had not been helped to get the main point. I thought that is a bit of a reflection on where we are going. In actual fact we almost needed to put that boy and that girl in the same brain.

Mr Lillico—Absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—And we would have a much better person who would make a much better contribution to the world. Ian, John and John, we have run out of time. We are going to talk with your students a little later. Thank you very much for participating in this inquiry. Thank you also for your hospitality and for allowing us to visit your school. It has been most informative. We think this parliament will go to November or December—but we do not know that. If that is the case, we will complete this report in this parliament and, when it is tabled, we will send a copy of the report to your school. If an election is earlier than that, we will go into the next parliament, depending on who the minister is. Usually what happens is we continue it in the next parliament. I cannot see an early election coming. Thank you very much indeed.

Mr Lillico—It has been a pleasure.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 a.m. to 11.11 a.m.

Student representatives:

Theodore Backhouse

Stephen Bain

Richard Eaton

Robert Green

Hadlee Martin

Chad Neylon

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you for agreeing to come and talk to us. This is a federal parliamentary committee, and we have been asked by the minister for education, Dr Kemp, to inquire into the education of boys. Basically, the Commonwealth department of education gave us some information a couple of months ago, when we first started this inquiry, that suggested that in some states in Australia, particularly Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, the attainment levels of boys and girls had changed dramatically over the last 20 years. We want to find out whether that is true and, if it is true, we want to find out what to do about it to fix it up. So we are looking for opinions about what you think is happening in terms of your own education. We are not on about girls versus boys; we are not interested in that. What we are interested in is making sure all boys, all girls, reach their potential. It is not a fight of one gender against the other.

As an opening question: maybe you could say something about what you like about this school; you might want to talk about why you or your parents decided you would come here. What book are you currently reading, and who do you admire in the world? It does not have to be a man, it could be a woman—sportsman, actor, actress or, as someone said the other day, the Prime Minister. Another one said Margaret Thatcher. Those two were going to have a very interesting debate if they stayed in that school. So it can be anybody. Some people said their mum. Don't feel intimidated that you have to say something spectacular; just say what you feel. Who wants to start? There always has to be a beginning one. I reckon Hadlee is smiling the best, so we will start with you, Hadlee.

Hadlee Martin—But I am always smiling.

ACTING CHAIR—Well, you are happy. That is why we are asking you.

Hadlee Martin—What if I am sad?

ACTING CHAIR—We will start with you, I reckon. Is that fair enough?

Hadlee Martin—Okay. Good day. I came to City Beach High School because I went to the primary school. That was really good, so Mum thought high school might be the same, so I

came here with a few of my mates. It is good, because it is a really small school and everyone knows each other. It is really easy to get along with the teachers—if you have got a problem you just talk to each person and it is okay. At the moment I am in the process of reading about five books: one autobiography and some C.S. Lewis books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

ACTING CHAIR—Are they part of your school texts, or are they leisure reading?

Hadlee Martin—No, I am doing some school books as well. I am still reading *The Devil's Own*—that is for English—but I just like reading so I do that. To say I admire someone I would have to say Mick Foley. He is a WWF wrestler, a professional wrestler and wrecker. I love that, and I think Foley is God.

ACTING CHAIR—He is good, okay. Chad.

Chad Neylon—All right. I came to City Beach because my sister was coming here. I originally went to Lake Monger and then Woodlands primary, but my sister was here and a lot of my mates were coming here, so I thought this would be a good school to come to. It is small, which is a good thing. We have had, I think, a second principal now. The school works well, I reckon—being smaller, you get to know everyone. The teachers know you better.

I just finished reading *The Devil's Own*, the English book that we have going through, and I am reading the Steve Waugh book. And I admire Steve Waugh: big cricket fan, Steve Waugh, Peter Brock, most soccer guys, and that is about it, really.

ACTING CHAIR—Are they going to win in India, do you think, get enough runs?

Chad Neylon—Get a draw, hopefully.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. Richard.

Richard Eaton—I came from Newman College right near the end of last year. I was not really getting along with all the students there, and I really did not know many of the teachers. But I came here and I realised it was a really small school and everyone was really friendly. I am interested in sports like skateboarding, BMX and stuff like that. Someone I really admire would be Tony Hawk.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not want to get you to say things you do not want to say, but in terms of the other school where you were unhappy, would you expand a little bit on the reasons you were not happy there?

Richard Eaton—There was not really anyone I knew there. My best friend is the only one who goes there. He is having a good time, but I just did not seem to get along with people. The teachers really were not that good at educating me, because the teachers were telling people off all the time and you never really learnt anything.

ACTING CHAIR—So you could not connect with the teachers?

Richard Eaton—No. The classes were too big and you could not connect with teachers at all.

Stephen Bain—I came to this school because John XXIII's classes were too big and the teachers could not focus on everybody. There were smaller classes here, so I just came here. My grades have gone up a little bit because I have learnt more from the teachers.

ACTING CHAIR—Why do you think that has happened?

Stephen Bain—Because there are smaller classes and it is just easier to handle for teachers.

ACTING CHAIR—Is it the point that Richard made: that you can connect more easily with teachers here at this school?

Stephen Bain—Yes. I like diving and tennis. The book I am reading now is Harry Potter No. 4: *Goblet of Fire*. The person who I admire the most is probably my Uncle Michael.

ACTING CHAIR—What does he do?

Stephen Bain—He is an executive research consultant and I want to be like him.

Theodore Backhouse—Before I came to this school, I went to Quintilian primary, which was kind of like a primary school like this except this is not a primary school. It was very small; it was an independent school and I really liked it there. This seemed pretty much the same, with small classes. Like Richard said, you can relate to the teachers better. I like most of the students. This seemed like a pretty good school, so I came here and it is good, I like it here. The person I probably admire most would be Jackie Chan. I am currently reading his autobiography and a book that we had to read today, *Bad Beginning*, by Lemony Snicket.

Robert Green—I came to this school because we had learnt that there was a new principal: Mr Lillico. There were small classes and I felt that—

ACTING CHAIR—How much did Mr Lillico pay you to say that?

Robert Green—I will not say that. I just felt that I could relate to the teachers. Because there are small classes, I actually get to know some of the kids. My brother went to Scotch and the classes were big and the teachers did not really know the students.

ACTING CHAIR—What is more important, Robert: the size of the class or the quality of the teacher?

Robert Green—I would have to say the quality of the teacher, because a good teacher can handle a lot of students. Things that I am interested in are basketball and tennis, and the book I am reading right now is called *Ramses: the Son of the Light.* I do not know who it is by. The person I admire most is my Mum, because she is a subeditor for the *Western Australian*.

ACTING CHAIR—That is very good, she might get a chance at writing something here. In terms of teachers, is it important that the teacher is male or female, or is it important that the teacher is a good teacher?

Robert Green—I just think they have to be a good teacher; it does not matter who they are.

Hadlee Martin—As long as they are good, it does not matter whether they are male or female.

Chad Neylon—We have plenty of good female teachers and we have had plenty of good male teachers.

ACTING CHAIR—Theo, Stephen and Richard, do you agree with that?

Theodore Backhouse—Yes.

Richard Eaton—Yes.

Ms GILLARD—What makes a good teacher?

Mr WILKIE—Ms Gillard stole my question.

ACTING CHAIR—She stole your question? These Victorians have got no class, you know that!

Chad Neylon—A good teacher is one that can relate to the kids that they teach. They have got to have a general knowledge of what they are teaching, of course, and they have got to be able to communicate well with whoever they are teaching. If a student has got a problem in class or out of class, the teacher should be able to go, 'That's okay, if you want to do this'—try to encourage you a little bit more—or say, 'No, that is not really the way to go.' Just someone you can get along with really easy.

Theodore Backhouse—Someone who listens to you when you have got a problem.

Stephen Bain—That is a good teacher, a teacher that encourages you to do something.

Ms GILLARD—Try things?

Theodore Backhouse—Yes. Like Mr Foreman—you might have met him before. He encouraged Rohan to write a book because Rohan wanted to write a book, but he did not end up writing it. Mr Foreman said, 'Yes, go on and write the book', and he helped.

Richard Eaton—Some teachers are better than others, based on the fact that they can teach you what they know and also they can also be friendly and not always just on the subject of things. So you learn and you are having a good time while you are learning. So you are learning the same stuff and you are remembering it, but with other teachers you learn it and you just get so bored with it you just don't listen.

Ms GILLARD—Did you get a go then, Robert?

Robert Green—I just reckon a good teacher has to know what they are talking about and just has to have a good relationship with the students. So they actually listen and pay attention.

Mr BARRESI—How many of you are doing drama? Are any of you doing drama?

Chad Neylon—We are doing drama right now.

ACTING CHAIR—So you are going to be the resident comedian. When we look at the *Comedy Store* in future there is going to be 'Chad Neylon' up there in lights.

Mr BARRESI—Is there something that you have wanted to do, or were you a reluctant participant in drama? How do you feel about actually doing it now?

Chad Neylon—Me and Hadlee, we just got given an audition to be in an Australian movie—thanks to Mr Foreman.

Hadlee Martin—Yes, he gave us that. He writes plays and he usually produces them. Last year he wrote a play, *Surfer Girl*. I had a lead male role in that, and that was good fun.

Chad Neylon—And now we are in this play now.

Hadlee Martin—Yes, we are in another play of his now.

Mr BARRESI—What do your friends think about you doing drama?

Hadlee Martin—They think it is good, yes.

Chad Neylon—It is one of the most popular subjects. It is a pretty big class and no-one has got any problems with being in the play that he is doing.

Hadlee Martin—If you are having a problem with a play or something, he will go, 'How can we work around it?' or something like that.

Richard Eaton—Also the teacher for drama is really, really good. He is one of the best teachers here, I think, but I would not want to say, because all the teachers here are really good. There are some you don't like and there are some you do like better than others.

ACTING CHAIR—But that is life too, isn't it?

Richard Eaton—Yes, that is life.

ACTING CHAIR—As long as you have got some good teachers.

Stephen Bain—And since Mr Foreman is such a good teacher—he has got a sense of humour, and that makes a good teacher as well.

Mr BARRESI—So drama is fun as well, is it?

Stephen Bain—Yes.

Richard Eaton—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—Is that part of why you like it?

Richard Eaton—Drama is usually the most fun.

Mr WILKIE—One of the differences of this school as opposed to others is that you have got your own space. Each group has got its own room, hasn't it, where you can leave your bags and things.

Richard Eaton—Yes. You are in your own form and—

Mr WILKIE—How important is that?

Richard Eaton—Really important. If you go to other schools you do not have any room, you always have your stuff stolen and stuff like that. When you go out to the courtyard here, it is all like nature. Sometimes you see a person walk past but it is really quiet and you do not hear people talking all the time. It is really relaxing at lunchtime, just to be with your friends and not have heaps of people around you.

Stephen Bain—At my old school you would be having a conversation and people would just eavesdrop, and then they might spread it round the school. But here you can actually talk privately, and not have everybody walking past and stuff like that.

Richard Eaton—It is really a quiet school and it is really good. I reckon it's a good school.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you lot known as the motor mouths of the school?

Richard Eaton—No. We were actually quite surprised to be chosen for this.

ACTING CHAIR—Why do you think you were chosen, Richard?

Richard Eaton—I am on the council committee here at school, and so is Stephen. Maybe we were just chosen because we might have a good attitude.

Stephen Bain—I was told that it was because we had good responsibilities, higher responsibilities.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you like having responsibility?

Stephen Bain—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—If you get into trouble in the school, what happens to you?

Stephen Bain—You would most likely get a detention, or if you are really bad you will get a suspension—not a suspension, a blue card. It is a program that you do.

Hadlee Martin—In each class you get marked off one to five; five being if you are mucking around all period, one being outstanding. At the end of the day you hand it up to teachers or someone. If they think they need to call your parents to say, 'Your child is doing real bad,' they will do that; if not, they won't. It is just like a behaviour sheet, so the teachers know how you are going in every single class. They write a little comment to say how the student was going and stuff like that.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you going to confess to having a file, Stephen?

Stephen Bain—No. I was just going to say that the teachers are lenient. They give you a few warnings and then you just get sent out of the room. It is not as though you get a detention straight away without any warnings, like at my old school.

Mr WILKIE—Is bullying a problem?

Richard Eaton—No, there is hardly any bullying here. At my old school, I experienced bullying every day. I have been here this term and half of last term, and I have not been bullied once.

ACTING CHAIR—Why is that?

Richard Eaton—I do not know. It is just that people are a lot nicer. People get along better. There are no people trying to show off in front of their friends. Everyone is relaxed.

Hadlee Martin—There is no need to.

Richard Eaton—Yes.

Stephen Bain—It is because you know the people here. It is such a small school, so you can get to know them really quickly. That is why there is no bullying.

Mr WILKIE—Why is there no need?

Hadlee Martin—There is no need because everyone knows each other, and if you have a problem with someone, you just do not go near them or talk to them—it is as simple as that. If it is a big school, things could get stirred around, so if someone says, 'He said this about you,' a fight starts. At this school, if someone tells them something, you might be a metre or two away because it is just that small that everyone knows each other. Basically, if you do not get along with someone, you just do not go near them.

Stephen Bain—You usually find out anyway. No one makes a big deal out of it because it is something really small and not important.

ACTING CHAIR—Is it smallness, or is it because people are happy here with the educational program and it is relaxed and calm?

Richard Eaton—It is not uptight like other schools; it is relaxed.

ACTING CHAIR—So people are calm?

Richard Eaton—Yes.

Mr WILKIE—If you could improve the school, what would you do?

Chad Neylon—On an out-of-school matter, I am looking forward to getting some sort of security program for the canteen. We have had that broken into five times in the last fortnight, and we are starting to think about that. We have tried everything, but that is one improvement. We are getting the international school built, so not much else could be done. It is on the up.

Hadlee Martin—I would probably say bring in wrestling as a school sport, because that is all I do. I go home and I watch wrestling. I wrestle with my mates.

ACTING CHAIR—This is obviously not Graeco-Roman wrestling, is it?

Hadlee Martin—That is what I do on Friday nights and Monday nights in my free time.

ACTING CHAIR—You do?

Hadlee Martin—Yes, I do. I train with a guy who went to the Olympics. If I could, I would bring it to the school, because I reckon everyone would get fun out of it.

ACTING CHAIR—What would you do, Robert?

Robert Green—I think it is fine right now. I think as soon as the international school is up, it is just going to be the best school there is.

Theodore Backhouse—I pretty much agree with Robert. I know this is already happening, but I am really keen to see the common room put together and go ahead, with all the lockers and a place where you can sit down at lunch.

Stephen Bain—Right now I would not change anything, because as you know, in the April holidays, we are going to start revamping the school, so it is going to be infra-red technology and everything. It is just going to be one of the best schools in the district.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you looking forward to that?

Stephen Bain—Yes.

Richard Eaton—There is one thing I would change. Computers are going to take over many jobs in the future, and I think if we had more computer courses, then it would help us a lot in life. If you think about it now, computers are taking over many jobs.

Hadlee Martin—It would be like a little kick-start to the future.

Richard Eaton—Yes. If we learned computers now, everybody would be all right. There would not be any hassles, and when you come into life, life would just be easier, knowing that you knew how to use a computer.

Mr WILKIE—If you were doing exams or essays, would you prefer to be able to do them on a computer rather than writing them?

Richard Eaton—Yes.

Mr WILKIE—I see that everyone agrees with that. What sort of work would you like to do in the future?

Richard Eaton—I would like to be everything to do with computers—computer programming, computer web site design or a computer technician, everything to do with computers.

Mr WILKIE—Have you designed a web site?

Richard Eaton—I am in the process of entering a competition of designing a web site now. Abacus is running it. You have to get a web site on a 3½-inch floppy A disk. I have been going in at lunchtimes and extra time just to be working on it. I would like to see my web site come into play when I have finished it. It might be interesting.

Stephen Bain—I would like to be an executive research consultant like my uncle, because I reckon that would just be a fun job. You get to meet new people and go places and stuff like that.

ACTING CHAIR—And get paid a squillion?

Stephen Bain—Yes. I have not been able to go to places, because we are not exactly on the wealthy side. We are well off but not rich.

Theodore Backhouse—I really want to be an actor, because I like acting. That is one thing that drama has done to me. When I went to another school, before Quintilian, I did not like acting because I was too afraid to express myself, with everyone around me laughing and everything. But now I really want to be an actor.

Robert Green—I would like to be a photographer for *National Geographic* because I would get to travel around for free and take photos, or just write for the newspaper, like my mum.

ACTING CHAIR—Have you got your own camera?

Robert Green—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you take photography?

Robert Green—No, I just play around with it.

Stephen Bain—And we have got photography classes at our school.

ACTING CHAIR—That is what I meant. Do you do photography there?

Robert Green—Yes.

Hadlee Martin—I would like to be either an actor or a wrestler.

ACTING CHAIR—Sometimes it is the same thing.

Hadlee Martin—I have come across only two people that have not laughed when I have said that. I am serious, that is want I want to do

ACTING CHAIR—We all think of Roy and HG.

Hadlee Martin—Everyone thinks of that.

ACTING CHAIR—Hadlee, what will they call you when they market you on the international arena as the wrestler from WA, Perth, City Beach High School. What are they going to call you?

Hadlee Martin—Hadlee the Monster Martin. That is what I want to do, just be in the WWF or the Olympics—either, I do not care. As long as I am involved in that, I will be happy.

ACTING CHAIR—You are sure you are not going to end up where Chad is, at the *Comedy Store*?

Hadlee Martin—No.

Chad Neylon—I want a career in sport, no matter which way you look at it—cricket, motor sport, soccer. I do soccer now. Being an actor would be all right, I suppose, now that I have got the opportunity, or even being a sports teacher. I would not mind that. But pretty much, I would like to make it big in cricket. I have played a few seasons now. But it is pretty hard to get to the top, and motor sport costs too much, really.

ACTING CHAIR—Who would want to be a teacher?

Stephen Bain—I was going to be a teacher earlier on, before I chose to be what my uncle is going to do. I just thought the executive research consultant would be more exciting.

Richard Eaton—I was thinking about being a teacher at university, teaching computers. But when I realised that I have seen how much money can be made and how much can be done for computers, now I think I would just like to slave away and just create computers and become Bill Gates or something like that.

Mr BARRESI—No money in teaching, right?

Richard Eaton—Make Bill Gates bankrupt, that is my goal.

ACTING CHAIR—We wish you every success.

Hadlee Martin—You can laugh at Bill Gates.

Mr WILKIE—You have got to start small.

Mr BARRESI—Remember you knew me once when you replace Bill Gates. I just want to go back to Theo's point. Theo, you mentioned that you would like to be an actor, and that you were doing drama in your other school but you did not quite like it. Kids were stirring you a little bit and it was not accepted. This school has really made drama and acting a more acceptable subject for you, hasn't it?

Theodore Backhouse—Yes. The teachers approach it differently. It is more interesting and fun. You just feel safer, rather than being stupid.

Mr BARRESI—Are there any other subjects that you were doing in your other school which made you feel uncomfortable yet you now like?

Theodore Backhouse—Sport. As I said before, if you lose, it does not matter here. If you lost in the other school, I suppose it really did not matter, but people would look down at you a bit more.

Mr BARRESI—So there was a lot more judgmental behaviour at the other school and the teachers or school allowed that to happen, whereas here it does not happen?

Theodore Backhouse—Yes.

Stephen Bain—Here people still congratulate you even if you do not do well at the sport.

Theodore Backhouse—Just for trying.

Stephen Bain—They congratulate you anyway.

Robert Green—At our old school, it was either win or lose. Here it is basically a win, because nobody teases you.

Hadlee Martin—It does not really matter what happens, as long as you give your best and have a good time.

Chad Neylon—If you are doing your best, then you do not get much better. You should not really care what other people think about that, although that is hard. When I was at primary school, I lost nearly all my running races, but I was in the top division. Even though I lost that race, I would have beaten another 30-odd kids in other divisions. If you lose at the highest level, you just think that you got to the highest level at least. If you got to the Olympics and lost, you still got to the Olympics.

ACTING CHAIR—You are still a winner.

Hadlee Martin—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Is winning important?

Chad Neylon—In some situations. If you spend a lot of money on something to get to a high level, then losing can be disappointing. At least around the schoolyard, you take it on your chin. A loss is a loss, and a win is just good fun.

Stephen Bain—At least you achieved something. Like Chad said, you achieved getting to the Olympics.

ACTING CHAIR—That is a very good way to explain it. If you participate at a level and come 30th out of 30, you come 30th out of the top 30. So it is not losing, is it?

Stephen Bain—At least you have done something.

Richard Eaton—Going back to Mr Baressi's question about whether I felt uncomfortable about any subjects at the school. At my old school, every subject was different to this school except drama; I really liked the drama teacher. Every single subject has changed. The teachers are different. They teach you a lot more. They teach you a lot of personality tips. At the other one, it was just all work. When I came out of that school, I was getting Cs and Ds, and I thought, 'What's going on? I never used to get this before.' I have come to this school and I am getting Bs, Cs and As. So I am pretty happy that I came to this school.

Ms GILLARD—When we walked around this morning, you were doing your first half hour of physical training. That does not happen in a lot of schools that we have been to.

Richard Eaton—No.

Ms GILLARD—Do you think it is a good thing? Does it help you settle for the day? How do you feel about the fact that the teachers do it with you?

Chad Neylon—Daily fitness is a good idea. But we only had a very small time for recess and lunch, and that has become even shorter now. That is pretty disappointing actually. I enjoy daily fitness. It helps for what I am going to do in life, the sports I play now and staying healthy. I am disappointed that it takes so much out of my free time though.

Ms GILLARD—What do you reckon, Hadlee?

Hadlee Martin—It is okay. Recess and lunch are so short now. You get in trouble because you are eating in class because the times are shorter, but you are told, 'That does not matter. Hurry up and eat.' It is good fun in the morning because you get to hang around with a few of your mates and do some things. It is okay.

ACTING CHAIR—Is the school day too short?

Hadlee Martin—No.

ACTING CHAIR—I just thought I would ask.

Ms GILLARD—What do you reckon about the daily fitness, Robert?

Robert Green—I think it is a good idea. Most people come to school really wishing that they hadn't, and they are all sluggish. Daily fitness just makes them a bit more energetic and they have a lot of fun with their mates. The only quarrel I have with it is probably the recess length.

Theodore Backhouse—I agree with Rob and Hadlee and Chad. In the recess sometimes I cannot even finish my sandwiches. I have to leave them till after school, because lunch is just too short. I like the idea of daily fitness, because some people are not doing any other sport, any fitness things—although some people are. So I reckon it is great, and it wakes you up. After that you can just relax and feel a lot better, I reckon. I think it is a good idea.

Stephen Bain—Like Theo said, it wakes you up in the morning. Before it started you were all sluggish and tired, and you did not want to do anything. It just wakes you up a little bit more. But I do not like the short recess and the short lunch. When we have science, the science teacher, Mr Savage, keeps us back a little bit just to ask questions and stuff like that. So we miss usually out on lunch when we have got science just before it.

Richard Eaton—I think they have said everything now. I was just going to say that I think that lunch is too short. Like Theo said, you come out of class 10 minutes late sometimes and you rush all the time at lunchtime. Ten minutes recess feels like five minutes and lunch feels like 15 minutes. You do not have any time to get your lunch or eat it. You do not have any time to play sport or anything like that. The time has gone.

ACTING CHAIR—There is a challenge, Mr Lillico.

Stephen Bain—Like Richard said before, you usually come out 10 minutes late, and when you go down to the canteen to get your lunch, the line has got 20 people in it and there are only two open. So it takes up your whole lunchtime just to get a sausage roll or something.

Hadlee Martin—Sometimes by the time you get down there, there are only a couple of things left and it's like, 'Damn!'

Chad Neylon—Along the lines that you asked is school is too short, not many schools do what we do. We have got five periods of one hour. Lots of schools do six periods of 45 minutes. That does make school shorter, but I think that having that extra 15 minutes you get a lot more in. Our school day might be half an hour shorter than some, but it is consistent. Some schools

end at 2.30 and 4 o'clock and then they might have more time to 5.30. It is good knowing that you can get off at the one set time. Even if it is half an hour shorter, you are still learning more because there is that extra 15 minutes.

ACTING CHAIR—One question about the physical activity in the morning: are there other benefits? For example, are there opportunities to have a bit of a private yarn with your teacher during that physical activity? Do other things happen in that half an hour that are beneficial but that may not happen in another structure of a school day?

Richard Eaton—I do not think that you have any time to talk to your teacher about anything. It is all sport. I cannot even really do it, because I have had a really bad back lately. I cannot do the phys ed, so all I am doing is sitting down waiting for everyone to finish, and just getting my name checked off.

ACTING CHAIR—So it is just activity all the time. What about opportunities to actually have a private word with a teacher in the school? When have you got opportunities to do that?

Stephen Bain—Sometimes you might. During tutorial, that is a session where your form plays sports against the other form groups, you tell your teacher, say Mr Wilson, that you are going to go to talk to someone like Miss Hobson about something. You can get some time in. It is the same with daily fitness. You just need to get your name checked off and then you can go talk after you have told someone that you are doing that.

ACTING CHAIR—I am not trying to wish horrible things on any of you, but if something horrible happened, who would you go to? Would you have an opportunity of going to someone in this school?

Chad Neylon—Definitely, guaranteed. It would be the school chaplain: Andrew Broadbent. He is a legend. We have got a cricket game coming up, and he set that up for us. He sets up soccer games against Newman for us. He is always there if you need to talk.

Hadlee Martin—If there is anything you need to talk about, you can always speak to him and trust him.

Chad Neylon—He sets up things at lunchtime for us as well. He has got his own youth group in the drama room. Kids can go down there and have a good time.

ACTING CHAIR—You all agree with that?

Stephen Bain—Yes. He is the easiest person.

ACTING CHAIR—Is there anyone else?

Chad Neylon—Mr Wilson is there, and he offers a hand. Also there is Mr Hughes, Mr Lillico, Mr Symons—all the teachers will do it.

Richard Eaton—Mr Wilson is really good because he has taught at lots of different schools around Australia, like detention centres, prisons and stuff. I think if you had a really bad

problem, he would be the one to see. He could help you because he has probably heard millions of stories like that.

ACTING CHAIR—I should ask Mr Wilkie to ask you a question, because he is an expert in that area too.

Mr WILKIE—I did 4½ years in prison, but I was a prison officer.

Stephen Bain—Mr Broadbent is the easiest person to talk to because he understands you. He does not go off telling other people, like some teachers might do if you have a grudge against them. Mr Broadbent is a friend to everybody. You can talk to him whenever you like.

ACTING CHAIR—And that confidentiality is very important?

Stephen Bain—Yes.

Theodore Backhouse—He is more like a student than a teacher in some ways.

Stephen Bain—He is like a mega-caring student. He just cares about everybody. He is really fun. He does a lot of activities. He is like Mr Hughes with the daily fitness, but Andrew does cricket and stuff like that. He will take you skateboarding.

ACTING CHAIR—I assume from what you are saying that having a person like Mr Broadbent in a school like this is very, very important?

Chad Neylon—Not just that, but his age. He is not old; he is still in his 20s, like 22 maybe.

Hadlee Martin—He can relate to everyone.

Chad Neylon—Exactly. He has had the problems that we have had not that long ago. He can really relate to what is going on in our lives.

ACTING CHAIR—Would an older chaplain do the same?

Richard Eaton—No.

ACTING CHAIR—Why?

Richard Eaton—We had an older counsellor at our school and she just did not seem to listen. That is the only thing she was not good at: listening. She always told you stuff and you always used to go out and try it. 'Stand up for yourself,' she used to say. You would go out and try it and it never worked.

Stephen Bain—If you have an old chaplain, like into their 40s, they are not used to it because it was a long, long time ago and they do not get bullied as much anymore. They might get one or two bad insults.

ACTING CHAIR—So it is important to relate to someone who is younger and can remember. Does anybody disagree with that? Does anybody think that the age does not matter?

Hadlee Martin—It might, it just depends on who the person is.

Theodore Backhouse—Yes.

Hadlee Martin—If you do right by Andrew, he will stick up for you through anything. He is just the person you need and can count on 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Richard Eaton—Every time I come to school in the morning, he is playing cricket down near the bins. You always see him playing different sports with everyone. You do not ever see him being like a normal teacher who just walks around and umpires; he actually plays in the sport.

Stephen Bain—He is such a good chaplain because he has got a sense of humour, he has got a great personality and he is really, really kind.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much, indeed. You are going to be a politician, Richard. And, Stephen, you are probably going to be the Prime Minister.

Stephen Bain—I hope not.

Richard Eaton—In year 7, we had to write down what we thought everyone was going to be when we were older. About 10 said I was going to be a politician, but I do not want to be one.

ACTING CHAIR—But everybody else thought you would be. Okay, thank you very much indeed. We wish you great success in your career at the school, and when you go on to years 11 and 12 we hope your dreams and your aspirations come true. I am sure if you work towards them they will. You are pretty lucky people to be in a school like this, but I think you contribute to that as well. Good luck, and thank you very much.

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

That this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at the schools forum this day, including publication of the proof transcript on the electronic parliamentary database.

Committee adjourned at 11.51 a.m.