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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Reference: Education of boys

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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, 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 1.47 p.m.

COOK, Ms Jocelyn Ann, Senior Educational Measurement Officer, Education Department of Western Australia

GARNAUT, Mr John Laurence, Director, Learning and Teaching, Education Department of Western Australia

GRELLIER, Mr Warren, Senior Curriculum Officer: English, Education Department of Western Australia

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Sawford)—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into the education of boys and welcome representatives of the Education Department of Western Australian to give evidence. I remind you 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 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?

Mr Garnaut—If we may, we would each like to make an opening statement. I would like to make some generic statements, Warren would like to give an overview the written submission and Jocelyn would like to follow up briefly on some monitoring standards information.

ACTING CHAIR—As long as you leave us some time to ask some questions.

Mr Garnaut—We will each be brief. I would like to set some contextual issues for the Education Department's response to the boys in education issue. The department certainly acknowledges that there are issues to do with boys in education. We do have our own monitoring standards in education data—and Jocelyn may speak on that later—which highlight local student performance information about boys and girls. We acknowledge the issues to do with literacy of boys in education, participation rates, behavioural issues and retention rates. We also recognise very strongly that the boys in education issue is a joint responsibility of families, the community and schools. As part of that triumvirate we are certainly committed to doing our best for boys in education, as we are for all students.

We believe that gender differences in educational outcomes need to be analysed with great caution because the issues are quite complex and multivariant. There has been a number of claims made, and rightfully so, about the impact of gender on literacy levels and educational outcomes. However, we are aware that quite a bit of the research in the area of boys in education is somewhat contradictory. Although I have not done an in-depth analysis, it is interesting to note that across Australia it appears that education systems have not come to full agreement on individual strategic approaches and programming or project like approaches to boys in education.

The Education Department's strategic approach to boys in education is set in about five major contexts. I would like to run through these briefly and they will no doubt emerge later. The first context is that of the curriculum improvement program and students at educational risk agenda. The curriculum improvement program is the framework for the planning and monitoring of

student progress in our schools. The students at educational risk agenda is the identification of those students in need of intervention and extra support. The second context that we bring to this issue is a belief that by increasing site based management at schools we get better outcomes for all students, including boys. I think that is an important philosophical position. The third context is a belief in the approach of 'Gender equity: a framework for Australian schools'. The fourth is the school accountability framework that is based on external validation of school self-reflection on their own performance. Finally, we believe in system data collection and analysis so that as a system we know how we are going in boys in education. Those five major contexts underpin the Education Department's major strategic approach. I will touch on each of those in a little more detail, but not too much as Warren is going to talk about them later.

The students at educational risk and the curriculum improvement program strategies are strongly consolidated in policy in all of our schools and are in evolution mode in a sense, in that the timeline to complete the implementation of the curriculum improvement program is 2004 and 2005. The belief in site based management is very important in our strategic approach. We believe in local community involvement in school decision making and support, the identification of local strengths and weaknesses in the outcomes for students and the process that results from that in terms of a commitment by school staff, administrators and communities to improvement for all students in the schools. In other words, the local site is the best site for strategic improvement for all students, and of course for boys.

The school accountability framework will be fully implemented by next year. It is another part of this jigsaw in that it is premised and based on student performance information. So schools self-reflecting on a comprehensive analysis of their student performance information—which includes cohort group analysis, including the performance of boys and girls—is an important component and links directly back to the curriculum improvement program and the students at educational risk agenda. Finally, to pull all that altogether, we like to ensure that we have a system approach to data and information so that, as a system, we can see how we are going on major strategic issues, including boys in education.

At the school level, we certainly support a whole of school approach to gender equity and to boys in education in that context of locally managed schools where, if schools identify that boys in education is a major strategic issue, the system needs to ensure that there is support available for those schools to access. The strategies at school level would relate to clear data collection and analysis—in other words, what is the nature of the problem and how does the boys in education problem compare with other cohort group issues in the school?—and to interventions through the curriculum, through support of school environments, through teacher development and training and through community partnerships. Through that whole of school approach, with local involvement at all levels, we feel that we can get the best outcomes for boys.

In a nutshell that is an overview. The Education Department of Western Australia does not have a project approach to boys in education. It has an approach that is supportive of the professional development of teachers. Today in one of our 16 education districts our major project on boys in education is being launched with a major publication. That will be a good supportive document for those schools that wish to reflect on their own performance in terms of boys in education and develop their own strategies to support boys in education. I will stop there and ask Warren to provide a brief overview of the submission that was made by the Education Department.

Mr Grellier—Thank you for this opportunity to present to the committee. As John has outlined the context, in a sense the submission follows those broad contextual headings. The focus on curriculum and organisational change is, I guess, the approach that we have taken in a broad policy sense to look at the educational needs of boys backed by a number of major strategies, one of which is the curriculum improvement program—which is in the third year of its implementation in the state—and another, the Students at Educational Risk. Those two key strategies are, of course, mentioned in detail in the document and are backed up by an excellent data collection through the Monitoring Standards in Education program which Jocelyn will mention.

In terms of the submission itself, we believe that the principles of gender equity are incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum development and delivery. Learning programs, as part of the philosophy that underpins the curriculum framework in this state, are programs that begin with the needs of individuals whether they are the needs of individual boys or individual girls. The plan for government schools education in this state gives schools an enhanced capacity to manage their own affairs. As John has indicated, we believe that local school sites are in the best position to make decisions at the local level to identify the needs of their particular students, and they are supported in that through the organisational structure of the 16 district officers.

Underpinning that is the notion of gender construction: that masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed attributes. That sits behind the gender equity framework which has been sent to all schools and which all schools are required to implement, and for two years we had a gender equity officer in central office to support that process. That is major work that is happening through our district officers. We do not have a separate boys in education policy. We have a non-categorical approach through our Students at Educational Risk policy. That is, we do not have a category for boys; we do not have a category for girls; we do not have a category for dyslexia, and so on. A major impetus of our policy is the needs of individual students and a belief that gender equity is incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum. Some of the research that underpins the Students at Educational Risk policy shows that perhaps one in five students are potentially at risk. The Students at Educational Risk policy—which is detailed in here—and the support mechanisms are to support schools and teachers in helping to identify those students and support them.

As part of our local education area planning we have a strong commitment to middle schooling, teaching teams and students centred learning to deal with alienation particularly for identified groups such as boys, as part of the schooling process. That is a broad philosophical position that operates for the middle schooling program in this state. We know that this is happening and we are collecting research and information on the middle schooling. We have a Behaviour Management in Schools policy in place to support districts and schools in responding to stereotypical behaviours, looking at preventing gender related violence, and modifying school cultures. We recognise that that is a long and slow process. The curriculum improvement program is most the appropriate curriculum to suit the needs of students and individual students. It makes a difference to the learning programs of all students. Part of our response to the sort of data we have collected through monitoring standards is that this state is involved in a major curriculum reform, a shift from an input model to an outcomes model that is going to suit the needs more closely of the sorts of students we feel are having difficulties in schools, and we are

adapting teaching and learning strategies to the needs of boys and girls and the looking at changes in pedagogy that are necessary under that.

I will not say anything about monitoring standards because I know that Jocelyn is going to say something about that. By way of finishing, I will say that we are also in the process of developing a new literacy strategy, which is in the draft stage at this moment, as a response to the newly elected government's attention to the literacy needs of students. One of the outcomes is parity of literacy and one of the targets is that by 2004 the current differences will be reduced by 20 per cent—that is the target that has been set. Typically, if it is boys at risk, the key focus of that strategy will be on the 200 literacy specialist teachers. We know that the identified groups are boys, students from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal students. We believe that the best approach to the issue of boys' education is a soundly based system with an outcome of focused and quality education supported by accountability and recording requirements and the identification and adoption of strategies to improve the educational outcomes.

Ms Cook—The student performance information that is included in our submission is derived from the Monitoring Standards in the Education assessment program. It is the system level assessment program for collecting data across all learning areas. Because it is a random sample program, it has the capacity to collect information in a variety of ways and is not restricted to paper and pencil tests. You would have seen that there is quite a bit of performance information and information on attitudes as well as the more traditional academic outcomes of learning being included in that. The sample is designed so that we have the capacity to disaggregate by gender, by aboriginality, and by language background. The sample is not drawn so that we can disaggregate by locality or school district. Any further information that might be of interest—for example, on boys from low socioeconomic backgrounds—we do not have the capacity to derive from the monitoring standards data.

ACTING CHAIR—I have three questions and then I will hand over to my colleagues. Firstly, John, I was happy to hear you use the term 'reflection and analysis'. One of the things that concerns me in the current debate is that we seem to talk about only half of the quote at a time. In other words, there is a lot of talk about reflection and there is very little talk about analysis. There is a lot of talk about qualitative research but there is no talk about quantitative research. There is a lot of talk about disaggregation but not about aggregation. There is a lot of talk about nurture but not about nature. There is a lot of talk about expression but not about repression. There is a lot of talk about cooperation but not competition. There is a lot of talk about passivity but not activity. There is a lot of talk about uniformity but not disparity. There is a lot of talk about conformity but not creativity. There is a lot of talk about detail but not so much about getting the main point. There is a lot of talk about safety but not much about risk taking. In other words, it is almost a bipolar debate and half of the debate has been removed. As I said, you used the term 'reflection and analysis' which I think covers both ends of the spectrum. Not everything about collaborative learning is positive. There are some negative aspects that it can reduce everything to the lowest common denominator.

There are some harmful aspects of competition but not all aspects of competition are harmful. It seems in the debate when we have been going around the country that there is a disparity between what teachers, principals and children are reporting to us and what 50 per cent—I am just making a guess there, I might be wrong—of academia are telling us while the other 50 per

cent of academia are telling us another thing. The education departments are basically telling one story that has no connection with what is going on in schools. This is a disconnect there. Perhaps if we could just ponder that a moment and I will come back to that question.

That worries me, because I think boys and girls are harmed in terms of the potential of outcomes for their abilities if you talk about only half of the debate and deliberately refuse to talk about the other half. Let us go back to that program there—Gender equity: A Framework for Australian Schools and its directions. On what quantitative research is that based?

Mr Garnaut—I am not able to answer that because I am not aware of the basis and development of the documentation.

ACTING CHAIR—I am not trying to put you on the spot. This is a concern of mine. Basically in this country we have implemented the Dr Carol Gilligan policy of Harvard University of gender studies—that is what it is. It is done in Canada and New Zealand but not in the United Kingdom. But it is taken in wholesale in this country. I acknowledge that qualitative research is valuable but it is only part of the argument. How can we in this country implement a policy through our state education departments that has no reference whatsoever to quantitative research? And in some cases, the quantitative research that has been done is ignored because it tells a different story.

Mr Garnaut—I think the Education Department's response to what might be seen by some to be confusion in terms of the conflicting outcomes of research in the area of boys' education, has been to set up processes and procedures for improvement for all students at the local level at the school so that issues to do with identification of students in need of remedial attention and additional support work, and groups of students who are under performing at the school level, can be identified locally, and with support plans put in place, to make local improvements with community support.

ACTING CHAIR—Can I use the words of a principal not in this state. In reference to the five points that you make, I would have thought that there would be no disagreement about any of those five points, but he made a suggestion which I thought actually made a lot of sense. When you said 'gender equity', he used the term 'gender outcomes'. I thought outcomes in many ways focused the debate more than equity. Can you comment on that?

Mr Garnaut—When I used the words 'gender equity', I was referring to the context of the Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools being one of the contexts for the development of the policy.

ACTING CHAIR—I am saying that people who are practising—the practical people in the schools—are not repeating the propaganda, the orthodoxy, that is out there. They are much more practical. They do not use those terms. None of them have used the terms, 'gender equity' or 'construction of gender'—or very few. Most of them talk about the attainment levels and what they have actually done. They talk about active learning: what works with boys, what works with girls—a much more practical approach. In fact, one female principal in South Australia used the term, 'practical'. She said, 'We have to marry theory in practice.'

Mr Garnaut—If schools and teachers are not using the terminology 'gender outcomes', that is fine. That fits in really nicely with our policy and directions for schools focusing locally on the analysis of student performance including gender performance.

ACTING CHAIR—If I am correct in my intention—and no-one can tell me where it is because I cannot find it either—there is no quantitative research in terms of gender equity and construction of gender, as far as boys' education is concerned. How come in this country we are implementing policies based only on subjective, narrowcast research not backed up by quantitative research? Why have we done this?

I can see the political reasons for why we did it for girls over the last 25 years but, hang on, we have got another gender there and they are not doing too well according to a lot of measurements. They are not fulfilling their potential. I just cannot believe that we have implemented this wholesale around this country—not only in public but in private and Catholic education as well. You talk to the Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union and the orthodoxy is remarkably similar. The only differential you see is in academia where there seems to be a fifty-fifty debate amongst the various social scientists and educationalists in the faculties.

Do you understand the point I am making? I just find the fact that we cannot answer that question a very dangerous situation. It is a serious situation when we are implementing policy that we do not know enough about. I would have thought that implementing policy we do not know enough about is dangerous. That is my problem.

Ms GILLARD—I am not sure you got an answer but you asked the question.

ACTING CHAIR—I am not trying to put people on the spot. No other education department has been able to supply the answer either.

Mr Grellier—I do not know whether we can respond to that particular question.

ACTING CHAIR—But it is an important question.

Mr Grellier—It is an important question, but I guess there are also a number of other policies that we are looking at, particularly in this state, that are not solely about the gender equity framework. We have got a curriculum framework that sets out a set of outcomes for all students irrespective of whether they are male or female.

ACTING CHAIR—I know, John explained that very well.

Mr Grellier—That is a key part of our curriculum change in the state.

ACTING CHAIR—But if you get one part wrong in a five-part framework, it is still wrong even if the other four are right. Anyway, I have had enough; I have had my point.

Ms Cook—You are focusing here on policy in relation to gender outcomes or gender equity. However if you looked at any other part of educational change policy you would find often that

it does not have an empirical base to it, that it is based on people's best observation at a given time and, also, based on a philosophical position that they may be taking in relation to it. Frequently we find that there is not this empirical base and so I think that is why we get seasonal shifts, if you like, in relation to education policy.

ACTING CHAIR—Quite right, Jocelyn. We have been finding that about this whole approach. We have had experiential and rote learning of arithmetic—they say mathematics but they do mean arithmetic, numeracy—but good teachers ignored it, didn't they? And I can tell you good teachers are ignoring this, too.

Ms GILLARD—Part of the motivation of this inquiry was looking at data about boys' educational attainment, say, 20 years ago, which was basically comparable—or boys were slightly in front—and looking at data about boys' educational attainment today. Today there are gaps between boys and girls with the boys underperforming. I have been asking almost all the groups who have come to the inquiry whether they could identify the changes in the last 20 years that they think explain the development of that differential. The reason for asking that is that a lot of people have come along and said that boys like more active learning styles but, presumably, that has always been true. So we are trying to get people to focus on the change factors in the last 20 years that would explain that outcome. Have you got a view about that?

Mr Garnaut—Maybe we can all offer a view on this one. One of the major impacts has been the change in society generally in the last 20 years with lifestyle changes, work related changes, family relationship changes, and changes to the teaching environment of schools has impacted, too, with male role modelling not being as strong now as it was 20-plus years ago. One possibility is that they are contributing factors to the difference that is emerging, although I am not aware of any research that actually pins it down tightly and says they are causal factors for the change.

Ms Cook—Perhaps it is to do with the way in which we have changed our assessment procedures as well. They have changed dramatically over the last 20 years and at the TEE level there is now much more of a focus on school-based assessment and continual assessment than, say, when I was doing my tertiary admissions exams. What we found in the science information that we have collected is that, where there is a process of group work with students working through a problem together and then going away and do some questions independently, the girls did better on the questions that resulted or followed from the group work than the boys did. It seemed like that emphasis on collaborative learning and talking in small groups actually did not provide the same level of benefit to the boys as it did to the girls in the subsequent activity that followed from that. That is one indication that I think is worth exploring further—that the kinds of processes that we regard as being good teaching practice now do not necessarily suit all kids and perhaps have a gender bias in them themselves.

Ms GILLARD—That is an interesting point. Thank you.

Mr Grellier—I think it is also an issue of pedagogy. When I reflected on that question about the performance of boys I went to the Curriculum Council statistics to see what subjects were there in which boys were outperforming girls in the current TEE, and it is rather interesting, as you would be aware. The traditional subjects, like English literature and history, and so on, not only attract larger numbers of girls but the girls do outperform the boys.

But, interestingly, there is an exception to that when you come to a language like French, for example, where the main performance for boys is higher than for girls. So it is difficult to explain it only and simply as a pedagogical issue. It may have to do with something about the way in which schools and students and peer groups construct the nature of particular subjects. For example, there is some research that I have read recently—because I was an English teacher in my previous life—about the way in which schools construct the nature of English. For many boys the subject English is seen as a subject for girls, as a feminised practice—and the way it is taught in some schools encourages that view—and boys feel very insecure in that situation.

And yet I can count another context. Since 1989 there have been major changes in the English syllabus in this state to move away from what one might call a pure literature approach to an opportunity for all students to study non-fiction texts—to look at media and the way media works in the world as a significant part of that course—and that is an analytical thing that boys can work on. I can only talk anecdotally here but I know some schools where boys are performing significantly better in the subject English because of the nature of the course, the changes, and the way it is being taught.

I cannot speak for all other subject areas but I am sure it is something about the way we construct the subjects. When I did English at school—and I am sure when people sitting around this table did English at school—it was very much a functional, comprehension, two-essay type of thing, and maybe we moved in a cyclical way to a more literary sort of style and then maybe back to a more functional style. So it seems to me that it is the way we construct the nature of the subject and the sorts of attitudes that we have to it in school. I have taught boys in schools that have done well in the arts so not all boys are doing badly in humanity subjects, just as not all girls are doing badly in the science subjects. You have to ask which boys, which subjects, which contexts—it is not just the universal all boys or all girls. I think we have to be very careful about that.

Ms GILLARD—I agree. But directing your attention to those subjects where we know that boys, or at least some groups of boys, are underperforming, you would say changes in curriculum and pedagogy explain some of the achievements?

Mr Grellier—Yes. I mean we are about to embark in this state on a major post-compulsory review which is looking at the whole nature of post-compulsory education and questions of courses and trying to look more closely at the needs of individual students to extend our understandings of outcomes into years 11 and 12, and to start looking at different teaching and learning styles. How do you match? Before it was matching the kids to the curriculum—you have got to fix in this box. Now it is matching the curriculum to the student. What are your needs, how do we address those, and how do we design courses and strategies to do that?

ACTING CHAIR—Have the boys been asked?

Mr Grellier—Certainly. The whole of this post-compulsory review process is to involve groups of students and parent groups in forums to give them the opportunity—

ACTING CHAIR—I am really talking about the past rather than what has been planned.

Mr Grellier—In the past I do not think anyone was asked, were they? We will do it to you—isn't that the philosophy we have taken in the past?

ACTING CHAIR—You have said it, and I think you are right.

Mr Grellier—I do not think that in the past there was the degree of consultation about course design and course delivery and pedagogy than there is now.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not want to interrupt my colleague's questions, but you used the term 'construction of subjects'—you referred to it two or three times when you talked about English. I found that an interesting observation.

Mr BARRESI—I am interested in this post-education review that you are doing—I think it is fantastic. Jocelyn, you mentioned that assessment procedures had changed, that you are going to continue with assessment and perhaps group work. There is an acknowledgment that that, in fact, has favoured girls. Would that be right?

Ms Cook—I think the information that we have collected through monitoring standards shows us that performance tasks involving group work and collaboration do favour the performance of girls. We know, also, that the use of other kinds of questioning techniques will favour the performance of boys.

ACTING CHAIR—Have you some examples of that?

Mr BARRESI—And the sort of texts, also?

Ms Cook—Yes, that is right.

ACTING CHAIR—Can you give us some examples of that because some things have been removed from examination systems, haven't they?

Ms Cook—Yes, that is right. Multiple choice tests have multiple choice items and boys tend to perform better on those.

ACTING CHAIR—What has happened to them in exams?

Ms Cook—In some cases they have been removed. In our TEE English they were dropped a few years ago.

ACTING CHAIR—Was there a rationale given as to why they were removed?

Mr Grellier—Yes, there certainly was.

ACTING CHAIR—What was that?

Mr Grellier—The rationale was that the nature of the subject did not necessarily allow—because of the notion of multiple readings of text—clear multiple choice items where students

could discriminate one against the other. So there was a lot of research that said that students were unable to find answers because of competing discourses and ways in which you could interpret text. It was very difficult to design questions at that level that allowed students to choose the correct answer. That was part of the rationale.

ACTING CHAIR—You might be struggling to find the quantitative research to support that contention, but that is another story.

Mr BARRESI—My follow-up to the question was: if there is an acknowledgment that the assessment procedures favoured girls and you are looking at perhaps greater ability to respond to the needs of boys in the curriculum design, is there the ability in the education system, because of the concentration on TER scores, to have an individualised assessment procedure introduced? When I say 'individualised', not to the point of view of every single student, but is it possible to have an assessment procedure which is used for boys versus girls?

Mr Grellier—That flexibility is available in K to 10, which is the area for which the education department has prime responsibility, so that flexibility exists for teachers to design even down to individual education programs to meet the needs of particular students. That currently does exist now. The TE and the post-compulsory issues are different because of the issues of comparability between schools so that assessment structures are perhaps more closely defined. But there is still a wide variety of different assessment modes from multiple choice and closed answer types, to open questions, essay types, to practical work, to field work, depending on the nature of the subject. Some subjects are still very typically pencil and paper type tests. Other subjects, like geography and biology and physics, are practical and so oriented. A good assessment policy would cover a range, I think, of different styles and forms of assessment and you would hope that in the best world they would not discriminate or favour girls against boys.

Mr BARRESI—I was not looking at discrimination, but at it being applied differentially so that you are taking into account the differing needs. We are going to make a time to meet with a particular professor from New South Wales who contends that the difference in the operation of the brain— the left and right sides of the brain—really does differ for boys and girls and the way they process information and come to solutions. I am just wondering whether there is that ability at an assessment level to make a differentiation, or are we locked in? We can do everything we can up to a point, but once you come to that point of assessment, because of the need to have rankings, benchmarks and assessment across schools and across the state, then you cannot go that extra step.

Mr Grellier—I would like to make another comment about the nature of the tests, and Jocelyn can talk about this. In one of the monitoring standards tests, the form of the text was changed with the deliberate intention of assisting boys to do better, and they did. There are ways, down to constructing texts and tests, that will advantage one or the other. We would be certainly interested in looking at that research.

Mr BARRESI—I have another question on a totally different tack. Under your violence in school culture section, you talk about research that suggests boys are empowered by involvement in policy decision making and that '12 and 15 year old boys perceive they are ready for adult masculine roles'. This is very much in line with some evidence that we received yesterday in Adelaide from a researcher from Flinders University, Malcolm Slade, who spoke

about the fact that boys like to be seen as adults and yet the school environment puts them down. This is beyond violence and it is more about school culture and valuing their worth, their position and getting their feedback rather than treating them—

Ms Cook—And babying them.

Mr BARRESI—Yes, babying them. What do you do in that regard? What is happening here under your behaviour management in schools policy? How is that demonstrating itself as an improvement at this stage?

Mr Garnaut—In terms of a system approach to that issue, it is really identifying itself as youth alienation and boys' alienation in that age group. When we have a look at the statistics on suspensions across the state, for example, we see that boys very significantly are more often suspended than girls. It is at the years 8, 9 and 10 levels that they are most often suspended.

The response across school systems has been to develop concepts called 'middle schools' and by adopting the principles of middle schooling to the organisation and structures of schooling for that age group we are working hard to impact on those issues through relevant curriculum, through pastoral care strategies, through more close relationships between teachers and students, and using both curriculum and school environment strategies to work about bringing improvement in those areas. In fact, it is very early days in Western Australia for what we might call the middle school movement but it is clear on some of our school sites that there have been significant decreases in alienation figures reported.

Mr BARRESI—We saw that this morning at City Beach, which was an excellent example of that taking place. From a philosophical point of view, do you find that there are schools or teachers or principals who are so caught up in the old approach to education that they would find it a little bit threatening to adapt that policy?

Mr Garnaut—It is a big change agenda. When you look at changing school structures—often physical school structures—and changing the structure of the curriculum in a school and, also, addressing changes to pedagogy or the teaching and learning processes, that is a very big change agenda and it is quite daunting for a lot of our administrators in schools.

In fact, if you look at the middle school movement across Australia, I think we would say that it is in development mode, and on many school sites the structural reform has happened successfully. We have different types of buildings being built around Australia, and some old buildings have been remodified to suit middle school structures. However, the difference that needs to be made is in the outcomes that are being achieved by children, and I am not sure that there is research yet that is able to clearly demonstrate those improved outcomes, because we are in this transition mode and schools are now starting to come to grips more with the curriculum and pedagogical issues. A change of that nature, to a middle schooling structure from a traditional schooling structure, takes a significant number of years to achieve, so we will not see improved outcomes over night.

Mr BARRESI—I am just going to follow up on my pet topic if that is okay. What is the official policy line by the Western Australian education department on male teachers and the lack of male teachers in the education profession?

Mr Garnaut—The education department does not have a policy on male teachers, but certainly there is a strong awareness of the issue. Our statistics show very clearly that, in 1999, 21 per cent of primary teachers were male and 46 per cent of secondary teachers were male. In that same year, males held 66 per cent of all promotional positions. So it is certainly an area of concern to education departments around the world. I am aware that, through our workforce planning directorate, there is a strategy in place this year to work with tertiary institutions to design strategies to attract males into teaching. With the requirement to comply with equal opportunity employment policy, it is quite difficult for education systems to take affirmative action to proactively put males into schools in lieu of females. The major issue for us is that males—

ACTING CHAIR—That is a paradox in itself, isn't it, John?

Mr Garnaut—Yes, it is. Males are not being attracted into the bottom end into teacher training, and this is where the emphasis needs to be placed.

Mr BARRESI—So this is an active beginning that you are about to embark on. No other education department has said that to us so far—

Mr Garnaut—Yes. The director of workforce planning is planning to liaise with tertiary institutions to plan strategies to attract males into teaching.

ACTING CHAIR—We are running out of time, and I need to ask Kim to ask some questions. John, you mentioned the expulsion rates. Is that in the submission? I do not remember seeing that.

Mr Grellier—No.

ACTING CHAIR—Could that be given to us, because that is exactly the opposite to what we were given by the South Australian education department yesterday.

Mr Garnaut—What did they say?

ACTING CHAIR—The figures were reversed. If I remember correctly, most of their expulsions were over the age of compulsion, not under. In fact, under was 0.002, almost a non-event. Yours are the reverse.

Mr Garnaut—Would you like us to provide you with that data?

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, if you would not mind.

Mr Garnaut—We will do that. But in a general sense they say very clearly that years 8, 9 and 10 are the problem years for suspensions. They also say that boys make up—

ACTING CHAIR—It was the opposite yesterday, wasn't it?

Mr Garnaut—It is years 8, 9 and 10.

ACTING CHAIR—They were saying that they had far more expulsions after the age of compulsion than under.

Mr Garnaut—That is certainly not the case in Western Australia.

ACTING CHAIR—I will check it out before you go.

Mr Garnaut—And the males are really dominant in those statistics, and we will supply those to you. And of course Aboriginal students are too highly represented in those figures as well.

ACTING CHAIR—Because I am conscious of time—

Mr WILKIE—Warren, you have already acknowledged this in some respects, but does the department overall acknowledge that sometimes the teaching methods employed that are beneficial for the education of boys could be different to the normal methods that would be employed?

Mr Grellier—I guess it is a question of what normal methods are. The best teachers are able to understand the ways in which individual students learn and they have a repertoire of strategies. As part of our literacy work and literacy network, we are trying to equip teachers with a repertoire of strategies, so that there is not just one way to do it and so they can match more closely the needs of their individual students. I do not know whether that answers your question.

Mr WILKIE—Yes, it does. It was very good. When you believe a teacher does not have an adequate repertoire of methods and is therefore in need of professional development to bring them up to that standard, how do you identify them?

Mr Garnaut—That is clearly recognised at the school site. If a school administrator is concerned with the quality of teaching in a classroom in the school, then that is where the identification happens and that is where the action occurs.

Mr WILKIE—How would they identify it?

Mr Garnaut—Generally through the performance management processes and the reporting of results of students in the class. It is often anecdotal. More often than not, when the curriculum is not relevant in the classroom, behaviour issues are rampant in the classroom as well. Quite often the first intervention is when there is a lack of control and poor management in the classroom. But when the administration dive deeper into the issue quite often it is discovered that the curriculum being taught in the classroom is not relevant and is not meeting the needs of those particular children in the school.

Mr WILKIE—Do you think the systems that you have in place at the moment are adequate in identifying those people who need that assistance?

Mr Garnaut—I think they are quite sound. Over the last 10 years we have made quite a lot of ground in terms of performance management processes. The new curriculum improvement

program focuses on the needs of individual children and, through the assessment reporting processes that have been set in place, we are going to provide a very sharp focus from 2004-05 on where there are deficiencies within classrooms, within school and across schools. Although we might be somewhat vulnerable in a systems sense, we now have processes in place to significantly improve in that area.

Mr WILKIE—You mentioned students at risk and the different categories, and I think Aboriginals, non-English speaking students and boys were categories of students at risk. I suppose I am bit concerned that half of your students could therefore potentially be at risk. If the data we have had is right—in that we know there is up to 20 percentage points difference in the ability, the learning capability or outcomes of boys as opposed to girls—then surely they are not at risk and there is something already happening there that needs to be addressed. There should be systems or programs in place to address that now. Does the department have any?

Mr Garnaut—The department has a range of strategies in place to address the boys in education issue and the issues you are talking about—for example, the structural changes to do with middle schooling and other school sites. Agricultural schools have very male orientated programs and very good programs with excellent outcomes for boys. Senior colleges, with their focus on independence on the school site, certainly enhance the education of boys. In structural sense, there are certainly structures in place to address that.

Mr Grellier—We also have a major literacy intervention strategy—P to 3 and 4 to 7 literacy net—the point of which is to actively identify those students from the data we have who are experiencing difficulty in this area, and programs are put in place with support and professional development, both centrally and through districts, to support those students. That is happening right now, and has been happening for the last three years. That is just in one area. There is significant Commonwealth national literacy money allocated according to need to deal with those students, and there is rigorous data collection procedures and strong accountability for those funds. The department is in the process of working out strategies for the current Labor government to employ 200 new literacy and numeracy teachers across the state to intervene to assist the needs of those students.

Ms Cook—You made the point that there is up to a 20 per cent disparity between boys—

ACTING CHAIR—I should point out that that was mainly in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. It certainly was not in the information from South Australia and it is not in your information either.

Ms Cook—That is right. I think the really interesting thing from the data that we have collected is that the picture is not a simple one. It is not that boys are doing worse across the board than girls. Certainly in the area of literacy, and particularly in writing, that is definitely the case; there is a big difference. But in other areas of the curriculum there is not that same large disparity, and I think there is much more rich and interesting information about different learning styles and about differences in various aspects of the curriculum than the simple literacy and writing results seem to suggest.

ACTING CHAIR—We are going to have to stop there, because we are running badly behind time. John, Warren and Jocelyn, thank you very much for appearing on behalf of the Western

Australian education department. We look forward to that further information. Thank you very much.

[2.44 p.m.]

DUMONT, Ms Elizabeth, Chief Executive Officer, Fremantle Education Centre

WATTERSTON, Ms Barbara, Director of Professional Development and International Projects, Fremantle Education Centre

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome, and thank you for providing us a submission. If at any time you would prefer this to be off the record, would you please ask the committee and we will consider that request. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Dumont—I have no background in boys' education. Barbara is our staff expert on that. Do you have an opening statement?

Ms Watterston—The Fremantle Education Centre is a small autonomous body and non-bureaucratic in our structure. Because of our relationship with our teachers and school communities and over 24 years working in the area of professional development, we are far more pragmatic rather than academic in the way we approach the different activities, services and products that we use, although we are informed by research. In dealing with school communities at the chalk face, academic theory rhetoric needs to be translated into useful and relevant approaches and pedagogies at the school level. From hearing the conversation before, that is not necessarily the case.

We have published a number of media articles. The responses to those media articles about our programs and services indicate a real concern and emotion for engaging in motivating boys both at home and at school. Quite often parents are the ones who are calling us with ways and strategies that they can use at home and how they can support their sons. We do not really necessarily enter into the continuum of the political debate—biological determinism, social construction, pro-feminist and what about the boys—although we do view gender as a continuum in looking at ways that we can break away from stereotypical notions of gender which impact and limit both our boys and our girls in the learning process. I think the girls were limited by society in the sense that, since the feminist movement had started, it was 'you can't do this because this is your role in society'; whereas for boys it is more about putting their own limitations on themselves and sticking to what they think is the way they need to be male and not exploring and going beyond those self-imposed limitations. The very last paragraph of my submission is probably the main recommendation. It reads:

> It is recommended that funds be made available to determine which teaching and learning practices, which assessment procedures work well for which groups of boys/girls? Funding allocations should focus on the practitioner level where an action research process would help to inform theory and practice.

We always hear the issues for boys in particular at the middle school level and their disengagement from school. We also need, in our research, to focus on the building of a fence at the top of a cliff rather than the ambulance at the bottom; and what are the preventative strategies we can utilise, starting with early childhood education, to develop emotional literacy resilience and competencies to support passage from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence into adulthood. For instance, Ken Rowe's research on inattentiveness and literacy

levels in junior primary students. If we had some focus on some of the strategies that would actually allow boys and those specific groups of boys to achieve success so that when they are moving along through to adolescence they already have gained some success. There are a variety of strategies that can be used to support that.

Traditionally, the boys are disengaging perhaps by the end of Year 3, and we do not seem to be focusing on that. A lot of our talk is essentially what is happening once they have disengaged. That is just a personal opinion. That is just a comment. Since writing this submission, my own doctoral research has now focused on the strategies outlined in the recommendations concerning the efficacy of single sex classes in co-ed schools, and I heard you talking about that as well. The research specifically emphasises the recording of student voices triangulated with those of parents and teachers. Emphasis is not just on the academic but also on the social and emotional domains. If we are going to undertake research within school communities, we also need to acknowledge and be informed by the interconnectiveness of student, teacher and parent perspectives as they are a valid and integral part of the research and development process.

You have heard about the WA Curriculum Framework. It is explicit in its emphasis in catering for diversity and difference irrespective of gender, race and social class. Its success is largely underpinned by relationships between teachers, parents, students and the whole school community. To encourage relationships to flourish, we need to feel safe in our learning and working environments. I actually did hear Professor Trent speak about what she had spoken to you about yesterday; that is, about what boys thought constituted a good teacher. At many of our sessions when we work with parents, students and teachers, we ask, 'What are the descriptives that you would use for a good teacher as someone who has taught you well?' And in each of those specific groups they all come up with the same descriptives.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed perhaps on pastoral care, on establishing a context for successful learning, creating a safe environment where you are willing to go and take risks, where it is okay to fail. Once you fail, where do you move from there, what do you learn from that, and you move on. In creating those safe environments, if I feel safe then I am going to develop some positive relationships which would then flourish: relationships outside of school relationships, within school and certainly the relationship with the teacher and the student. The research seems to indicate that boys classically learn teachers and not subjects. So if they are working well with their teachers, and I think that was from some of the research that you heard yesterday, then they will continue to move forward, and in doing that then empowering collaboration at all levels.

These base levels I feel are often ignored, but they are vital for performance and growth. So, before we say which strategies we are going to use, have we set a context, have we set a safe context for learning, no matter what that is, however we see that? It is interesting that we talk about middle schools, and middle school is, again in my personal opinion, based on a primary school structure.

ACTING CHAIR—That is right.

Ms Watterston—So those very great qualities and the relationship and that nurturing that you have there, irrespective of whether it is mainly female teachers, male teachers, are what

needs to be transferred and translated as they move on. Again, the classic disengagement is when they move into years 8, 9 and 10. When we are talking about a single sex class—this is only one example; I am not meaning to go on about that—it is only one strategy. Trialling with single sex classes did not start with, 'Let's deal with the problem boys. What are the issues we are having there?' It was, 'There seems to be a problem in this area—maybe it is literacy. They just happen to be a group of boys. So what can we do?' What some schools have started to do from one point of view has actually netted some fantastic anecdotal results.

It has encouraged greater diversity in teaching and learning styles, it has enhanced collegial relationships, provided positive modelling and role models for students, a safe environment to explore and interrogate in greater depths social and emotional issues, and if you ask students what they find really great about being in those classes, these are the kinds of things they will say, 'Exponentially it enhances outcomes for girls and enables students to then return to that co-ed environment, whether that is in the afternoon, to practise those issues that they have discussed and to move on and to develop.' I will stop there.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much, Barbara. Elizabeth, do you want to add anything to that?

Ms Dumont—No.

ACTING CHAIR—Just to confirm your point about disengagement, I am sure principals yesterday were saying to us that disengagement starts at year 4. I have a couple of questions. You mentioned a couple of times explicit curriculum, but you did not mention implicit curriculum. Is there a reason for that.

Ms Watterston—I am not really sure how to answer that.

ACTING CHAIR—I am not trying to put you on the spot, I am simply making the point that sometimes in the debate we have we are only considering half of the debate, we are not considering all of it.

Ms Watterston—I think those are those subtleties that I was talking about and the issues of relationships and safe environment, and they are the things that we do not necessarily talk about because we look at the explicit.

ACTING CHAIR—Sometimes perhaps we need to state them.

Ms Watterston—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—On the single sex classes, you talked about when to use having impacted on the success. Can you just elaborate on that, because we had a principal this morning at City Beach, and he actually spoke about that as well, that he wants to pursue single sex classes within a coeducational context. I have a school in my electorate where it is a boys school and a girls school, and actually they come together for coeducational classes. Can you just elaborate on that?

Ms Watterston—There is such a broad context in the way people actually develop those classes and reasons why they do it. When people hear that there has been success, they then immediately think, 'Okay, single sex classes, there we go,' and they do nothing else, and nothing else changes. The assessment does not change, the learning style and the teaching style do not change, and then what do you with it, what do you do with that information once you then have discussed it with the boys and/or girls and then you come together? How has that then empowered them to improve and move forward in the context of the co-ed environment?

What some schools are disappointed in is, yes, they have gone and done that, and nothing has changed. You walk into that classroom, it is the same teaching, everything is there, so they are wondering why they are not achieving those results. I think people really need to be informed and really thrash out exactly why they are actually going to use these classes in the first place, and then set about finding research, finding what others have done and really being much more informed before they go ahead and actually trial it, and reasons why are you doing it. Is the reason why you are doing it so you can just throw a group of disenfranchised children into one class and get rid of them, is that why you are doing it, or what are the reasons why you are doing it?

Mr BARRESI—Would you recommend it, say, for those subjects where traditionally boys have felt that they may be viewed as taking on more feminine type classes, like drama, art, poetry, cooking, whatever it may be?

Ms Watterston—Yes, that is classic. I think you would have seen this morning that that is not the case with those boys there necessarily but, yes, traditionally, that is how schools have started to say, 'What are the ways that we can engage them in those more feminine subjects?' So that has certainly been an impetus for schools starting that. I think there is so much more richness to be gained from using those classes, not just singly to look at engaging them in a different subject. I think it then frees boys up because they do not behave in certain ways because the girls are not there. This is what they tell us. That frees them up to actually go and try things because they are all there. Even now, within those groups of boys or girls, there is that continuum of difference, and the difference is just within their own sex. They can then go and explore without fear of ridicule some areas that they would not necessarily have done in a co-ed class. That is not to say we should have boys versus girls or we should split them. Every time this comes on the media as well, it is like, 'What are we trying to do? We are trying to separate sexes.' It is not about that. I think we need to be really clear when we are talking about that in general terms or to anyone.

Mr BARRESI—Sure. You referred in your submission to a term which I have not heard mentioned before, except I know there are two excellent books written on it, and that is emotional intelligence. Could you explain for the benefit of this committee what you refer to as emotional intelligence and how that impacts here on boys' education?

Ms Watterston—I suppose it is all those interpersonal skills. Even when we are looking at issues of bullying—why has that happened? Why is there a bully there? Emotionally, how do I deal with that?—I think Goldman was saying 85 per cent of success is to do with emotional intelligence and literacy in that area. Traditionally or biologically, females tend to be more affective in that area and are more skilled at dealing with those emotions from an early age. Then some will argue, why are they? Is it because when we see a female baby we talk to it a

little differently, we do things more articulately, and with boys we don't because we treat them differently because they are a boy? There is a whole range of arguments.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that necessarily on all occasions a good thing? I used an example a couple of days ago of Holocaust victims. When you talk to Australian soldiers that have been in Changi, the ones who actually survived the best were the ones who repressed their emotions, not expressed them. Holocaust victims will tell you the same thing. Repression on its own sounds like a very negative feeling—

Ms Watterston—But it is still a feeling; it is still an emotion.

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, it is a feeling, and there are positive aspects to it, and you acknowledge that.

Ms Watterston—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—It has been used in terms of describing the difference between success and failure in the work context, and you are using it in a school context. Perhaps it starts there, developing those skills.

Ms Watterston—Yes, I think so—and very early, in the pre-primary.

Mr BARRESI—There is not an acknowledgment of that by the profession probably. You heard the question I asked the education department about assessment procedures and whether or not it is possible to differentiate assessment between the sexes. Is it possible?

Ms Watterston—I do not know that it necessarily needs to be between the sexes. It needs to be suited to the way that you learn best, which does not mean to say that, because Jim has a learning style that is more active, he should not be utilising other learning styles. But knowing that that is his preferred learning style, for instance, then why don't we look at a way that we can assess him using that kind of strategy? With children who are better visually, how can they show us whatever outcome it is that we want to achieve? How can they show us that they have learnt? Maybe they can show us visually. Maybe they can act it out in drama. Does that still mean, because they cannot write it, that they do not understand that outcome?

Mr BARRESI—So you are making a differentiation there. If we accept that things such as verbal reasoning and communications are very much the domain of the girls and they are much more comfortable with that and are able to display those traits far better than the boys, then perhaps a chemistry question which is an essay, as we had an example of yesterday, may very well suit that particular cohort. But with the boys, whose verbal reasoning is not going to be a core skill that they have or that they are using in terms of their brain, we should go back to a lab demonstration and multiple choice.

Ms Watterston—What is the purpose of the learning? That is what we need to determine first, and then what is the best way for you to show me that you have learnt that, whether you are a boy or girl? My favoured learning style might be more of a supposed boy learning style. What I am saying is that I just think we should open up and offer assessment procedures that acknowledge all of those differences.

ACTING CHAIR—When we teach the boys the verbal skills of girls, no-one will be able to listen to anybody!

Mr WILKIE—We have had a lot of evidence suggesting that really the best way for boys or girls to learn, but probably more for boys, is that they need to have a really good positive relationship with the teacher.

Ms Watterston—Absolutely.

Mr WILKIE—The teacher needs to be able to get on with them. Do you think that we do enough teacher training to give them those sorts of skills so that they can relate to the students?

Ms Watterston—Personally, from my own experiences in teacher training, no, from the anecdotal experiences I hear from others, no, and from my own experience in university now, no. Even as professional development providers, if you are going to talk about emotional literacy and if you are going to talk about these issues, do you know what it means? If you do not know what it means, you cannot articulate it and you cannot model it, then why are we saying that others are disengaging because they have not developed those literacies? I agree with what you are saying. We have actually tried to find ways, and one of our programs is a fantastic personal growth experience, but in doing that it is also a wonderful approach. It started off as a program for girls, but particularly for boys they found that it has engaged them really well, and they can look through and discuss those things that we term emotion literacy—those issues of bullying and a variety of social and emotional issues—through using this program. But in using that program it has developed those skills for the teachers as well. Personally, and again it is only my opinion, I do not think that we emphasise that.

Mr WILKIE—Do you think it can be taught?

Ms Watterston—I think we need to talk about that more explicitly. Everyone assumes implicitly that we know what we are talking about, but I do not think that necessarily we as young teachers, or teachers who have been in the work force for a while, do. That is not to knock teachers either; that is just to say we are really concerned with other issues to do with implementing the curriculum and making sure we have done this outcome and ticking this off. There are so many other issues impacting on it that we forget about the self, and we forget about the humanistic side of teaching and looking at that staff member first.

Mr WILKIE—I have not asked this before, but do you think there is sometimes a bit of an attitude of them and us—teachers versus the students, as opposed to working with them to get an educational outcome?

Ms Watterston—More teachers are trying to work beyond that, and I think that has been in the traditional high school structure, from what we seem to hear, and less so in the primary school. Clearly, when I was talking about developing safe environments and relationships and empowering collaboration, that is exactly right. If you do not have that context then you are going to have that them and us. It is about this is what I am doing to you, or this is what we need to get done, this is the curriculum area we need to cover and this is the assessment procedure. We do not go back and look at those things.

Ms GILLARD—I was interested when you said the middle school is replicating the structures of primary school, and I had not actually heard someone put it like that before but that is a good way to put it. I am trying to reconcile that with evidence we have had, particularly yesterday from a Flinders University researcher who had interviewed extensively boys in years 9, 10 and 11 whose main complaint about school was that they wanted to be treated like adults and were not being treated like adults. The fact that at a whole lot of levels they were being required to function as adults was not recognised in their schooling. Boys who were performing up to 20 hours of work a week would then come to school and be told off because they did not have the right footwear on, or something like that, something really jarring in terms of the expectations on them. He was talking about this in terms of years 9 and 10, yet on the other hand we are saying middle schooling boys in years 9 and 10 want, if you like, the security of the structures which were more primary school like. I am just trying to put that together in my head, because it does seem a little bit contradictory, doesn't it?

Ms Watterston—Yes, it does. It is just being treated with respect, and you need to do that in primary school as well as middle school. But their studies were looking at boys in the post-compulsory years.

Ms GILLARD—No, this bloke was not looking at post compulsory.

Ms Watterston—Right, I am sorry. She was saying that the boys she had spoken to were 16 to 18.

Ms GILLARD—No, I am sure the Slade stuff from yesterday was boys in years 9, 10 and 11.

Ms Watterston—But someone did ask her that in the interview today and she said it was 16 to 18. When you say being treated like an adult, what does that mean and what does it mean for them? They were saying it was to be treated with respect, and I think that was their main issue. Do we not treat pre-primary children with respect? Just to say, 'Now that you are of this age, you need to be treated like an adult'—I am not sure; I would like to find out more about what they mean by being treated like an adult. It basically came down to respect, having a relationship with that person, with that teacher, knowing that they cared and knowing that they were going to support you in your progress. And is that being treated like an adult? I am not sure.

Mr BARRESI—He actually elaborated to some extent by saying that it also goes to the acknowledgment of skills and contribution you are making in extracurricular activity. For example, you may have not completed your homework on time and a teacher then rips the shreds out of you but because you were working on a family farm or you were working to help out in terms of bringing some sort of income for the family. Those skills in terms of managing the roster or working at McDonald's are not acknowledged. That is what he was referring to as well.

Ms Watterston—Yes. To me, it is about saying that we need to acknowledge that, we need to be more flexible—and that is bottom line relationship issues again.

Ms GILLARD—I accept that. Isn't the problem with the assessment argument—you were talking about assessment in response to questions before—that whilst I agree that it would be a great world if it could have flexibility in assessment styles and different people would thrive on different assessment styles and you could package the assessment styles for where their best efforts are, the reality is that we do need verifiable assessments across wide classes of people, particularly by the time you are talking about year 12, and even probably a little bit earlier but particularly year 12. I am just wondering how we could develop a schooling structure where you could say 'for primary years and early secondary years we can have all of this assessment packaging' but then you are going to get to a stage—

Ms Watterston—And then all of a sudden change it and then boom—that is what they are finding now. I do not have an answer for that. That is not really my area of expertise. It is really just to make a comment. But it is an issue. For me, no matter what you do, if you are going to write something and someone is going to mark it, what is the first thing you do—do you look at the comment or do you look at the mark? Again, it is the way that we are traditionally used to being assessed. That is a nebulous statement in a sense. I do not have any guidance there at all.

Ms GILLARD—No. It would concern me if we are saying in relation to year 12 results that we could tweak this a little bit by using assessment styles that the research would say the preponderance of boys are better at. Then you will get a series of outcomes where boys have done a little bit better and girls have done a little bit worse, but you have not really fundamentally changed anything, have you? You have just kind of tweaked it. While I can understand the argument about flexible assessment and that a lot of the concern about boys and girls achievement has been in year 12 subjects but, because of the purpose of year 12, which is tertiary entry so people can compare kids—and unfortunately that is what it is used for—you need verifiable assessment across a large class of people in year 12.

Ms Watterston—I agree.

Mr WILKIE—Mind you, in terms of assessment of year 12, we might put them through an exam at the end of the year where they cannot use a computer and they have to write—that was something that was raised. They have been able to use this computer tool all year and then suddenly they face an exam where they cannot use it and they have to write. They struggle and they get a poor mark because they cannot use the tools that they have normally had access to.

Ms Watterston—I agree. My answer would be, 'Why not? Why can't we go and explore these things?' There is a much bigger picture out there, and I appreciate that it is not as simple as that.

ACTING CHAIR—One last question, which is the first question I put to the education department.

Ms Watterston—Which was that?

ACTING CHAIR—I saved it for last. It has been an excellent presentation.

Ms Watterston—So you are not asking the question?

ACTING CHAIR—No, I am going to ask the question. Do you want me repeat it?

Ms Watterston—Was that about the issue of quantitative research?

ACTING CHAIR—How have we introduced into this country a policy of gender equity framework based on no identifiable quantitative research? I find that absolutely amazing—not that the policy is necessarily right or wrong—that is not the point; that is not the issue. How have we done this? We have done it before in education, and Jocelyn Cook made mention of the phonics whole word debate and we have a great learning of arithmetic and experiential learning—we have had all these things before. They have the same context, do they not? There was no quantitative research at all. It was just that someone felt good about it. Good teachers can make anything work, but not all teachers can make that same thing work because, as you pointed out so clearly, they do not understand what is in there. It is not just a matter of single sex classes. There is a whole range of other issues and, if you do not deal with the other issues, you will never be successful.

Ms Watterston—Exactly.

ACTING CHAIR—Here we are in 2001 and we are implementing a policy Australia wide. Every state education department and every Catholic education group—we have one coming in a minute, and I hope I am not pre-empting what they are saying—have spoken to us and they have all said, 'This is what we should be doing.' But when you ask them that question, not one of them can point to one piece of quantitative research that supports the introduction of that policy.

Ms Watterston—Maybe that could be the next research base.

ACTING CHAIR—It might be good research program for the Fremantle Education Centre. Thank you very much, Barbara. Elizabeth, thank you very much for accompanying Barbara.

Mr BARRESI—Where do you work?

Ms Watterston—In Fremantle. Are you coming down that way?

Mr BARRESI—Where is the school?

Ms Dumont—We are on the corner of Cantonment and Parry in a historic building. Do you know it?

Ms Watterston—It is an old heritage building. Do you know?

Mr WILKIE—Phil is an old Fremantle boy.

Ms Watterston—Then you know. It is right in front of Clancy's Tavern—you might remember that.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you for the presentation.

[3.14 p.m.]

CICARELLI, Ms Mary, Executive Officer, Catholic Secondary Principals Association of WA

WEDD, Brother Alan, Member, Education Standing Committee, Catholic Secondary Principals Association of WA

WHITE, Mr Robert, Member, Education Standing Committee, Catholic Secondary Principals Association of WA

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Brother Wedd—We are going to speak to some aspects of the paper that may help you. We will share it between the three of us.

ACTING CHAIR—That will be fine.

Brother Wedd—The paper that you have in front of you is the result of a workshop, a discussion group, that took place with Catholic secondary principals and a number of deputy principals. From that discussion, Mary drew up the report. Each of us has a background in teaching and education. Mary has been working in teaching at the secondary school level for about 10 years in a co-ed school and also at university level at the Notre Dame University. Bob has been working in a variety of schools in two states—country and city, co-ed, single sex and primary and secondary. My background is all boys' education—primary and secondary, country and city and higher and lower achieving. We thought that we would pick out three particular aspects of the paper that we see as significant. Bob will lead us in that discussion.

Mr White—My comments are introductory and basic to our submission. That is the context of paragraph 2 of our submission. It concerns a broader issue about the education of boys in schools that needs to be addressed. There was a very strong feeling in our particular group that the socialisation of boys in our society today is very different from what it used to be. The social structures that are there have created different sorts of responses to boys. We, as adults in schools, are trying to cope with those responses out of a framework that is very different from the boys' framework. It was interesting to hear some of the issues that people have spoken about.

One of the questions that I have delved into in my experience in schools is what it is that boys seek the most from their school experience. Rod hit on it before in one of the responses, and to me it is the most important one: role modelling. In a recent survey in our school we looked at who were the ideal role models for boys. We got a bit of a shock at the results. In general terms, role models were boys who were successful, who were physically fit, and who believed they were attractive physically, emotionally and psychologically to other people. They were people who could relate well and who had an image that was very close to that which the media subject young people to.

That brought us into discussion with some of these boys. Was that the reality or was it the most appropriate thing for them to say in such a survey? It was not amazing to me, given the context of our middle paragraph in the submission. I do not believe that the responsibility for the education of boys' issues solely lies with schools; I think the responsibility solely lies within our communities. We talked about role modelling. The reality in my school—and we are one of the biggest boy's schools in this city—is that in the last seven years, only one student has gone onto teaching. I started to do some research around some of the other boys' schools and I saw similar statistics—that the number of boys going into teaching has diminished significantly over the years. When you randomly ask some of our boys why, they say, 'Why would you go into teaching with all the issues that are surrounding the teaching profession at the moment,' with reference to litigation. You could go on forever.

So the role modelling issue is something that is pretty close to us, and it is a real issue for me in my own backyard, but also, from the Australian perspective, most of our young people, particularly boys, are going to schools where the influence of the male in a teacher's role has diminished significantly. That is going to have some sort of impact on their responses, particularly in—as I heard before—the middle schooling area, which seems to be the flavour of the month.

In our particular structures and in the way in which we treat boys in curriculum and school structures, I believe we are doing it from a very different age. We are structuring things and developing curriculums for an age that I believe is past. I do not think we have really caught up with what is the age of the young person, particularly boys, that we are trying to cater for in schools. You get caught up in all that assessment stuff and requirements of tertiary institutions, and we keep perpetuating that. I understand we have to perpetuate that to a degree, but I do not think we have got to the bottom line of what it is, how boys learn most effectively, and the basic issues that surround boys' education and boys' socialisation.

Interestingly enough—I have been trying to locate the research but I could not before this presentation today—there was research done a few years ago by a technology company in Australia, and I think they were based in Melbourne. They looked at the leisure time activities of young people aged 10 to 15. Some of those results were quite extraordinary. People were finding that boys were diving to computers after school as a refuge, because it was something they could handle, and the socialisation of running around, climbing trees or whatever was starting to disappear. I think maybe you, Mr Acting Chair, being from South Australia, have read the latest research in a couple of schools with the mobile phone issue. Kids are now using mobile phones if they get into trouble, or if there is something going on in the schoolyard they will ring their boyfriend or their girlfriend. What has stopped is that socialisation of talking to mates or friends. It is a lot of those issues tied up with the influence that those socialisation aspects of life have had on boys.

In some of our discussions, if you asked a lot of kids at school, particularly kids in years 8, 9 and 10, what they find hard to cope with, most boys would respond that they are bored. If they are bored, what do we do? We tend to push more stuff into their lives rather than going backwards and saying, 'Let's have a look at the reasons for some instances of boredom.' That leads on to the drug issue, ADHCD, suicide rates, and we can keep going on and on. From our perspective, our concern would be the whole socialisation issue of boys in the Australian

society: what is the most effective role model process that we are trying to promote in our society. I think that then impinges on what happens in schools.

Ms Ciccarelli—I would like to briefly follow on from what Bob said. He has put very clearly our concern that the issue of education of boys is being contextualised into the whole social milieu. It is not seen as something that simply relates to what happens in schools and therefore it cannot be dealt with simply in schools. If we try to do that we are really not going to get to the seat of any of the problems. Having said that, I think there are still some issues. Alan will speak more specifically to some of the educational, curriculum and pedagogical issues.

One thing our members certainly felt was important was the need within schools to provide opportunities for students, and particularly in this instance for young boys, to actually come to an articulated understanding of what they mean by masculinity and alternately or correspondingly what they understand by femininity—to actually engage with that discussion. I guess it is our concern that, unless and until students have the opportunity to engage in those discussions in ways that are open, non-threatening and supportive, students are left either with stereotypes—which Bob was alluding to—as their model of what it means to be masculine, to grow up to be a man in this society, or with nothing against which to test their growing identity. We would say that it is important for us to find opportunities in schools to actually provide students with the opportunity to talk about those issues. We all know that that opportunity arises sometimes in particular classes. Most specifically it will arise in English literature classes. That is the curriculum area where these sorts of discussions arise. For all sorts of reasons which I am sure the committee is aware of, that does not necessarily reach an awful lot of boys in our schools. So we would say that that is a really important issue.

I would like to reiterate the sorts of things that Bob was talking about in terms of the provision of role models for boys within schools and the problem with not having a critical mass of good male teachers as role models in schools. We do not believe that schools are currently finding ways that appropriately affirm boys in their achievement. We would suggest that the sorts of affirmation methods used by schools are less and less effective. The sorts of affirmation activities that typically take place in schools are ones that typically took place when I was at school. I may have felt really good about them, but I think that our kids often look at those sorts of activities and really wonder what we are on about. Why should they get excited about the sorts of things that we set up as affirmation? They do not actually relate to them. We come without particular answers as to what those new methods of affirmation may be, but we would indicate that we think that that is an area of fruitful research.

ACTING CHAIR—Brother Wedd, did you want to add another comment?

Brother Wedd—I would like to add more to our paper. I will just cover a few areas briefly then. I am not sure if you have the paper in front of you. I am referring to the lower part of page 2 and then following on to page 3. The areas Bob and Mary have talked about refer to the whole cultural change that has been taking place, the changes that have been observed to be happening in education and how these appear to be impacting on education for boys. A lot of the information that is around tends to be anecdotal and drawing from experience. There does not seem to be a great body of research that supports what people are saying. The impressions that teachers certainly have is that, by the time that boys get to years 8, 9 and 10, the problems are emerging. As they move through primary school years it is quite clear by about year 6 who the

underachievers are going to be and, stepping back from that, perhaps even at year 1, which students are just not comfortable learning in the way that the schools are structured.

So by years 8, 9 and 10 boys in particular seem to be getting lost in our educational system. It seems that a lot of the strategies that teachers use and a lot of the educational changes that have taken place in the last 10 to 15 years have moved towards favouring styles of learning that seem to favour girls or boys who are comfortable learning in ways that are exposed to reading and writing. By years 11 and 12 there are directions emerging, and boys can start to take up life at school with a clearer sense of purpose. A lot of work has been done at that post compulsory level. Our biggest concern is what is happening in years 8, 9 and 10, particularly with boys but also with girls who are underachieving and perhaps experiencing similar problems. But at the moment the debate seems to be identifying and focusing on boys.

It seems that in Australia most secondary schools tend to be templates of each other and follow much the same structure, organisation and curriculum. Teachers tend to draw on very similar styles of teaching, what is looked on as appropriate behaviour within classrooms and assessment structures that are defined to external bodies. We see all of these as factors that need to be looked at. We hope that in some way there may be some research funding in areas that will give people solid academic foundations for looking at change and for exploring approaches to the learning process, especially with boys in that age group, that may be more effective for them than what is currently happening. I will close there to leave time for questions.

Ms GILLARD—I am addressing this question to Mary, but others might have a comment. I accept that if we do not find a space in the curriculum for the discussion of gender issues. Boys who are looking for male role models will either not have one or they will look to the mainstream media for those role models. One of the things that has concerned me in the course of this inquiry is that, over a 20-year period, data on achievement for boys is worse now. When we have gone to schools, it seems that, once kids get to a stage where they can pick their subjects, there is still fairly rigid gender stereotyping about who studies what. I find it difficult to explain why that is still so acute when, over that 20-year period, images of men in our society have diversified a fair bit.

It is not as though the mainstream media images of masculinity have got more rigid over that 20-year cycle. The images of masculinity in the mainstream media 20 years ago were pretty much the strong silent father or the strong silent nice guy the strong silent hero. Then there was the range of bad guys. Although we still have the range of bad guys, I think we have diversified male imagery a bit, yet that does not seem to be feeding through. Do you have a comment about why that is so?

Ms Ciccarelli—I have a personal reaction to that. There are a couple of things. Part of the reason that it is still an issue in schools relates to something that Bob first brought up, which I think is noted in our submission, and which I suspect it been put to you before: the feminisation of the teaching work force. I think that has been a particular issue in schools.

Personally, I would not be quite as phlegmatic about the broadening of stereotypes in the major cultural organs. I think the stereotype of males and appropriate male presentation may have changed, but I think it is still fairly limiting. If I may be so bold, in the discussions with the boys in his class that Bob alluded to earlier, he was somewhat more diplomatic in his

presentation of those than he was in conversation with his colleagues. At the risk of offending him, the stereotype that came forward was more of an attractive, tanned and successful—in terms of money—with a female appendage. That was the stereotype of a successful male for young boys, and I am not sure that we have moved enormously in cultural stereotypes for young men.

Ms GILLARD—It is depressing, isn't it? You do see men in service professions in a range of settings. Even in our mainstream media, we have hospital shows now where the woman might be the doctor and the man might be the nurse, and that was not the case 20 years ago. But that imagery has not fed through.

Ms Ciccarelli—That is important in itself, and I am not denying that, but you have to engage young people in a conscious articulation of what it means and what it means to them.

Ms GILLARD—Yes, I accept that.

Mr BARRESI—You have touched on role models and the need for male role models and male teachers. It is an issue which some education departments do not acknowledge as being of a primary concern. It is an issue but not of a primary concern. You have actually raised it specifically in your presentation and in some of the comments you made earlier on. If we take that back to the training colleges themselves—you made a comment about training colleges—what is the Catholic education department doing in terms of ensuring that there are more male teachers coming through the colleges and, when they are in the colleges, both the male and the female teachers learn teaching methodologies which acknowledge the differences between the sexes?

Mr White—There is no separate Catholic training college, they are all at the various universities. I think one of the issues that we are trying to address is a system of trying to encourage boys in our schools to move into teaching. It is a very different trend. As you say, the whole stereotype was that it was very commonplace that very few females went into teaching in an era, and now the tide has turned, for all sorts of reasons. I believe boys feel that success is much bigger than being a teacher in a classroom. I do not think there is any specific program—

Mr BARRESI—How are you going to attract them? You talk about increasing the standing of the profession, quantum salary increases and long-term career incentives for classroom teachers. A lot of those are going to be outside your control to be able to do that. What can the Catholic system do in its own right to attract more male teachers?

Mr White—I suppose in its own right it can only rely on the various schools and their commitment to—

Mr BARRESI—Why I am asking that is: if the number of male teachers in primary education in the state system is low, I would imagine it is even lower in the Catholic schools.

Mr White—I do not know those statistics. I would say it would be fairly similar. I would be surprised if it was not.

Brother Wedd—By contrast to the school where Bob is working, the school where I am working is Fremantle CBC, which is traditionally a working class area. There is a very broad ethnic mix at an inner city school. We would have one or two boys going into teaching every year across the last eight years I have been down there, but they have all been going into primary teaching. They seem to be hesitant to see themselves as stepping into secondary teaching. Perhaps that reflects something of what they see taking place in secondary teaching; it is not attractive, and they feel threatened or not competent to move into that area. It probably also reflects what has always happened in education, which is that the majority of teachers have come from an average socioeconomic area and lower socioeconomic area and only a smaller number have come from backgrounds that are more affluent. Perhaps that trend is really still happening and we are starting to draw more now from groups that are newer to Australia as they want to contribute and make a difference. Certainly with boys and I guess girls who come from families who have a highly affluent background, teaching does not appeal to them as a way to be successful.

Mr White—That really does not answer your question. I think the bottom line too is that it is our responsibility in all the schools to recognise the issue and to try to develop ways—I do not think our universities have responded to that issue as well. I think it has to be a joint process, a joint program. We have to get together and say, 'How are we going to resolve this? What do we need to be doing in schools? What do you need to do in universities? Let us work together to promote the image of teaching.'

Mr BARRESI—It was pleasing to hear the education department representatives say that the department will be entering into discussions with the tertiary sector on how to attract more male teachers. That is the first time we have heard that from any of the departments so far round Australia.

With reference to father involvement and providing a range of heroes and mentors for boys, specifically how do you propose to go about doing that? Fathers are too busy. Fathers find it very hard to even have half an hour to go to see their daughter at school.

Mr White—Phil, we always use that excuse.

ACTING CHAIR—He is confessing. This is his own confessional.

Mr White—That is what we do in schools. It is the same with the tuckshop-canteen issues: 'We'll send the letter to mum.' I think we have been using that not as an excuse but as a sort of a reality, but I do not believe it is. We are beginning a program—and I know a lot of other schools are—of developing father-son. In the era of girls' education, the thrust in the late eighties, early nineties, it was not political to run father-son because we might offend, given the thrust of girls' education. That is an era that we have gone through. I think a lot of schools stood back a little and were not game to make that step forward. I believe that has probably been one of the wrong decisions that we have made. I know a lot of boys' schools now in particular are moving down that track very significantly and saying, 'We need to develop the role models, whether it is dad, the guardian or the significant male whoever that might be.' So if you are too busy, maybe the grandfather, an uncle or a neighbour can come with the boy and do things that are significant together. I think that is part of the key.

Ms Ciccarelli—The model that was referred to in our submission was actually undertaken in what you would consider a very middle-class school where you would assume—whatever assumptions one can make about these things—that at least one parent, if not both parents, would have been in work. The program still worked. One way or the other people found the opportunity. It was important enough for them. They found ways to either get there themselves as fathers or for someone else to get there.

Mr WILKIE—When I first got elected, I went out to Aquinas and had a very good conversation with Brother Paul, who is the principal. He had very strong views about having always taught in boys' only environments. He believed that it was very beneficial for them. Obviously Catholic education has got both co-ed and single-sex schools. Have you done any comparisons between the achievement levels of your students in the co-ed schools as opposed to the single-sex schools to determine whether that is a view that is relevant? Do you have any opinions on that? You might not want to release information—

Mr White—I am not sure if there has been any official research done. From results that we get through that are tallied at the end of each year on results of year 12, you can draw some conclusions from some of those statistics. Again, from experience, I would maintain that if boys are intelligent, confident and have fairly good self-esteem—if they have those qualities going for them—they will be successful in any structure. This is a personal opinion. From my experience, if boys have not got those qualities, they will sit at mediocrity unless someone personally challenges them. We could argue whether single sex or co-ed is the way to go, but it is interesting to note that in a lot of government schools, and in some Catholic and independent schools, the trend, particularly in middle schooling, is to separate the males and females in classes. There are some government high schools who are operating a number of their core subjects—English, maths, science—in single-sex classes. I think that is a very interesting move.

Brother Wedd—I had tea with Kevin Paull on Sunday night to talk about the same question. Kevin is very experienced in the area of education, working with boys. His sense would be that, until schools are able to or encouraged to work to develop structures and ways of organising and developing learning within their schools that favour boys in a boys only setting, we really are still struggling with this question of boys' education, because we are still providing the same pattern of teaching and learning, curriculum and syllabus and expectations that all the other schools are providing. We have not been able to provide anything that is significantly different which starts to address what quite a number of people see as the real needs of boys. In years 8, 9 and 10, if people were encouraged, given some freedom and some access to funding, they may be able to come up with some structures on an experimental basis that could start to do something different and start to address not just the needs in learning but some of these other social and cultural needs as well. But that is still something in the future.

Mr WILKIE—Does the association have an opinion on which is the better way to go, given that you do run both sorts of schools?

Brother Wedd—The association would say that variety is important; that trying to produce just one form or one structure in schooling is a big weakness. I suppose here in Western Australia we tend to be very uniform as it is, and we do not have the diversity that is there is on the east coast. Our experience is limited that way. But our sense would be that greater variety and variation of school structures needs to be encouraged.

ACTING CHAIR—I would like to follow that on. The Karmel report back in 1975 or whenever it was came out recommended to the Australian governments, state and federal, that they abolish technical schools. They introduced within this country the comprehensive high school system, which Catholic education followed slavishly as well. In hindsight, do you think this was a mistake?

Brother Wedd—I do not think it would be good to go back to that structure.

ACTING CHAIR—No, you cannot go back. We live in another world. But, in terms of what you were saying, we do not offer the diversity to parents and children that was offered in those days. Certainly time has marched on. You might call them technology high schools or enterprise high schools. It might be a whole different context. But the main point still remains, if the diversity is not there, and it is also negatively affecting Catholic education throughout Australia.

Mr White—Each to their own, and we have forgotten that in education.

Brother Wedd—Catholic education has copied what state departments have been doing. That is a significant weakness.

ACTING CHAIR—One other point in terms of women: we have been teaching boys and had it recorded empirically since Aristotle. Have we forgotten something in the last 20 years? What has gone on?

Brother Wedd—Aristotle would look for a different form of teaching and learning than what we provide in our schools, and Plato would too.

ACTING CHAIR—Is Rousseau taking over, Alan?

Brother Wedd—To some extent, yes.

ACTING CHAIR—You acknowledge that? Let us go back to the question I asked of the education department and of the Fremantle Education Centre. We have introduced in this country a policy of gender equity framework and a concept of gender construction. I have asked every education department, every union representative, every Catholic ed person, in every state of this country—we have not been to Tasmania— and not one of them has been able to point to one piece of empirical or quantitative research to substantiate the introduction of that policy. Your response, please.

Brother Wedd—Our response would be that we would be calling for funding to go into research in a number of these areas that we are addressing in this paper. The research is not there.

ACTING CHAIR—Why are we doing it?

Brother Wedd—People are working from best guesses, what seems to work, the sense of experience and intuition.

ACTING CHAIR—I cannot believe we are actually admitting this on tape. We are introducing a policy in this country, in every state, in every Catholic ed in every state, and we do not know why we are doing it. Is that what you are saying to me?

Ms Ciccarelli—I think what is being said is that there is an acknowledgment that your statement is accurate, that there has not been quantitative research to validate some of those initiatives. I am not sure that that is exactly the same as saying we have no reason for it.

ACTING CHAIR—This makes us all look like idiots. There is a value in qualitative research. I am not throwing out qualitative research with the bathwater. Of course it has got relevance. But I just cannot believe we have actually done this. We have done it before, of course, on a much smaller scale. Jocelyn Cook from the education department made mention of the phonics and whole word approach in literacy. Of course, we had similar debates with new mathematics and rote learning in arithmetic. But they were small issues. This is no small issue; this is a big issue.

Brother Wedd—Most things in education tend to happen when you see something not working and people look around for something else. Looking at it before it is tried, it all looks great. So various people try it. Sometimes it is done on a trial or pilot basis; at other times it is brought in on a whole system basis; and only when you get into it do you start to find out that it produces its own problems. A lot of what has happened in education has simply worked that way.

ACTING CHAIR—Are we using information that is destructive to both boys and girls? For example, we talk about suicide rates, should we not also talk about suicide attempts? We talk about mental ill health and it is applied to boys. Yet in Australia more girls than boys—at almost a rate of two to one—are admitted to children and women's hospitals with mental health problems. I would have thought that that would have been a concern.

Ms Ciccarelli—It is a concern. Part of the response of the CSPA was a concern that any attempt to address what are perceived as the needs of boys in education is not done in some way as a counterbalancing or a countervailing of what is needed for girls in schools.

ACTING CHAIR—We totally agree with that.

Ms Ciccarelli—I understand that.

ACTING CHAIR—I think girls have been dudded as well because, if you only construct half of the debate in education, then boys and girls lose.

Ms Ciccarelli—The association would agree with that, and I think that would also be reinforced by the sort of comments that we have tried to make here. One of the things that we see as unhelpful is a move to sort of template solutions—a template of structure in schools, a template of curriculum, a template of approved pedagogy—which everybody then scuttles around to apply and to fit into.

ACTING CHAIR—That is what is happening now, isn't it?

Ms Ciccarelli—And I am flagging that the association is not comfortable with that sort of activity.

ACTING CHAIR—What do you think you will do about it?

Mr White—I suppose it comes back to our original meeting where the question was raised: why is this an inquiry into the education of boys? Was it because it was the flavour of the month?

ACTING CHAIR—No. If I can give you the reason from our perspective: it was chosen by Dr David Kemp, the minister; we as a committee did not choose it. He may have had an agenda in all that, but we do not know that. But I think I am correct in saying that at the first public hearing when the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs presented evidence to use, one of the comments that stuck in all of our heads—and they were referring to Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales—was that if you compared the attainment levels of boys and girls in 1980 with what they are now, there was a variation. In 1980 the variation was less than one per cent, which you would expect because girls and boys are intrinsically equally as intelligent, so why wouldn't they be doing the same. Now the variation is up to 20 percentage points. It is different in South Australia, but it is still there. And it is different again in Western Australia. That is also recorded in the United States, in Canada and in the United Kingdom. By the way, the United Kingdom have been doing something about it for seven years now, unlike any of us. In New Zealand it is the same thing and it has also been happening in European countries.

So something has changed. Julia keeps asking the question, what has changed in the last 20 years such that, on a range of 40 indicators that some witnesses put to us, 34 of those indicators favoured girls—some dramatically so. That should not be the case. Either you are measuring the wrong thing or something has gone wrong somewhere. And I think that is the purpose, as we see it—this is not a Labor or a Liberal or a National Party thing, this is how the committee would see this inquiry going. The committee has had a history of being non-partisan in its 14 years of existence. It has only once ever brought down a minority report, and that was on share ownership—not on anything substantive like education or employment or training issues. Are there any other questions you would like to put to us, because we are running out of time?

Brother Wedd—I do not think we are in a position to come up with answers or solutions to a lot of the questions you are asking, but the questions being asked and talked about in schools are at least developing an awareness. It is very difficult for people in the workplace in the task of teaching to come up with answers on their own in an isolated sort of way because the demands on teachers are increasing all the time. That is part of the answer to the question you asked before. Teachers often work from day to day to address the immediate issues of those in front of them.

ACTING CHAIR—The evidence is that they are also ignoring everything about the gender equity framework and they are ignoring construction of gender. I am sure there are exceptions. We have not come across those yet but I am sure we will. None of the good schools, the successful schools that are doing well with the education of boys, talk about those sorts of issues.

Mr White—It goes back in more general terms to a curriculum that is assessment driven, a curriculum that is determined by—as I said in my opening remarks—an age that is past. I think they are some of the issues that need to be addressed alongside this particular issue. An assessment driven curriculum—given the nature of what the last people said, and I will not go back because I agree with what they say—has favoured girls in their responses to those assessment items. That push in the last 20 years—which gets back to Julia's question—has been a massive shift and has favoured, whether it was meant to or not, the education of girls.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not think any of us believe in the conspiracy theory—I think it is something that happened.

Mr White—It did—exactly—and it evolved.

ACTING CHAIR—You cannot deal with only half the debate—and it is not a matter of girls and boys. I think girls lose out by dealing with only half the—

Ms Ciccarelli—Absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—They miss out too.

Mr White—Exactly. When you go into the competencies, you can keep going on forever.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed.

Mr White—Thank you very much for your time.

[4.07 p.m.]

BEDNALL, Mr John McDonnell, Headmaster, Wesley College

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Would you care to make a few opening remarks?

Mr Bednall—If you do not mind, I would like to share with you something of my background so that you might understand why the issue of boys is of a particular professional interest to me. It has in fact been a substantial part of my professional growth for some 10 years now.

I first became alerted to what I considered to be a concern about boys in traditional schooling paradigms when I was deputy head of a co-ed school. I guess my continued research writing and practice gives me some basis to claim that I have done work internationally on boys' education. I was invited to be part of a committee of inquiry which the United States Department of Education set up to examine the feasibility of single-sex schooling in the public system of the United States, and I found that extremely illuminating. But the whole question of boys has been an issue for me as a school practitioner for some 10 years.

I have a written summary of my submission, which I am very happy to share now or to distribute later, but I am basically talking to that document. There are three major themes in my submission. The first is that I believe there is a very urgent need to focus upon what I call the connectedness of boys to school. The second theme is that there need to be some specific strategies to enhance learning outcomes for boys, and the third theme is that the most effective period of schooling in which that should occur is years 5 to 8. I want to make the point very strongly that a boy who is not academically and socially secure by year 8 will be at a greater degree of risk for the remainder of his schooling than perhaps a girl will be.

I am also very conscious that this committee has a huge scenario to take on board, quite apart from the enculturation and socialisation of boys outside of school and the dynamics of gender as they operate outside of school, and then to try to focus upon what specifically happens in schools. I hope I have been correct in my judgment, but my submission very much focuses upon what happens to them in schools. But, by the same token, I would like to comment that I am very aware that implicit in everything that I say about what happens to them in schools is driven by some of the enculturation forces that happens to them outside of schools.

I listened intently to the previous submission and two of the questions which you posed to the previous people. I think I might be able to attempt to answer some of those questions. It is always necessary in matters such as this to try to examine what has happened historically. I want to make the point that the 1987 national advisory committee on the education of girls was an undeniable need—there was no doubt that that had to occur. But I think there was a strategic error. I am not saying that that strategic error has been the cause of the current outcomes for boys in schools, but I think it did show a naivety about what actually happens to both boys and girls in schools. By its own admission, that committee focused upon outcomes. It tried to manipulate the outcomes in order to address inequities that clearly existed for girls. My concern, which I expressed in 1987, in that feminist period, was subject to a fair amount of criticism. My

concern was that, if it was necessary to ask why girls were not doing mathematics and science, it was also necessary to ask why boys were not doing literature, foreign languages and learning how to dance. In other words, the committee did not focus upon the socialisation processes that were causing the problem for girls because the same problems were being caused for boys. We have never fundamentally attacked that as an issue in society. I believe the time has come to start to attack it in what happens in schools. However, I want to stress that I am the first to refuse to want to talk in terms of boys fighting back—that is an absurdity.

ACTING CHAIR—Nor are we—we are not interested.

Mr Bednall—But I do want to put to the committee that it really was an extraordinary situation to be so interventionist in the schooling outcomes for girls, when we actually knew through research that boys presented quite inexplicable examples of education and social dysfunction far in excess of the rates of girls. We knew that before we even started the 1987 program. I disagree that there is no research—there is; there are buckets of research about what happened.

ACTING CHAIR—I am not arguing about that—there are buckets of qualitative research. What I am arguing is that is not a great deal of quantitative research that supports the introduction of a gender equity framework into schools; in fact, there is none. No-one has been able to point to one. If you can I will be delighted.

Mr Bednall—I would agree in terms of the qualitative data. But some of it has been driven by mythologies that have been in our society for years. I also do not want to get into discussions about what is best—single sex or coeducational. That is a meaningless argument. I have heard people pontificate that single sex is best for girls and coeducational is best for boys, but when you point out to them that that is actually impossible to achieve—

ACTING CHAIR—Can you point us to some quantitative research?

Mr Bednall—In terms of the gender equity framework, no I cannot because it is based upon the mythology of society—for example, when one talks about schools being part of the real world. Schools are not part of the real world; they are thoroughly contrived institutions. It is where adults intervene in the lives of children in order to produce certain outcomes. If you wanted to argue, as we used to, that coeducational was more natural or was part of the real world, I would say that that is not what is actually happening the real world; it is not a coeducational world. There are gross examples of dysfunction for women where men are in positions of power and so forth. If the bulk of the population has been schooled in coeducational schools, you have to ask the question as to whether in fact the paradigm of schooling itself for both boys and girls needs to be challenged. You have to start to ask whether there is a corresponding and equal imperative upon coeducational schools.

ACTING CHAIR—For you is that the more important question?

Mr Bednall—The more important question for me is not whether a school is coeducation or single sex but whether the school understands how gender constructs and gender socialisation are occurring in it because of its gender status and whether it has specific strategies in place to tackle the nature of its gender status.

Good co-ed schools have specific structures and strategies in place to educate girls well and to educate boys well. I am prepared to say, as head of a single sex school, that it is a great deal easier when you have only one sex to deal with. There is a sharp focus in single sex schooling, and, having been deputy head of a co-ed school, I will not get into this discussion about whether single sex or co-ed is better. It is to do with whether the school actually understands how gender is operating and whether it has strategies in place which will tackle—

ACTING CHAIR—Is there another question in that? Before the Karmel report in the mid-seventies, where they basically recommended the abolishment of technical high schools—and if you look through the little dot points in Karmel you will find that one of the real reasons for that was that technical schools were increasingly getting a bigger share of the education budget—there were lots of complaints from academic high schools, who were often not succeeding in attracting enrolments, and the technical schools were more attractive. They were also gaining a lot of the academic prizes in Australia. They were coming from a school that was basically a VET school, but they were also specialising in a whole range of other subjects.

In the UK at the moment, Tony Blair and two education ministers are giving the concept of comprehensive education a real going over. Is the more important question that parents had a choice, particularly in public education? They had boys schools, girls schools, selective high schools, selective boys and girls and co-ed, and selective technical schools. There was a range from which parents had a choice. So is the question more of choice?

Mr Bednall—No, I do not think it is. We obviously read the report very carefully, and I do not think, in Carmel's comments in that report, there were gender considerations influencing his thinking.

ACTING CHAIR—No, what I am talking about is that he changed the construct of having a variety of different sorts of schools, structured differently and even run by different parts of the department, into one.

Mr Bednall—Yes, but I would be saying that no matter what the diversity of the schooling system is, no matter what the differences of types of schools exist within that system, each school has an equal obligation to consider how gender is operating.

ACTING CHAIR—But that is not the question I am asking. I am saying in terms of parents and kids—not in terms of you—. I have heard parents say, over and over again, that they want choice; they want different sorts of schools. They will argue for single-sex schools. They will argue for technical schools or enterprise high schools—I do not care what you call them. They are arguing for different sorts of structures in schools. What the department is giving them is one sort of school.

Mr Bednall—Obviously I support the whole concept of freedom of choice, but I see it as an issue of democratic equity, and therefore the capacity for parents to access the school of their choice is what I would be concerned to support. That brings in a whole set of imperatives that are not actually to do with the educational philosophy of individual schools; they are to do with how government supports, and how society validates, the capacity of parents to choose the school that they genuinely think is best for their child.

In terms of how I manage my own school, I am going through this all the time with parents. I say to them, 'You must seek out other schools, you must go and check the local government high school, you must go and check the local co-ed school, you must go and check'—horror of horrors—'Aquinas College,' which is about 100 metres away and we are going to beat them in Head of the River next weekend. I say, 'You must go and check these schools and you must be very clear that this school suits your aspirations for your child.' I do not think that is a gender issue. I think it is an issue of access, it is an issue of equity. But in terms of what individual schools are doing, each school has an absolute obligation to focus upon what I call connectedness, and for boys that is a crucial issue.

Before I say some more about that, I think we also have to change the language we use when we consider boys in schools. If you read the literature, if you read the social comment, you will repeatedly find—and I have done surveys of parents on this and it comes up all the time—that when teachers describe the social and learning habits of boys they apply negative descriptors. They are described as, relative to girls, immature, less motivated, disruptive and whatever else. I am saying that we have actually got to understand some of those behaviours and we have got to actually learn how to validate them, because they might be misunderstood strategies for succeeding in school.

Certainly in my school there is a very concentrated attempt to try to understand how some of these bulldogging behaviours actually are boys trying to learn, risk taking and trying to experiment and so forth. The reason I focus upon school connectedness is because there is work that has been done. The work that I use as the base for this is done by the National Adolescent Health Resource Centre of the University of Minnesota. They showed that boys are more likely to demonstrate what they called acting out behaviours, while disturbance in girls was more manifest by quietly disturbed behaviours. I think we all understand what they are getting at there. A proportion of both, incidentally, is represented across the genders. However, for both genders the most salient protective factor against acting out behaviours, for boys and for girls, was school connectedness. If acting out behaviours are more likely to be represented in boys, and if the most salient protective factor against those behaviours is school connectedness, then school connectedness for boys becomes of absolutely crucial importance. What is happening at the moment in schools is that we tend to think school connectedness for boys and school connectedness for girls are synonymous, whereas we need to understand that there is a need to actually put additional attention into it for boys. I hope that later that will emerge a bit more clearly for you.

ACTING CHAIR—John, didn't we know that from Aristotle's time and his writings?

Mr Bednall—No, because in a climate which talked about trying to achieve equitable outcomes, or sameness, if you like, for boys and girls—

ACTING CHAIR—No, I was not talking about boys and girls, because Aristotle was not concerned about girls at all. But he was concerned about the way in which boys were civilised and socialised.

Mr Bednall—Yes, indeed.

ACTING CHAIR—When you look at it, they had a very structured—

Mr Bednall—But what I am saying now is that you are quite right. If we have known this for so long, the time has come to actually get some specific strategies in place. That comes back to my point about specific strategies for boys and for girls in schools. I heard Bob White—I know him very well; he is a good friend—talking about experiments with single-sex classes in co-ed schools. My own wife is the principal of a co-ed school and she is running single-sex classes. They appear to be successful, but I have always wanted to add that the socialisation that is going on in that school is very powerful in the playground as well as in the classroom, and therefore what is going on in the playground has to be understood as well. In terms of whole school culture, I do want to make what I think is going to be a fairly controversial point about what has happened in government schools in particular in this country and what is increasingly happening in non-government schools, Catholic schools and independent schools, to do with protecting whole school cultures. I will get to that in a moment, if I may.

What I am saying is that I am not wanting to challenge the fundamental paradigm of institutional schooling, but I am saying that there do need to be some very carefully thought boy sensitive approaches to how we school boys. I also want to refer to work done by Professor Ken Rowe from the University of Melbourne—

ACTING CHAIR—He has spoken to us.

Mr Bednall—Yes. His work is incredibly important. I might be able to just venture into answering this question about what has happened. You ask what has happened and why the image isn't being translated. I think there are two reasons. My first reason is that we are not recognising that the context of learning which is happening in modern classrooms is driven by technology. Technology is changing the way students are being assessed as successful or unsuccessful in schools. Increasingly there is an emphasis being placed upon negotiation, upon research, upon verbal analysis and upon the written synthesis of hosts of information sites. We do know, through research, that they are particular learning styles which suit girls. Boys tackle the computer because they want to play games. They want concrete literal images from the computer. Therefore, what we have to do for boys is bring them up, in terms of their skills of synthesising information. If we are going to progressively and increasingly measure success in schools in terms of the capacity to synthesise information from the world of the Internet, if you like, or from technology, then we have to understand that boys are entering computers on a different level to girls and we have to bring up these skills in order to value them for what is undeniably an important skill, and that is the reasoning and the information processing that is part of what technology brings into learning cultures. I think that as a society, and I am constantly having to say this to parents, we are forgetting the impact that technology has on learning environments in schools now.

There is a variety of teaching styles. We are accommodating a variety of learning styles far more than we used to. We are not transmitting knowledge. Schools are no longer the cultural transmitters. We are the facilitators to teach kids to process the information, which they can access at home anyhow if they wanted to. But we are also now asking them increasingly—and we will go on doing this as on-line learning continues to increase—to synthesise the information, to reason verbally and express those verbal reasons in writing, to cooperate, share and challenge each other, to sit down and collaborate with each other, look at common problems and so forth. These are all what modern employers are saying are what is important in school

leavers, but they are learning styles that we know from research are more likely to be represented in girls. So we have to try to increase the boys' skills there.

The second concern I have and this is where I skipped a bit, but I am on this path now—is that whole school cultures in this country, and it is true around the world, have declined in emphasis. Frankly, I think the teaching profession and the teacher union movement have got to shift the emphasis of their concerns about qualities and conditions of service for teachers around from classroom items such as classroom sizes and so forth, and focus upon the development of whole school cultures. It was in whole school cultures that so much of the engagement of boys was found. If you had a vibrance in a school sporting program, a vibrant performing arts program, a vibrant clubs and societies program—a whole range of different experiences and opportunities for both boys and girls—it was in those very areas that boys were more likely to be engaged. We know the importance of sport in the lives of most boys; that has been researched as well. We also know that a lot of boys would kill to be involved in performing arts and so forth. But we have lost that sense of the whole school culture providing that. I think the decline in the management and support of whole school cultures, as distinct from classroom cultures, in Australian schools has had a devastating impact upon boys in ways that we did not understand but now do. When they go to school, they are only there to sit in a classroom. If they are going to a school because of the life experience or life opportunities that it is providing them, they are more likely to engage.

ACTING CHAIR—We want to leave some time for questioning too, John.

Mr Bednall—Sure. I am a practitioner, I am not a researcher, but I do believe my practice is based upon research because I read the research. I would like to identify six themes in this paper which I believe will lead to a more boy sensitive schooling world. The first one, which has been referred to again and again, and you have probably had it ad nauseam, is the modelling of older males, the importance of the role models of older males. That includes not just the male staff but the senior boys as well.

The second is this business of whole school culture. It is important to provide school environments where boys who have aspirations in the performing arts program as well as in the sports program, in the debating society as well as the science clubs and so forth can get that breadth of experience in schools. I would certainly be suggesting that to not see the performing arts as a budgeting priority in schools is going to work against boys far more than it might even with girls.

My third theme is to enable boys to feel confident that it is legitimate for them to strive for power, that it is something that they can legitimately seek to achieve. However, they do not have exclusive rights to it. If they are going to exercise power, they have to learn how to do it ethically, but they have to be given the opportunity to exercise that power.

My fourth theme is that we have to provide mechanisms in schools where boys feel accountable to each other for the health of the student culture and do not feel just accountable to the official precepts of the school. In fact, we should be creating peer cultures that are just as intimidating to individual boys in terms of their accountability to each other as perhaps the official precepts of the school are concerned. In my school we have boys sitting on the college council, we have boys making disciplinary decisions—we have boys exercising a whole series

of decisions associated with how the school operates. Part of that is to make them understand their responsibility to each other. I say with some emphasis here that boys who are held by each other to be accountable to each other are boys who learn the wisdom of caring for each other.

Then I talk about this question of what I call the romance of tradition. I make in bold type here my point that school spirit is not romantic symbolism, it actually is an important capacity for boys to get hooked on.

Then I talk—and this is the most complicated one, and I do not have time to pursue it but it is currently a major professional interest for me—about teaching boys how to be bilingual in matters of gender, to understand how to deal with women, how to broker with women. I often say it is not important for me in a boys school to have a female head of mathematics but it is important for me to have a female in a position of power because boys have to learn to negotiate with that power. They have to learn female power brokerage. I quote as the research basis for this theory the work done by Deborah Tannen, who talks about males and females and their asymmetrical communication with each other and so forth. It is very complicated to relate here, but perhaps as you are sitting in the Qantas Club you can read it. I do have nine recommendations which I would like to put very quickly.

ACTING CHAIR—As long as they are quick, because we are now down to eight minutes.

Mr Bednall—Any strategies to improve learning outcomes for boys should focus upon years 5 to 8. We know that, if they are not right by the end of year 8, they will not be right for the rest of their schooling. The national middle schools project has done the work. From their graph, it is really that plateau point that we should really focus on. I certainly agree that incentives for young males to become teachers in the middle years of schooling is important. I talk in my paper of Michael Gurian's theory of male nurture—of how boys must be exposed to the male nurture culture as well as the female nurture. I think we do need to do some more work. My third recommendation is that teacher training programs identify gender base learning style preferences. My fourth recommendation is that schools be encouraged to explore how boys can be placed in positions of meaningful leadership of other boys so that they learn the solicitude that can be found in caring and support for each other. My fifth recommendation is that disciplinary protocols in schools show much greater emphasis on the accountability boys have to each other. My sixth recommendation is that incentives be provided to the teaching profession to design whole skill cultures which provide more opportunities for engaging by boys. My seventh recommendation is that industrial awards for teachers reflect the work of teachers outside the classroom. My eighth recommendation is that more research occur into adolescent sexuality and the relationship it has to boys' perception of power brokerage and the programs which demonstrate to boys that gender stereotyping is essentially a values issue. It is an ethical issue and needs to be explored as such.

If you talk about a lack of research, there is very little research which actually asks why males are predominantly the rapist, why males are predominantly the child offenders, why 99 per cent of the prison population is male. We understand—because that is researched—the very strong sexual drive that adolescent boys have, but we give them no framework in which to work out the relationship between that drive and power, and that to me is one of the major problems that we have got to confront. My final recommendation is that teacher training improve the ability of early learning teachers to recognise development delays in boys. I do not think we are very

good at that at the moment. We see the outcomes at the end of year 5 or year 6, but we do not see the signs in kindergarten, year 1 or year 2. I have spoken at some length, but this is not a topic that you can dismiss in 10 minutes. So I have taken the liberty of writing it down and my recommendations. I hope it proves useful to you.

ACTING CHAIR—We thank you for that. I have one quick question. You said 'verbal analysis and written synthesis'—you used that concept. Professor Madison Curry is the Professor of Philosophy at Oxford and his views were in the *Spectator* a couple of weeks ago—six weeks ago, I think. He did not agree with you at all. He said boys are far superior with verbal and written analysis and girls are far superior in written and verbal synthesis. That is not what you said, is it? You said, 'Girls are superior at verbal analysis'. I am just saying he said the opposite. I do not want to go into examples, but he said exactly the opposite.

Mr Bednall—He is a professor of philosophy and I am an educator. I see the assessment outcomes and I explore TE results—

ACTING CHAIR—I am an educator too.

Mr Bednall—the results in the *Financial Times* index and the work of the Institute of Public Policy and Management of the University of Melbourne, which demonstrates conclusively that, where a relationship exists between learner and teacher in the assessment model, the girls will do better. When there is an objective, not a relationship, and the boys are relying upon spatial literal interpretations they will do better.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there any questions?

Ms GILLARD—You are saying that the new technology, in particular the advent of the Internet as a research tool, suits girls.

Mr Bednall—No, what I am saying is that, increasingly, it is the method of assessment in schools. Increasingly, skills in the processing of information will influence assessment outcomes. I am not saying necessarily that girls are better at it, but I am saying girls empathise with it far better than boys. Boys go into the computer looking for literals and they repeat literals—they cut and paste the literals.

ACTING CHAIR—That is true.

Mr Bednall—Girls will find another information site and bring them together in a final analysis.

ACTING CHAIR—But that is not analysis; that is synthesis. When you grab the parts and put them into a whole, that is synthesis. When you look at the whole and identify the elements, that is analysis.

Mr Bednall—You have got to understand one before you finish with the other. I guess the analysis occurs before the synthesis.

ACTING CHAIR—Have a look at the Australian media. Who does analysis in the Australian media? Zero. Ross Gittins is back from hospital. He is the only one who does it. No other writer in Australia, in the national media, does analysis. They all do synthesis. There are a lot of male writers in all of that. Are there any other questions? We are really running out of time?

Mr WILKIE—You have talked about the importance of strong male role models for boys. How do you involve other strong male role models?

Mr Bednall—This is one of the things that leads me to comment on this. We talk about the need to attract males into the teaching profession. I ask you to recognise that it is illegal for me to advertise for males. I cannot place an advertisement in the paper seeking a male teacher.

ACTING CHAIR—I think you should try, and see what happens.

Mr Bednall—In Tasmania I threatened to do it and was told I would be prosecuted.

Mr BARRESI—You are a wise man.

Mr Bednall—The issue of getting males is crucial. It is not about getting them into power positions—I am not talking about the strength of male role models but of nurturing. There is no question that we have to put more males into positions of nurture in schools. When you say there are ways around it, I am telling you now that I get 150 applications for early primary teaching every time I advertise, and I go straight to the males, not because I particularly want males but because I want the balance. If there are two year 2 classes, I want a male for one class and a female for the other, and I want them to integrate with each other. In answer to your question, Kim, this is where we have very real programs and very real imperatives upon our older boys. We put our older boys into teaching positions with younger boys.

Mr WILKIE—Do you involve fathers?

Mr Bednall—Yes. We have a fathers group, and we have a mothers group. There is a father-son dinner that we are about to run and it seems to have good acceptance amongst the parent body.

Mr WILKIE—What would you describe as a good teacher? What qualities do you look for?

Mr Bednall—The first and most obvious thing is a genuine love of children and the willingness to spend their time in the company of children. In a boys only school, if I am employing a male I am looking for somebody who presents the best male language to boys in terms of life experience, social attitudes and values, and so forth. In terms of females, I am looking for teachers who respect boys and do not emasculate them. It has been a bit of a problem with female teachers when they feel they are in some sort of contest and have to win over these hardy toxic boys. I look for female teachers who respect boys and love boys for what they are. Secondly, I look for a teacher who knows their subject matter, is able to show a rich experience in their subject area and therefore has a good basis of learning styles and respects the variety of learning styles that will come at them from any one particular classroom. That, for

boys, has been a big issue. We have only just learnt that you cannot teach a class of 20 kids in one way. You have to find 20 learning styles and deal with them.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much for your very forthright views. We look forward to reading your submission in detail. As a concluding remark, I agree with your comments about class size. If the teachers unions went back and looked at their own history, they would find that the economic situation of the day and the minister of the day were responsible for reducing class size. It was not the teachers union.

Mr Bednall—I am not critical of reducing class sizes—

ACTING CHAIR—No, but that happened in the economics of the time.

Mr Bednall—If the teachers union movement was to become militant, they should have been militant about whole school cultures and they should have adequately valued the work that teachers did in the whole school, quite apart from what they did in the classrooms.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed.

[4.40 p.m.]

HARROLD, Mr Phillip, Policy and Research Officer, WA Council of State School Organisations

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement before we open it up for questions?

Mr Harrold—Yes, I will just make a brief one. Firstly, I would like to apologise for the absence of our president, Shelley Norrish who—because of the nature of being in a volunteer organisation and also coming from the country—was unable to make it down this afternoon, although she did very much want to.

I wanted to explain a bit about our organisation so you know which perspective we are coming from. The WA Council of State School Organisations represents P&C associations in government schools. We represent 630 of them, which is about 90 per cent of all P&C associations in government schools. The submission which we have put forward to this inquiry was actually debated and endorsed by our state council, which consists of people from all over the state who come together to represent the opinions of parents and citizens in government schools. It also reflects the policy of the organisation. Our policy is determined by our annual conference, where people from P&C associations, grassroots organisations, come together once a year to debate where they see the government school system being, where they see it going in the future, and what their concerns are.

I bring that point up initially because I think there are a few issues. One is that boys education is not one of the priority areas which gets debated year in and year out at our conference by parents who come from P&C associations. I will tell you what the top five are, just so that you are aware. Fees and charges in government schools is the number one issue which people think about. Class size is the second issue, and it was interesting to note the discussion you had before about class sizes. I would like to go into that more. The third is maintenance of schools and the structure of school buildings, in terms of the classrooms, the schools and the facilities. The fourth issue is the safety of kids at school and on their way to school, and the fifth issue is literacy. Those are the top five issues. Although we have a policy, and it has been debated by our organisation, it is not one of the issues which is burning parents and citizens in government schools. I can tell you that for a start.

We absolutely agree that there are problems with boys suffering disadvantage in schools. We are not trying to hide from that at all. As our submission states, we believe that there are three factors that can judge educational disadvantage. The first is the denial of access to educational opportunity—obviously, if you are not there you are disadvantaged. The second is those who leave school early, despite having satisfactory performance, and the third is those who are prevented from achieving their absolute potential as a result of social or environmental factors. We believe that as well. It is clear, using those factors, that some groups of boys are disadvantaged. I think that is the key point. We say some groups of boys are disadvantaged as a result of their gender and other groups of boys may be disadvantaged as a result of a number of other things: class, race, sexual orientation and rurality—which is a word people use a lot; I do

not think it is a word, but people use it a lot. So their living location is the thing that really does affect people's opportunities and their disadvantage.

We say in our submission that one of the major problems in relation to the education of boys is societal expectations of boys, that is, the expectations that people have of them in terms of their performance at school, their subject choices and after school outcomes—where they are going to go when they leave school. Because of a lot of societal expectations that class things such as English and the humanities as effeminate, and violent and aggressive behaviour as masculine, we believe that that has an ability to push people in certain directions rather than open out opportunities for them to achieve the things that they want to.

In terms of addressing these problems we see that the problems are obviously quite complex. They do not necessarily rely on just simple strategies that deal with one issue. We certainly believe that gender is not an overriding issue that affects the outcomes that can be achieved by boys in school. You have to look at a whole range of issues to totally address that problem. When I was listening to the department give their evidence you talked about gender outcomes rather than gender equity—

ACTING CHAIR—One of the principals who was a witness to our inquiry in Adelaide preferred to use the term 'gender outcomes' and we would not have such a silly debate.

Mr Harrold—Rather than gender equity?

ACTING CHAIR—No. He was saying gender outcomes. We should be looking at the outcomes of girls and boys and then we would get further down the track of helping both girls and boys rather than looking at the term 'gender equity'. He questioned the term 'gender equity'.

Mr Harrold—I suppose the point that I was asking is the same one that you brought up. Is that in difference to inputs? If that is the case, then that is what we totally agree in.

ACTING CHAIR—You agree?

Mr Harrold—I am not sure if I am clarifying it properly, but if what you are thinking is making sure that the outcomes for people of both genders are equitable, or that across the board both genders are able to achieve the same outcomes, then we agree. I do not believe that you can say gender equity is about inputs because the education system is not necessarily about inputs, it is about achieving outcomes across the board.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not think the concept was saying outcomes. It was that girls and boys would reach their potential as far as outcomes were concerned.

Mr Harrold—Okay, cool.

ACTING CHAIR—They might be different outcomes.

Mr Harrold—For sure, absolutely. That is a fundamental belief of ours. Certainly, in terms of when we look at it, we see one of the biggest solutions to this problem is in terms of class sizes in school. The more you look to going towards an outcomes based approach to education, the more I believe that you cannot say that class size is not appropriate. Recently we have listened to quite an interesting visiting professor from America who has come to Australia as an expert on class sizes. Certainly his research was American, but he has had some very interesting things to say about the ability of class sizes to actually deal with a whole range of issues. When you are talking—as you have this afternoon—about looking at individualised programs of learning, I do not believe you can do that without having a serious look at class sizes so that teachers are able to address the individual concerns of students. That is a brief summary of our position. I am quite happy to take questions.

Ms GILLARD—Thank you for your submission. One of the problems with this inquiry, as the discussion happens over the table, is that we do start to use shorthand 'boys' and 'girls'. I think it does in some ways set up the wrong dynamic. As your submission says, and as you have said today, it is really in some sense about some groups of boys. There is no doubt that there are some groups of boys who are going very well indeed and some groups of girls that are going well indeed and other groups of boys and girls who are struggling. We need to keep that in our minds. One of the things I have been asking people is the 20-year question.

ACTING CHAIR—Have you practised two or three answers to this?

Mr Harrold—No, I have not.

Ms GILLARD—I am going to have it engraved on my headstone at this rate.

Mr Harrold—The educational outcomes of boys is not decreasing. The evidence that was promoted from the department—the Monitoring Standards in Education which we believe is actually quite a good analysis of measuring people's educational outcomes as opposed to what we would say are some more simplistic testing measures that have been used—

Ms GILLARD—So in absolute terms it is not decreasing.

Mr Harrold—I agree. The difference is the problem. The difference is that some people are increasing at a greater rate. If you break it down in terms of gender, girls are increasing at a greater rate than boys. If you break it down in terms of socioeconomic status as well, rich kids are increasing at a greater rate than poor kids. People who go to well-off schools with better facilities and have smaller class sizes and are able to do educational excursions are increasing at a greater rate than those who do not have access to those facilities as well. I agree, but the point is that you need to lower that gap between outcomes. What is the difference between now and 20 years ago? I do not know.

ACTING CHAIR—You probably were not here.

Mr Harrold—I do not think that the education departments of the country can answer that question, and I am certainly not going to attempt to.

Ms GILLARD—I agree with you that gender is not the only factor that explains difference in education attainment. There is socioeconomic status, remoteness, Aboriginality and all of those things.

Mr Harrold—Especially in a state like Western Australia.

Ms GILLARD—Yes, absolutely.

Mr Harrold—You talked before about choice and how parents want choice and a large number of outcomes. You can talk all you want about choice but there is no choice. Your choice is that you go to the local school in your town, or you send them away to boarding school. If you cannot afford to send them away to boarding school, there is no choice. Your choice is limited absolutely. I think people fail to recognise that. Sure, if you live in the city and are prepared to catch trains then you can have a choice. You can look at schools that have a focus on theatre, arts and performance, or you can go to a school that has a focus on language. If you live in Kununurra, you have no choice.

Ms GILLARD—I accept that. I am agreeing with you that there are other things that explain difference, and remoteness is certainly one of them. We have even had data where controlling for those factors and controlling, for example, for socioeconomic status you get a difference between boys' and girls' attainment, with the boys under the girls. You would just say, reasoning from first principles, that if merit is equally distributed between sexes, and I hope around this table that we would agree that it is, if you see a differential outcome like that then it requires explanation.

Mr Harrold—A question I often like to know is that, when people leave school, who is still more advantaged in the post-school environment?

Ms GILLARD—It is men, absolutely.

Mr Harrold—I think it is a bit of a furphy to talk about—

Mr BARRESI—I think it is an irrelevant argument.

Mr Harrold—I do not.

Mr BARRESI—I think it is totally irrelevant. I have heard this being said before. What happens after school is a separate problem that needs to be discussed, but you do not say that, because you are going to have a much better chance of getting a job outside school, it is okay what is happening within the school years. The equity argument still needs to be handled, in terms of what is happening in the school grounds. One does not justify the other. I have heard some witnesses try to dismiss it in that way by saying that the boy is going to get a job anyway.

Mr Harrold—That is not my argument. I argue that education is a life-long process. If you just say that school education stops at year 12 and you do not look at the idea that education keeps going on, if you just dismiss what happens after the school environment and you do not look at the whole gamut of your life experience, then I think that you are not taking into account the full scope of what you are trying to do with an education system.

ACTING CHAIR—The South Australian Schools Association have a very different view to what you just said.

Mr Harrold—We have a very different view from what the South Australian Schools Association has. I do not agree with the position that SASO holds.

Mr BARRESI—The South Australian Schools Association said that striving for equity is fine so long as it is understood that the objective is equal outcomes rather than equal treatments.

Mr Harrold—Yes, I agree with that view, but there is a whole heap of other things that Graeden Horsell said and I have very little things in common with them. Certainly our policy in relation to boys' education is very different to that of SASO, and I am quite happy to admit that. We absolutely agree with putting in place programs that deal with and attempt to address educational disadvantage of groups of students. That means not necessarily that you will have the same programs in place for schools for every single student or every single group of students. The idea is to get everyone towards a level of achievement. The idea of the state education system is to provide an ability for every single student, at no matter what level, to reach and realise their potential. I think it is an absolute furphy of people to say that that can be done by having one system of education. You need to have an ability to have programs that target different groups of people, whether or not they are boys, whether or not they are girls, whether or not they are Aboriginal students, whether or not they are kids with disabilities. The idea is to get everyone to have the opportunity to reach their potential.

Ms GILLARD—Does your association have a view on where the disengagement seems to happen with schooling? Right from when we met with Peter Hill from Melbourne University, who has done research to show that in educational attainment terms for both boys and girls they are sort of going up the curve in primary school, hit late primary early secondary, flatten out or even go down in terms of attainment levels and levels of engagement with school, and that that drop-off happens for girls as well as boys but it happens in a much more pronounced fashion for boys. If they are fundamentally disengaged at years 8, 9 and 10, the likelihood of bouncing back successfully at years 11 and 12 is going to get fairly remote for some kids, though other kids might be able to do it. Does your association have a view about those middle years of schooling, about whether there should be separate middle year schools or separate programs? We have seen a school this morning that focuses on the middle years, and I think there is an interesting sort of educational structure question there.

Mr Harrold—Yes, very much so. Certainly lots of our members come back to us and say, 'These are really the disruptive years of school. What are we going to do with them?' For many years the policy of our organisation was to see what we could do and look at those years. We have been quite supportive of the department's response in terms of looking towards middle schooling, whether or not that is at a separate site or whether it is changing school sites so that you have a place that focuses on middle years. We think that is an excellent step forward in terms of looking at the problems that those people suffer. Yes, you are right, it is more pronounced in boys. We have been very supportive of moves in that way. I bring class sizes up again, but I think it is not only class sizes, but one of the things about middle schooling is not moving classes around so much—having one teacher that stays with a class. I think that just reinforces our argument about class sizes, because one teacher that stays with a class so much has more of an opportunity to know the educational needs of the children, in the same manner

that one teacher with less students has more of an opportunity to know the educational needs of individual children and address them and develop the educational program towards them. So we see it as in the same kind of ballpark and a good way of being able to look at groups of people and make sure we address them specifically.

Ms GILLARD—Some of the discussion we have had through the inquiry has been about the feminisation of teaching, and it has been put to us that particularly in primary schools and early primary there is an absence now of male role models and it would be good to encourage more men to go into teaching, particularly into those age ranges. We have also had anecdotally the other view presented, which is that,whilst people intellectually say, yes, male role models in junior primary be terrific, some parents are concerned about the proximity between male teachers and their kids because of all of the publicised issues about sexual abuse of children and the like. Has your association tried to deal with any of those issues or think that through? It seems to me there is a real conundrum there that is pretty hard to resolve.

Mr Harrold—Without a doubt we have two kind of camps within our membership, and you have explained them quite significantly. The smaller of the two is the one that believes that you do not want males near young kids. It is a concern to them, but it is outweighed by the thought of putting in place processes that would stop that happening as opposed to not having them there at all. It is certainly our position that there should be more men in teaching, but it is not because we think that male teachers provide better teaching to boys. Our position is that you need to have a variety of role models in your school. Whether or not they directly teach your class or they are just in the school and they are around and they do different things, the idea is that you need to have a whole heap of them. Boys and girls, in the socialisation process, obviously need to judge themselves against different people. We do not believe that that is restricted to school. We believe that you need to have a variety of male role models in the home. We totally believe that the child's education is a partnership between the home and the family. As we have mentioned in our submission, it is not just about providing those male role models at school, it is about having them in the home environment and the social environment as well.

To answer your question, as an organisation our position is that you need to put in place strict measures to allay the concern of parents about possible inappropriate behaviour between male teachers and children and we need to encourage a broad spectrum of male role models within the school environment. That is not because we believe that men are able to teach boys better.

ACTING CHAIR—I will just follow on from what Julia said. You said that WACSSO rejects the idea that the school curriculum has been feminised. Were you here when the education department gave evidence?

Mr Harrold—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—You would have heard Jocelyn Cook say that it has been. There is a greater emphasis on collaborative learning which is more suitable for girls and that there is a lesser emphasis on directed learning over the last 20 years. You would not agree with that?

Mr Harrold—I agree that that is the case, but I do not believe that that is as a result of the feminisation of the school curriculum. As your last speaker said, those are the skills that are

necessary in society and those are the skills that are increasingly needed for people to get on in the post-school environment.

ACTING CHAIR—I do not debate that. You would have been here when I put the point that only 50 per cent of the arguments are being put up in the current debate on the education of girls and boys. We talk about this gender equity framework that has been introduced into this country. After the introduction in the United States, it has followed in New Zealand and Canada, but not in the United Kingdom. Yet there is no empirical or quantitative research to back it up. Isn't that remarkable?

Mr Harrold—I am not here defending the gender equity framework.

ACTING CHAIR—No, but what is your organisation's view of that?

Mr Harrold—We believe that students need to be taught skills and leave school with appropriate skills in order to develop their—

ACTING CHAIR—But you are talking about the gender equity strategy. You are acknowledging that gender is a social construct. Where did those views come from if they did not come from that framework?

Mr Harrold—That framework is not the only document that has ever thought that gender is a social construct. I think that the development of gender as a social construct is an opinion held much more broadly than by the one evidential publication.

ACTING CHAIR—I think the previous witness raised this as well. We are very good at raising negative views about girls, boys and anyone in particular, but we are not so good at acknowledging the positive views. I do not find any reference to any positive behaviours of boys in the submission. Have I missed something? We talk about aggression, we talk about repression, we talk about conflict and we talk about violence.

Mr Harrold—My understanding is that the inquiry was about the problems of boys—about boys' education and addressing—

ACTING CHAIR—It is also about balance.

Mr Harrold—We are not here writing a submission about all the good things about kids. If you want to see our policy on how excellent kids are in education, boys and girls, we will give you a whole heap of information, but we are addressing the points that the inquiry was into, and that is looking at the education of boys, particularly the literacy level—we have not talked about that but I am happy to talk about it—and making sure that outcomes for both boys and girls are increased. Unless this education system and our governments are really committed to making sure that outcomes for all children are improved, I do not know what we are doing here. We have some really good solutions to that. There should be more money put into public education so you can reduce class sizes so those teachers can look at the individual concerns of students and increase their educational opportunities. People are talking about programs that deal with the minutiae; we are talking about making sure that every single student is able to achieve their outcomes and to maximise their potential. The public education system teaches 70 per cent of

students in Western Australia, so that is where we think the focus should be. Every single one of those students, it does not matter where they live or what their gender is, whether or not they have a disability, should be able to achieve their outcomes and to maximise their potential.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you think the education of boys or the failure to educate boys successfully is part of—

Mr Harrold—I do not think there is a failure to educate boys successfully.

ACTING CHAIR—Let me finish the question first. Do you think that is part of the drift from public to private education, which has been highly significant in the last 10 years? You certainly cannot deny that.

Mr Harrold—No, not at all.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that a part of it?

Mr Harrold—I think that parents think that they will get better opportunities—and I do not believe that that is backed up by the facts—for their kids by sending them to a private school.

ACTING CHAIR—Nor is the gender equity framework backed up by the facts. This is totally based on qualitative research and is not based on any empirical information.

Mr Harrold—I am not here defending gender equity frameworks.

ACTING CHAIR—But you are promoting the intent of that framework.

Mr Harrold—That gender is a social construct; absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—Everybody agrees with that.

Mr Harrold—What is your opinion? How do you think gender is developed?

ACTING CHAIR—I think there are differences. I can give you the differences if you want. I will list them for you. I listed them before.

Ms GILLARD—It is a debate without an answer, because we will never know whether there is a social constant involved.

Mr Harrold—We could talk about socialisation versus—

ACTING CHAIR—Why talk about it? Shouldn't we be talking about outcomes?

Mr Harrold—Because neither one of us is necessarily correct. We could say that gender is wholly socially constructed or we could say that it is innate.

ACTING CHAIR—Then why bother to talk about it?

Mr Harrold—Because you are saying that it is innate and I am saying it is socially constructed.

ACTING CHAIR—No. I am responding to your submission, and this is a significant part of your submission.

Mr Harrold—Okay, I will answer your question.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that correct or not?

Mr Harrold—Why bother talking about it? Because it affects the way in which kids learn. If the environment at the school is saying because of social construction that boys—

ACTING CHAIR—Let us come in on that. You say it affects the way kids learn.

Mr Harrold—No. If the environment of the school is such that boys believe that there are legitimate choices form them to make, that affects the education of boys. The same goes for girls. If they think there are some choices that are not legitimate choices for them to make as girls, that affects their education. They are not able to maximise their potential, and it does affect their outcomes.

ACTING CHAIR—Professor Faith Trent, who is in Perth today, is a professor of education. I will read part of the executive summary to you:

Several popularly held views that the problems start in the primary years, and that the issues are reducible to matters of gender difference, gender equity or literacy and numeracy, were not supported—

this was a study held by Malcolm Slade, a research fellow at Flinders University, with 1,800 boys across the Catholic, independent and government system, urban, rural and isolated areas—

as might have been expected from the literature, but are part of a complex response to decisions to remain at school. Issues about masculinity which often were important for teachers and academics did not feature at all, with occasionally some irritation being expressed by the boys about others defining "what they [the boys] ought to be.

In this inquiry, we have had the whole spectrum of views from the loopy right to the loopy left. Every education department that has submitted to us has put forward the orthodoxy—Western Australia less so, admittedly, but every other one has. Every teachers union put it forward. We have had two parents' organisations. You are putting one view and, as you would be well aware, Graeden Horsell is putting forward another view. In academia it is about fifty-fifty. The orthodox view—the current prevailing view—has been put forward, and one says that this is a whole lot of nonsense. All those views have been presented to us. We have to judge all that. We had Julia's question about what had changed over the last 20 years. We went to the schools and talked to the teachers, the principals and the kids. They never mentioned any of this at all.

Mr Harrold—I have heard this before. Just because we use different words it does not mean that—

ACTING CHAIR—They do not use those things. A successful program diagnoses the problem, gets a program to address those problems, monitors it regularly and measures the

differences. In all of the schools that we have been to—whether they be in poor areas or affluent areas, and whether they be high schools, primary, public or private—there is a consistent message coming through. They go back to what I would have thought was the most quantitative study in education, particularly in primary and middle education, in the world—the Inner London Education Authority's longitudinal study over seven or eight years, published in the *Times.* In the summation, and please forgive me if I get a word here or there wrong, it said:

The determinant of success or failure for boys and girls in education is most critical between the ages of seven and 11 ...

Which reinforces the view of the previous witness. It goes on:

It is the quality of the educational program ...

Which implicitly means the quality of the principal and the teachers—

... that is far more important than the issues of gender, race, religion, culture and socioeconomic status.

It basically goes on to explain that when teachers use those terms they are putting forward excuses for failure, and they are putting up the deficit model, which I thought we had killed off in this country 20 years ago—obviously we have not.

Mr BARRESI—Ken Rowe supports what you just said with his research.

ACTING CHAIR—And Ken Rowe supports that. He is the other person who has quantitative research.

Mr Harrold—I just fail to understand why you believe that this is so particularly different from our argument. Our argument is that groups of boys, groups of girls and groups of students have particular problems and they need to be addressed. We believe they should be addressed through high quality programs and well resourced teachers in small classrooms so that they can go towards the individual program that addresses boys. You say the educational program is somehow distinct from, or separated from, gender, race, socioeconomic status or any of those factors, where that clearly is not the case. I think that educational programs address those issues.

ACTING CHAIR—On that we can agree to disagree.

Mr Harrold—I do not see how you can say that you have an educational program and that is somehow divorced from the rest of the things that affect society.

ACTING CHAIR—There are main points, there are secondary and there are tertiary points.

Mr Harrold—I think there are also points that say—

ACTING CHAIR—We are talking about structure and you are not talking about structure. That is okay. We can agree to disagree.

Mr Harrold—The reason I am bit confused is that we agree that the idea is quality programs that address the concerns of the individual student in an environment in which that student is

able to learn properly and most effectively. That is what parents want. Parents want to see their kids achieve as much as possible. Unless the educational program—

ACTING CHAIR—With respect, you do not actually say that in your report. We can agree to agree on the final point.

Mr Harrold—I think we do.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed, and thank you for the forthright views you put forward and the way you did so with good humour.

Mr Harrold—No problem, any time.

[5.23 p.m.]

RODGERS, Ms Natasha, Psychologist-in-charge, Coolbellup Social Psychological Educational Resource Centre

MARLBOROUGH, Mrs Pauline Anne, Teacher, Coolbellup Social Psychological Educational Resource Centre

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an introductory statement before we open it up for questions?

Mrs Marlborough—I have made a few notes, so I will read from them. We come from the Coolbellup SPER Centre. It is a service to assist schools and students to manage moderate to severe behaviour problems. This can range from noncompliance, oppositional, aggressive, off-task, work refusal, selective mutism, soiling and a range of other behaviours. The students range from regular students to students with disabilities or special needs. Interestingly, children who demonstrate problematic behaviour do not qualify for special education assisted support time or money for that support time. It is also interesting that the majority of the children with problematic behaviour are boys.

This year, remembering that we are only seven weeks into our first term, we have had 36 children referred to us for moderate to severe behaviour problems. Of these, 34 are boys and two are girls. Can it be that so many boys have behaviour that is unacceptable in the classroom? If so, what is happening to the boys? Or do we have a mould of acceptable behaviour, based on the 'good little girls', that boys are expected to conform to? My worry is that with the push to have equality in academic and social areas, the physical and emotional gender difference has been discounted.

We work with some brilliant teachers. They are organised, they treat the children with respect, and they are happy in their work. If there is a problem, they ask for help. These people bring about change on the behaviour level. However, we also work with some very negative people and this impacts particularly on the boys, who become aggressive and noncompliant. They do not get stuck into their work, and there are problems in the playground. The girls have a different approach—they become quiet, we do not hear from them, and therefore they are not referred to us. We deal with these problems. We get a lot of boys referred because people see them as problems whereas the girls do not get referred because they are much quieter. My belief is that they still have the same problems.

ACTING CHAIR—That is what I was going to ask. You get more boys with problems than you do girls. What are the problems with girls that are not recognised?

Mrs Marlborough—The problem for girls is that, in some funny way still, the girls feel rather submissive in primary classrooms. Teachers do not see them as difficult because there are a lot more boys making a lot of noise. It is the old squeaky wheel. The boys are noncompliant, they speak out for themselves and in many ways they are threatening to teachers and to other students. Girls, because of their size, their femininity and things like that, are not as aggressive.

However, they probably are still not doing their work. They are much more subtle. I think the girls are getting away with things, so it is much harder to find the problem.

Ms Rodgers—When it comes to attention seeking behaviour, boys will very openly seek attention through aggression, noncompliance or whatever, whereas girls are a lot more subtle. They might seek attention by following the teacher around the classroom, wanting to get her attention that way, whereas a boy might just pick up something and throw it across the room. It is just the different ways that they go about doing that.

Mrs Marlborough—That is a gender difference we have to realise. In the academic and social areas, we want the boys and the girls on the same level. That goes through the school, into high school, into the workplace where women are now taking charge of corporate bodies and God knows what, and boys are feeling a bit left out.

On the physical and emotional side, it is quite a different story because physically there are things the boys can do that the girls cannot, and yet in schools we are starting to allow girls to play football. The girls can go and do trades. It is still not that acceptable for boys to go and do nursing, but they do it. If you look at nursing schools or occupational therapy—which is another one I checked on recently—I think there is one male to 20 girls in the class. I do not know about the other states, but regularly in Perth you can see girls as mechanics and on building sites and you see weeding women all over the place doing gardens. I think the boys are being left behind in our lack of understanding of their physical and emotional growth.

Ms GILLARD—Of the girls that are referred to your service, are they referred because they have boy style behaviours or are they referred for some other reason? I notice you said 20 males to one female. Was the one girl acting out in a boisterous sort of way?

Ms Rodgers—One girl is a school refuser. We had to actually get her to come to school.

Ms GILLARD—That is a family problem?

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, there are some family issues there. The other one has some acting out behaviour but there are medical issues as well. They are definitely different, but that is not to say that some girls who are referred do not exhibit the similar types of behaviours to the boys. They do but there are just more boys being referred because they are just different.

Ms GILLARD—When you get the boys, what strategies do you use to re-engage them with learning?

Ms Rodgers—It depends on the actual referral. We will go out and do observations of the child in the classroom and in the playground. We consult with the teacher and hold case conferences and get a whole profile of the student. We will then look at what we can do and what has already been tried and the success of that. We really need to tailor our behaviour change programs to cater for the specific needs of that student. What strategies we use with one boy the same age as another boy could be completely different.

Ms GILLARD—But they are kept in school?

Ms Rodgers—Yes, they are kept in school. We are an outreach program so we actually go in and provide support in the classroom for the teachers.

Ms GILLARD—In my electorate, which is a lower socioeconomic outer western suburb of Melbourne—on the ABS definition of disadvantage it would come up as a highly disadvantaged area—I have had primary schools suggest that behaviour management issues that they are required to deal with in primary schools now are so acute that they would be interested in alternate education being developed that primary school age kids could be referred to for short periods for treatment. We do have in the western suburbs of Melbourne alternate education settings for high school kids who are non-attenders and street kids, et cetera. To see those kinds of behaviour management issues move backward into primary school is a little bit of a shock. Do you think the range of these behaviours at primary school age is increasing and, if so, why?

Ms Rodgers—I think they are becoming more difficult to manage. The kids are exhibiting behaviour now that is really hard to manage and hard to change and it takes a lot of time. We have resources available where we can refer kids to a particular place in a hospital type setting but they still go to school. That is for the really hard-core kids. We try not to do that; we try to keep them in the classroom as much as possible and work with them at that level. If they do go to our referral agency outside there is always a transition program. We work very closely with that outside agency. We are still part of the process although they are out in a separate setting. We do refer them in that respect.

Mrs Marlborough—We have actually been a withdrawal unit. It was not as effective. We dealt with maybe 22 or 30 kids in a year. Last year we dealt with 90. You can see the difference in going into the classrooms. What is actually happening is that we are transferring our skills to the teachers. It is my belief, too, that the people who are training our teachers are not giving them enough behaviour management strategies. You need to be in a classroom first before you can learn because you have the theory but you cannot apply it until you have had a class. What we are finding is that a lot of people are good teachers but they have never been exposed to the types of strategies that we use. This is particular so in relation to boys because people have an image of what boys are like. Before we ever hit a school we have people saying, 'This boy is doing this, that and the other.' We get there and he is a really nice kid. He just needs boundaries and needs some help. He needs to agree there is a problem and take on the responsibility. Boys do not do that without some help.

Ms GILLARD—You would say from your experience that training for teaching skills and methodologies for dealing with boys is not good enough or that teachers need more assistance in this area?

Mrs Marlborough—Yes. I also think that sometimes teachers are very stressed and schools can have a very negative outlook whereas we come from a hugely positive reinforcement basis. That is how we write our programs. They get rewarded for things. People say that we are spoiling this kid. We are not spoiling them; we are rewarding them for doing the right thing. It becomes a part of their life to be like that.

ACTING CHAIR—Are these teaching or parenting problems?

Mrs Marlborough—Both.

ACTING CHAIR—A combination?

Mrs Marlborough—I believe so.

ACTING CHAIR—Are they more one or the other?

Mrs Marlborough—I have to be careful here.

Ms Rodgers—It depends on the area and where we work.

Mrs Marlborough—Also, when we come into a school we work to change the behaviour of the child. In doing that, we frequently change the behaviour of the teacher and the behaviour of the other children in the class. People have this focus of this naughty boy, and we have to change that before this boy can make a complete recovery. Often you cannot do anything, and nor do we have the right to go into homes and tell parents how to bring up their kids, 'If that is how you want to bring your kid up, fine, but in the school, this is how we behave."

Ms Rodgers—We try to link in with parents as much as possible.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, we do.

Ms Rodgers—We invite them to our case conferences, our meetings and our reviews. Hopefully they can pick up some of the strategies that we are going to use and they can do them at home. That means that if he has had a good day, he goes home and he gets a reward at home, or whatever, so there is that consistency across both home and school environments. That is the ideal situation.

ACTING CHAIR—A couple of school principals have given us evidence that, when they have had meetings with parents about successful strategies to use with children at home—with children who have been difficult—they almost lap it up and they are demanding it. This school at Elizabeth is in a pretty depressed area, where most people would be unemployed. Do you think that perhaps in parenting skills that something has changed? Lots of things have changed and we have a 300 per cent increase in single families in the last 20 years. That is one change. Has that had an impact?

Mrs Marlborough—I think I have also said that we need some resourcing to develop programs accessible to all parents when a child—male or female—is first registered for schooling. I have been on this bandwagon for a long time, saying that when your kid is enrolled as a four-year-old at kindy or pre-primary, every parent—father and mother—has to come in and do this course. At least it will give them some help.

Some parents have no idea. They were brought up in families without any effective parenting. Some children of this generation, which is three generations away from me I think, are not particularly compliant. You get families where your 11-year-old or 12-year-old is out half the night. Parents do not have any control because he will not come home. That is the other thing we deal with. In school, we have to say to the child that we are the authority, that they need to be compliant and that they need to cooperate within the school. It is a huge issue. I think the

effective parenting program, if we can ever get it off the ground, would go a long way to doing something.

ACTING CHAIR—That is an interesting recommendation.

Mr BARRESI—I am a lot more pessimistic about this ever working. I am not saying that you are wrong—I think it is good to try—but, as the Chair mentioned, there is a 300 per cent increase in single families, and the dual career couple is on the rise. The high level of mobility within jobs is increasing as are the extended hours of work. I think it is an uphill battle to get parents to become connected with the school, even more so than it has been in the past.

Mrs Marlborough—I do not know about the ways they are connected but, if a child has a problem, it is very rare that we find a parent will not come and try to do something.

Mr BARRESI—To me, it seems that parents believe that they have done their duty for the school if they turn up to a working bee. Even with something as basic as that, they prefer to pay their $20 or $50 contribution to get themselves out of doing a working bee.

Mrs Marlborough—I do not blame parents. I think that is what they should do.

Mr BARRESI—What I am saying is that they will not do something as basic as that, let alone turn up to be a teachers' aid for a session or come along and be part of the school environment. I just cannot see it happening.

ACTING CHAIR—When we were in Sydney—Phil was not there—we went to Roseville, which is a highly affluent area. The mean salary is about $100,000. They gave a different view. They did involve both fathers and mothers who work in high profile positions, because the parents had the flexibility to get time off during the day so they could be involved. This school raised $100,000 to pay for the salary of a literacy coordination teacher and changed dramatically the failures of both boys and girls over a period of four years. So that is a different view. Phil did not go to the Sydney visit.

Mr BARRESI—I have an explanation for that. Brendan Nelson's electorate has the flexibility that a middle-class area has not. I agree with what they did and I think that, as a parent, you have failed your kids if you do not take an interest in their education. Julia talks about changes in the last 20 years. In the next 20 years we may very well find that we can say, 'Remember those days when we were part of a school community.' It is becoming a drop-off centre.

Mrs Marlborough—No. In Western Australia, I do not think so.

Mrs Rodgers—I think some schools that we work with do really well in linking with their community. EDWA's Behaviour Management in Schools Policy that came out in 1998 strongly promoted linking in with your school community. When you are getting your behaviour management plan up and running, you get reps from the community to come and sit on the committee. I think some schools do that really well. They have committees, and they share it.

Mr BARRESI—Yes, it is the same parents that turn up all the time.

Ms Rodgers—You have to try these things.

Mr BARRESI—If their strategies are going to work, I want to know about it. I will take it back to our schools.

Ms Rodgers—There is also the school keeping in touch with the parents about what is happening in the school and giving that feedback. Of course, some parents are just never going to come. But I think they are trying. I think they are out there doing that. I think some schools are doing it really well.

Mrs Marlborough—My belief is that we need many units like ours. We have four of these units in the metropolitan area. We do not have any in the country, which is not fair. Of those 90 kids we dealt with last year, I would say we had something like a 95 per cent success rate. They became normal kids in normal classrooms. Teachers became happy and wanted to come to work.

ACTING CHAIR—On average, how many hours would you spend with each child?

Mrs Marlborough—That is hard to work out.

ACTING CHAIR—Would it be 10, 20, 30 or 40?

Ms Rodgers—With some kids, we work on an intensive basis. We go there all day, every day. With other kids, it is more of a consultation.

ACTING CHAIR—With just the one child?

Ms Rodgers—It can be.

Mrs Marlborough—We have six on our staff.

Ms Rodgers—We have six on our staff. We cover two districts: Fremantle District and Peel District. We cover 150 schools. There are six of us to manage the work for these kids. We have huge waiting lists because there is only so much that we can do.

Mrs Marlborough—From those parents—who are supposedly the worst parents because they have these dreadful children—we have had such fantastic support. They come and they learn. They want to know about the program. We show it to them. They go home. They try it.

ACTING CHAIR—Because they are having trouble with the kids too.

Mrs Marlborough—But they learn so much that they want all their sisters' and brothers' kids and everyone else to come because they have had success with their child, and then they start to see someone else as a naughty child.

ACTING CHAIR—What are the intrinsic elements or attributes of your program? Are they in your submission? What makes your program work?

Mrs Marlborough—We are positive and we believe the kid will change.

ACTING CHAIR—So you do not believe in deficit modelling?

Mrs Marlborough—No.

Ms Rodgers—No.

Mrs Marlborough—We believe that kids will change. We expect they will change. We expect that parents will change. They need to have some guidelines. They need to be shown how to do it. We work huge hours, much longer than what we get paid for.

ACTING CHAIR—When you go into schools, are you seeing a reignition of the deficit model debate?

Mrs Marlborough—I do not know. What do you call the deficit model?

ACTING CHAIR—You would do the opposite to what you say. You refer to boys' negative behaviours and you do not balance them up. I suspect that you do not even talk about negative behaviours, you talk about positive behaviours.

Mrs Marlborough—Absolutely. Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—That is the deficit model.

Mrs Marlborough—When we first go into schools teachers say to us, 'You won't change this; you won't change that.' A school was 'tearing out their hair' and was about to ban a boy for all time. I worked with him for three days and he has made this change. And they asked, 'How did you do that?' I said. 'I just told him he was a good kid and a nice kid. I gave him a positive reinforcer and asked the principal to jump off his back and not to focus on him and watch him every time he moves in the playground. Of course he is going to be naughty, he is nervous.' You have to change the attitude. You have to believe these kids are good, and there are millions of good kids out there. They love it when their peers change. They say, 'Jamie, you are beaut. You have changed,' or, 'I like the way Henry does something.' They are telling them, 'We like you.'

ACTING CHAIR—Obviously you see a whole range of schools which the teachers do not normally do. They see only their own school and sometimes during the year they might get some professional development in others. They do not have comparative information. You have a lot of comparative information. Do you see any differences in the way boys and girls learn in the schools you visit?

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, I do. I think boys are much more like a bull at a gate. They will get something and they will go for it. They are not as tidy and they do not want the pretty bits and pieces.

ACTING CHAIR—The bulldogging approach is the term the principal used.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes.

Ms Rodgers—And they do not like to ask for help as much. They do not want to be seen as different in front of their peers.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes. We put in really good reinforcers for these boys so they will change. They do not want to be seen as being a good kid. There is a pecking order quite often as to who is going to be the naughtiest boy. If the teacher is weak, these kids are so hard to deal with because they know that they can show off and they can be the worst kid in the class.

ACTING CHAIR—What about the girls?

Mrs Marlborough—The girls are different. The girls will sit there and subtly do nothing. They will go from year 1 to year 6 pretending they can read and nobody ever finds them out because they are so quiet. They do not cause any hassle.

Ms Rodgers—They can very easily slip through the system.

ACTING CHAIR—That is a bit of a reflection on the monitoring abilities of the teachers involved if a child can get through in that way, isn't it? Does it mean that there is no effective monitoring going on of boys' and girls' attainments? How does a girl get from year 1 to year 6 without being able to read?

Mrs Marlborough—I do not know that.

ACTING CHAIR—We know it happens, but how does that happen?

Mrs Marlborough—I think it can happen because when this child is about to be tested or when something is to happen she might not be there that day and when she is there another kid might be helping her. I do not know. I would have to be in a school all the time. I would really have to think about that one.

ACTING CHAIR—If you come up with a list of differences, send them to us.

Mrs Marlborough—We actually have monitored our stuff for the last 10 years I suppose. We have come up with about 10 different reasons why our behaviour change plans work. I have not got them here. I did not even think about bringing them.

ACTING CHAIR—Can you send those to our committee?

Mrs Marlborough—I think it would be no problem.

Mr BARRESI—My question is related to that. Have you done a profile of the type of student you deal with? You said you had 90 kids last year. What is the typical profile in terms of demographics, background, family status and type of school. Would you be able to give us an idea of that?

Mrs Marlborough—Whether they are ADD, whether they are selective mutes or whatever their behaviour is we write all that in a column. They might have four different behaviours.

Mr BARRESI—Are they coming from single families or are they coming from families where there is aggression and conflict?

Mrs Marlborough—We would have that amongst our notes, yes.

Mr BARRESI—Are they coming from families where both parents are working and are regularly absent?

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, we would have all that information.

ACTING CHAIR—What are some of the attributes? You used the term which I have not heard for a long time—selective mute. What are the attributes of boys who are selective mutes?

Mrs Marlborough—The selective mute boys that I have worked with—and we have had quite good success with that—have all had English as a second language. With the girls it is not the same. I think we have had five girls to 10 boys.

ACTING CHAIR—But every case has been English as a second language?

Mrs Marlborough—No, only the boys.

ACTING CHAIR—What are some of the qualities of those boys, other than selective mutism? Are there other qualities that identify them?

Mrs Marlborough—With one particular one that I work with it has been very hard to find out what is going on. He is a beaut little kid—the kids like him; they will help him. They do not even suggest that he should talk because they can talk for him, but that is not what we want. We have made them step back so he will talk. In finding out that, the more he talks, other behaviours come to the surface. We have decided that he is quite lazy. He is very manipulative. He will not answer a question or do anything if he chooses not to. He is becoming quite non-compliant in the classroom. The teacher is pulling out her hair. She said to me today, 'I wish he never learnt to talk.'

ACTING CHAIR—I have heard other teachers describe these children as being into control in such a big way. Is that a fair statement?

Mrs Marlborough—In a sad way.

ACTING CHAIR—No, I do not mean that it is good; I am not promoting it.

Mrs Marlborough—They are in control because they are comfortable in that boundary, but it is not good for them. Socially they are missing out.

ACTING CHAIR—What are the attributes of the girls who do that?

Mrs Marlborough—I have not actually worked with any of the girls, but the girls tend to turn into really aggressive 'monsters'.

Ms GILLARD—We have had evidence before this inquiry that boys tend to have more hearing defects than girls and that that is—

Mrs Marlborough—Selective?

Ms GILLARD—Selective or not, clinically boys do have more hearing defects than girls. Numbers of them go undiagnosed and that then causes learning difficulties, and learning difficulties cause behavioural difficulties. Of the boys that you have worked with, have you found widespread evidence or any evidence of undiagnosed hearing or sight difficulties that might have been the trigger that started the spiral of behaviour?

Mrs Marlborough—I haven't at all with hearing or sight.

Ms Rodgers—All that is always checked out first.

Mrs Marlborough—We always eliminate all of that before we start. It is in the receptive language. They are not receiving the information because they are putting up barriers or something is happening. But certainly, in receptive language, the boys have quite a deficit.

Ms GILLARD—So the kid would be unlikely to get to you if that was the cause, because they would be diagnosing hearing and sight first?

Ms Rodgers—They would be allocated Aide time and they would probably have a teacher assisting if something were diagnosed, yes.

Mrs Marlborough—If you have problematic behaviour here, you do not have any time allocated to you. That is what teachers are screaming out about—34 boys behaving very badly and the teachers do not have any time allocated; therefore, it takes a huge amount of teaching time away from them.

The other thing I was going to mention briefly is that recently I observed a young man who was in a psychiatric hospital. I was really interested to sit back and watch for the three months. In the ward there were 25 young people. There were only three girls and the all rest were boys. Most of them were there from drug induced psychotic episodes.

ACTING CHAIR—Substance abuse?

Mrs Marlborough—Not only substance abuse; some cases involved medication that had been given to them but had gone wrong and so they had got into a psychotic state. It interested me because, hearing the young ones talk, I would say that as many girls as boys abuse substances. Why are the girls not in there? It seemed to me to be uneven.

ACTING CHAIR—They are being measured in a different way.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, exactly.

ACTING CHAIR—That is in Adelaide—I do not know whether it is the same here.

Mrs Marlborough—I do not know.

ACTING CHAIR—I think it is the education department. You gave us some information about mental health problems. That can guise a whole range of sins. At the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide, admissions of girls outnumber boys by 68 per cent to 38 per cent. With substance abuse—I cannot remember the figures—it was dramatically the other way; almost two to one the other way. It was even higher than two boys to one girl—I think it was about four boys to one girl. That surprised me because I did not realise that in terms of mental health problems, which can guise a range of problems—you need to look at what sort of problems they were. In actual fact there were two girls to every boy.

Ms GILLARD—This was a live-in institutionalised setting.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes.

Ms GILLARD—I suspect it is the same explanation as your own service which is that mental illnesses influences which affect women do not tend to manifest in aggressive behaviour, so they are not institutionalised. They might be treated, but they are not institutionalised.

Mrs Marlborough—They are managed better at home, maybe.

ACTING CHAIR—You said you listened to Faith Trent today.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Did that confirm to you, in terms of the boys you are dealing with, that they must develop a close relationship with you to be effectively changing their behaviour—so you must develop a very close relationship with them and they trust you?

Mrs Marlborough—A trusting one rather than a close one.

ACTING CHAIR—Trusting. When Faith Trent was reading out those attributes of what the boys were saying, did that resonate with you? Was it the same sorts of thing that you were finding or was it different?

Mrs Marlborough—I am just trying to remember what she said.

ACTING CHAIR—'Adults don't listen.' 'Treat us with respect.' 'Treat us as older boys.' 'Give us an adult environment.' 'Give us some activity.' 'We want a good teacher.'

Mrs Marlborough—Exactly. Kids are always asking me, 'Can't you get me another teacher?' I found her comments about using first names interesting. All the kids call me Pauline. I do not expect them to call me Mrs M or any other name; they just call me Pauline. Teachers

often say, 'It's Mrs Marlborough to you.' I say, 'No, it's not'. I let them call me Pauline and as long as it is with respect and we treat each other on that level, there is not a problem. When you get to high school, certainly as she was saying, the 16 to 18-year-olds, I cannot see any problem with kids calling the teachers by their Christian names.

ACTING CHAIR—In fact, most successful senior schools have that as a given; they do not even have any queries about it.

Mrs Marlborough—Yes, I was a bit surprised.

ACTING CHAIR—Pauline and Natasha, thank you very much for your time and thank you for your submission.

It is resolved that the committee receive as evidence, and authorise the publication of the submission received from Mr John Bednall for the education of boys inquiry. It is further resolved that the committee receive as evidence and include in its record as an exhibit for the inquiry into the education of boys documents received from Mr Ian Lillico, *Australian issues in boys' education* and *Boys and their Schooling*.'

Resolved (on motion by Ms Gillard):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by paragraph (o) of sessional order 28B, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day, including publication on the electronic parliamentary database for the proof transcript.

Committee adjourned at 5.56 p.m.