



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

## Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND  
WORKPLACE RELATIONS

**Reference: Education of boys**

TUESDAY, 20 MARCH 2001

EVANSTON SOUTH, SA

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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

**Tuesday, 20 March 2001**

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

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

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

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



**Committee met at 12.43 p.m.**

**GAERTNER-JONES, Mrs Marion, Director, Open Learning Centre, Trinity College**

**BROOKS, Mr John, Student, Trinity College**

**LOOKER, Mr Ryan, Student, Trinity College**

**PAWLEY, Mr Liam, Student, Trinity College**

**SUGARS, Mr Greg, Student, Trinity College**

**VANNINI, Mr David, Student, Trinity College**

**YOUNG, Mr Christopher, Student, Trinity College**

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for the opportunity that we have as a committee to talk to you this afternoon during our inquiry into the education of boys. We are all members of parliament from Canberra and different states. As I said, this is very informal. We are here to get your opinions about the education system, to learn of any difficulties that you may see, being males in an education system — anything that can help us improve the education of boys. There may be a problem; there may not be. We are here to see. There has been a vast difference in boys' achievements over the years, and that is why this inquiry is on. We are here today to see if there is anything you could help contribute. This will all come out in a report by the end of the year. We will make sure that report gets sent to everyone who is making a contribution to the inquiry.

Is there anyone who would like to ask us any questions or tell us anything? It is very relaxed, very informal, as I said. We want to get to ways that we can help boys achieve their potential. Would anyone like to make a contribution about how they see things within their system? Can I ask what year you are from?

**David Vannini**—I am in year 11.

**CHAIR**—Have you found any problems with the system over the years — from primary right through — that you thought could be a bit different?

**David Vannini**—It is not so much a problem, just that I sort of struggled with myself because I was not really a hard studier. I found it difficult with my reading mainly, but then after I got the hang of it year 8 started to get better.

**CHAIR**—What year were you in when you said you got the hang of it?

**David Vannini**—Probably from year 4 on.

**CHAIR**—Did you find many support systems there from years 1 to 4 that could have helped you along the way?

**David Vannini**—Not really. I used to go to One Tree Hill and they did not really help at all there. When I came here I had to repeat year 3. They started giving me extra help and then I started getting better.

**CHAIR**—Do you feel you have lost out on anything by not having that ability from year 1, or did you catch up?

**David Vannini**—I had to work a lot slower than pretty much everybody else because they knew how to do some of the work. I had to go back and catch up, so, yes, I fell a bit behind.

**CHAIR**—Did you have any problems in the classroom from your peers?

**David Vannini**—No, not really.

**CHAIR**—I will hand over to some of my colleagues. There may be different questions that each one would like to ask along the way.

**Mr SAWFORD**—First of all, we might try and get you all to make a brief comment initially. You perhaps might like to say something good about the school or something you would like to see improved in the school. We will limit it to that. Say your name and quickly go through it. That gets everybody on the record straightaway. We will start off with Greg.

**Greg Sugars**—Trinity College is a great school and gives many people opportunities to fulfil their goals in life and do what they want to do. I did not see the advantage of finishing right through to year 12, and that is where the open learning centre comes in. I believe it is helping me even more now than it would if I was to stay in regular school and finish up to year 12.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What would you improve about the school, Greg?

**Greg Sugars**—I do not really know.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is fine.

**Ryan Looker**—I was at Birdwood High School. I started in year 8 and I swapped schools because of harassment troubles at Birdwood. I started at Trinity halfway through year 10. I wanted to leave to get an electrical apprenticeship, but I was offered the open learning centre and I took up the opportunity.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are you happy there?

**Ryan Looker**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What makes you happier there than you were in a more traditional classroom?

**Ryan Looker**—It is helping me do what I want to do for myself later.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It fulfils your goals as far as employment choice is concerned.

**Ryan Looker**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What would you improve about the school?

**Ryan Looker**—It is much better than the school I was going to.

**Liam Pawley**—At my old school I never used to like to work. I used to always be in trouble but when I came here I found it more enjoyable.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why didn't you like to work in your previous school?

**Liam Pawley**—I am just that type of person. I do not like reading or that type of thing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What sort of learning do you like?

**Liam Pawley**—Hands-on learning.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Active learning.

**Liam Pawley**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Structured learning?

**Liam Pawley**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you know what I mean by structured learning?

**Liam Pawley**—Not really.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does anyone know what I mean by structured learning? Everything is organised. You know the purpose of the lesson. You know where you are going, it is measured, you get some feedback and you have plenty of activity. Hands-on is probably just as good as anything. What would you improve about the school?

**Liam Pawley**—Not much really. I cannot think of anything to improve it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are quite happy here?

**Liam Pawley**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What makes you happy in the open learning centre?

**Liam Pawley**—I can go out and do all the hands-on stuff as well that I want to do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—When you want to?

**Liam Pawley**—Yes. I do not have to do other things that are not really related to me.

**John Brooks**—I reckon the open learning centre is excellent. It is good because we have small classes and we can get individual attention. That is probably the biggest thing. I used to struggle heaps with core maths when I first came here. My other school taught differently and I never caught up, so I ended up going to business maths. My business maths class was pretty big and they ended up splitting it into two classes, which was better because we had more individual attention. This is really good because if you need something else you do not have to wait ages for it. It is just better being able to get individual attention.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What would you improve about the school?

**John Brooks**—Probably just classroom sizes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You wouldn't get a new principal?

**John Brooks**—No, he has been doing a pretty good job.

**CHAIR**—Good answer.

**John Brooks**—He is sitting behind me.

**Christopher Young**—I have been at Trinity since year 1. If I was not pleased with the school I would have complained to my mum and she would have moved me by now. It is a great school. I like it here. It is good. The teachers are nice. It is great. However, when I got to year 11, because I was struggling in some subjects, I decided to do the open learning centre. Most schools should be run like the open learning centre today.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you think that says something about year 11 and 12 students or does it say something for students who are in years 9 and 10?

**Christopher Young**—Years 9 and 10 students should take it a lot more seriously than they do. They seem to slack off and think that when they get to years 11 and 12 they will start putting in the effort then. However, they need to realise that years 9 and 10 are a build-up to year 11.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You did that in years 9 and 10 as well.

**Christopher Young**—Yes, I did.

**CHAIR**—Can you tell us a little bit about a day in the life of the open learning centre?

**Christopher Young**—We come to school for the first two lessons. We go through English or maths pretty quickly because the classes are so small, which is great. Then we have recess, muck around with our friends, come back for another two lessons. We knuckle down and get straight into work, breeze through that quite quickly, maybe do a little bit extra. Then we have



lunch, settle down, have a play, come back for the last two lessons and really get stuck into some more work.

**CHAIR**—What is it that makes you work harder at the open learning centre than in a classroom?

**Christopher Young**—I see it as an advantage because now I get work placements as well, which is going to help me for a job later on. I also get a lot more one on one with the teacher, which is a lot more help for education's sake. That is basically why I chose it.

**CHAIR**—Do you go one day a week to your workplace experience?

**Christopher Young**—Yes, we will be starting that next week. We will be going to our work placements.

**Ms GILLARD**—How many kids are in the open learning centre?

**Christopher Young**—At the moment I would say about 18 or 19.

**Ms GILLARD**—Boys and girls?

**Christopher Young**—Boys and girls, yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—Do you study in classes together?

**Christopher Young**—Yes, we do.

**Ms GILLARD**—How do you find that? Do you think it is good to have mixed classes or would you rather have classes by yourself? You don't mind?

**Christopher Young**—I do not mind at all. As I said, I have been in a co-ed school all my life, so I do not see a problem with that.

**Ms GILLARD**—What about anybody else? Do you have a view about studying with girls?

**David Vannini**—It is good. We will be working with them in the work force anyway, so it is good to work with them now. I do not have a problem with that.

**CHAIR**—Kim, would you like to ask a few questions?

**Mr WILKIE**—The activities at the open learning centre are obviously more hands-on. But what do you do? Do you do welding or electronics or anything to supplement your normal studies?

**John Brooks**—We do normal study subjects like maths and English, and I think somebody is running a science class now. We then go and do a TAFE course of our choice. I am doing mechanics — and you are doing IT, aren't you?

**Christopher Young**—Yes.

**John Brooks**—Instead of doing tech at school we do tech at TAFE or whatever subject we are interested in, rather than school.

**Mr WILKIE**—Do you get a TAFE qualification out of it?

**John Brooks**—Yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—You go actually off campus to do that?

**John Brooks**—Yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—Each afternoon?

**John Brooks**—No. I am doing mine in a semester block. Some people go two days a week to TAFE. Other people go like I am, in blocks or whatever. It is just however TAFE works it out.

**Mr WILKIE**—You have a pretty good idea of what you want to do when you leave school, and you are doing your TAFE courses to get to that?

**John Brooks**—Yes, pretty much.

**Mr WILKIE**—Do you all do the same? You do different courses, obviously, but you have got that aim in mind?

**John Brooks**—Yes.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—It might be useful for me to explain the drill with the open learning centre. We have 18 students at this stage. We have a midyear intake. What we have basically done is design programs to fit each individual student. Students are pursuing their vocational area, so some students are attending TAFE two days a week, some three days a week, some four days a week. We have some students who are going to be doing TAFE full-time in the second semester.

We have two lads here doing carpentry in one-week blocks with the apprentices at TAFE. We are basically wrapping the school program around their TAFE commitments and the work placements. They are still full-time students but they are off campus sometimes, on campus other times—very flexible learning. That is probably why they like doing what they are doing at the moment. I teach them for a number of lessons and they work really hard in class. They are really well behaved in class. They are a stunning bunch of people to teach.

From our point of view, the system is working. Last year I think they were all a bit disenchanted with study and the standard educational setting, so we have tried to create something different. They have really taken it on and are doing things very well. With the work placements, yesterday we had four lads going to United Water, who wanted to interview them

before they decided on who they wanted. They each had a 15 or 20-minute interview. It is the whole presentation of real-life, real-world experience. That is important to them.

**Mr WILKIE**—What is the advantage of doing the schooling this way as opposed to having boys go directly to TAFE and study full time the courses they want?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—A lot of the students, as well as their parents, are really concerned that they get SACE stages 1 and 2 and finish their certificate of education. This way they can do both, whereas if they just go to TAFE they will only get the TAFE certificates. Down the track you never know when it might just come in handy if you want to change careers. It is the best of both worlds. SACE is very adaptable. It actually lends itself to doing that quite easily.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Marion, in education ‘open’ means all things to all people in some respects. By ‘open’ I assume you are meaning highly structured. You include everything, the whole spectrum of education, rather than laissez faire, which is some people’s definition.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—That is right. Next term we will be moving into online education as well. All the students are doing the international computer driving licence. That will be part of their program.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Would it be fair to say that, in terms of the boys and girls in your program, they have in fact highly structured programs tailored to their individual needs?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—That is right, individual needs.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Far more structured than you would get in a normal classroom?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—Yes, probably, but very flexible because they have to cater for individual needs.

**Mr SAWFORD**—To be truly flexible, you have to be highly structured.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—That is right.

**Ms GILLARD**—Of the students in the open learning centre, how many boys and how many girls are there?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—Eleven boys and seven girls.

**Ms GILLARD**—So it is a small difference, not a huge difference.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—We started off with eight boys and four girls. We have had a few more in the last few weeks and they just happened to all be girls.

**Ms GILLARD**—Is there much of a difference in the sorts of courses the girls select at TAFE compared with the boys?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—We have a really wide spectrum. We do not have any girls in IT at the moment. One girl is looking at office admin, and I have had a chat to her about IT and office admin as well. She is going to be looking at that area. We have a girl doing aircraft mechanics at Parafield. We have boys doing carpentry, horseracing, electrical, diesel mechanics and IT. We have a boy doing painting and decorating. We have a girl doing hair and beauty, and another doing youth work because she wants to get into the police force. In office admin we have a couple there.

**CHAIR**—How did the boys choose what they were going to do? Where do they think they would be now if they had not?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—We have moved over to the open learning area.

**David Vannini**—If I did not come up to the open learning centre I probably would have left school, or really struggled through year 11. Yes, I probably would have dropped out halfway through, or something like that. I chose to do carpentry because I like working with wood. I have a few options there with cabinet-making or in the building industry, whichever one I want to do. I am going to have a go at doing both of them and choose which one I like.

**Greg Sugars**—If I was not at the open learning centre this year, I would not have seen myself back at school. The industry I am involved in is the horseracing industry.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is a very famous name, too.

**Greg Sugars**—My family has been heavily involved for many years now, so I guess an option for me would have been to go either straight into that industry full-time this year, working there, or maybe completing the TAFE course which I am involved in now with the open learning centre.

**CHAIR**—Do you take school more seriously, being able to do both?

**Greg Sugars**—Yes, for sure. More of it is what I am interested in instead of a lot of stuff I would be doing at school which I could not see myself needing later on in life. I find myself wanting to do better now as it is more involved with what I want to do later on in life.

**CHAIR**—So your standard of schooling has improved since you have been at the open learning centre?

**Greg Sugars**—Yes, I am pleased, actually. I concentrate a lot more. I want to learn more, yes.

**Ryan Looker**—All through the holidays I was looking for an apprenticeship as an electrician and I really could not find one. Mum said unless I got an apprenticeship I would have to go back to year 11, so I started looking at TAFE courses but I could not get into any. I was probably looking at either dropping out or still looking for more TAFE courses. Then I was asked if I wanted to do the open learning centre, and I applied for it.

**CHAIR**—Do you do your TAFE courses in the electrical trade, too?

**Ryan Looker**—I have not started yet, but that is what it will be, yes.

**Liam Pawley**—I was thinking about quitting school and trying to get an apprenticeship with carpentry people because school did not really excite me. I cannot really go anywhere if I do not pass this year. I was going to try and pass and then go, but if I had found it too hard I would just quit and try and do something myself.

**CHAIR**—What field are you looking into?

**Liam Pawley**—Carpentry.

**CHAIR**—Anything to do with carpentry?

**Liam Pawley**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—But you have not started your TAFE course?

**Liam Pawley**—Not yet.

**John Brooks**—I have always wanted to be a mechanic or something like that. There was not much of a choice. I had selected all my subjects and I had got them all—they were all tech subjects anyway. I am pretty much doing what I would have been doing in normal school, except my grades have picked up a bit because I find it easier. My last few projects I have been flying through. If I had been doing it normally, I would have been getting maybe 60 per cent or 70 per cent. It is better for me this way—I can do my TAFE as well—because I probably would have dropped out at the end of this year and just gone to TAFE or something.

**CHAIR**—When you went to TAFE you saw that you probably needed those literacy and numeracy skills to take your career further. Would that have been something that enthused you to try a bit harder?

**John Brooks**—I knew I had to pass year 11 to get into one of the mechanic courses. Then I thought if I finish year 11 I may as well drop out once I finish that—that is the minimum requirement—and go and do my course then. I probably would have just got the bare minimum and then left.

**Christopher Young**—I have always liked computers so I was originally going to leave after year 10 and go to TAFE full on. It was only by chance I heard about the open learning centre through a friend. When I heard what they were going to do about work placement and all that, I thought it was a great idea. If I was not in the open learning centre, I would probably be at TAFE.

**CHAIR**—It sounds like it has been a very successful program.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—Can I just add that quite a few of the students actually involve themselves. We had pinpointed some of the students we thought this might be good for, and it was going to be a very small pilot program. As I said, we have 18 now, and probably the last 12

of those have come of their own accord and enrolled themselves, just knocking at my door saying, 'Hi, here I am. This is what I want to do.'

**Mr SAWFORD**—Not because their mates were doing it?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—No, I think they were individual decisions. I did also talk to some people last year and I explained that really the bottom criterion was for them to have to be independent, because they would need to be moving around a lot. Some of the students I interviewed who we thought might be potential candidates were told, 'I don't think you're ready for this.' They are actually not with us. There is a level of maturity they have to have.

**CHAIR**—How many students would have dropped out of school and not taken on the open learning section?

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—At the end of last year?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mrs Gaertner-Jones**—We do not lose too many at the end of year 10. Probably—I do not know—half a dozen, six to eight at the most. But one of the reasons we created the open learning centre was to address the need for those students we lose either at the end of year 10 or halfway through year 11, or at the end of year 11. Given the students we have now, all had the intention of leaving by the end of year 11. Within three weeks of starting this year, a lot of them have decided to stick it out until the end of year 12, which I see as another benefit.

**CHAIR**—Congratulations.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What are you currently reading and who is your current hero?

**David Vannini**—I am currently reading nothing. I am not a very big reader still, even though I know how to read. Hero? I do not know. I never really had a hero.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is fine. It is not compulsory to answer.

**David Vannini**—I have not really thought about it.

**Greg Sugars**—I am in the same boat as David. I am not a big reader, really. I do not like to read too much. Hero? I do not think I have one hero in particular. I have a few people that I admire and want to be like.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Name some of them.

**Greg Sugars**—I would like to be like my dad.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Ross Sugars?

**Greg Sugars**—Yes. In the harness racing community there are a few guys interstate—a guy called Gavin Lang, and Fred Kersley.

**Mr SAWFORD**—These are all people involved in harness racing?

**Greg Sugars**—That is right, yes. They have just done about everything there is to do, and they have had a successful life, and that is what I want to do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Ryan?

**Ryan Looker**—I do not really like reading, as well—like them two. I am not reading anything at the moment, and I would not really have a hero.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Liam?

**Liam Pawley**—I do not read much either. I do not have a hero.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Okay. John?

**John Brooks**—I am reading a novel, like a thriller novel, at the moment. I do not really have any heroes much. What happens, happens. I do not look up to and idolise people. It is whatever makes you happy, pretty much.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Chris?

**Christopher Young**—I am currently reading Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*. And heroes? Steven Jobs and Bill Gates, I would have to say.

**CHAIR**—That's very good! Thank you very much. It has been a pleasure to speak to you all. We appreciate the time you have given us today and we wish you all well in the future and hope it goes well for you.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.08 p.m. to 2.07 p.m.**

**BATEMAN, Mr Christian, Student, Trinity College**

**BATTERSBY, Mr Steven, Student, Trinity College**

**BENNETT, Mr Thomas, Student, Trinity College**

**BROOKMAN, Mr Tom, Student, Trinity College**

**CHATBURN, Mr Alexander, Student, Trinity College**

**CODY, Mr Jarrad, Student, Trinity College**

**COOPER, Mr Shaun, Student, Trinity College**

**GOOSSENS, Mr Adam, Student, Trinity College**

**HARTWICH, Mr Michael, Student, Trinity College**

**LLOYD, Mr Brody, Student, Trinity College**

**LOOKER, Mr Ryan, Student, Trinity College**

**MILLER, Mr John, Student, Trinity College**

**PARKER, Mr Jarrod, Student, Trinity College**

**PETTIGREW, Mr Nicholas, Student, Trinity College**

**RICHARDSON, Mr David, Student, Trinity College**

**THAME, Mr Matthew, Student, Trinity College**

**WILSON, Mr Jonothon, Student, Trinity College**

**CHAIR**—Thank you all very much for being part of this very important inquiry that the Commonwealth government is running into boys in the education system. This is probably a rare opportunity where you can have a say in the outcome of what is going to happen and what recommendations we will be making when the inquiry is completed. The inquiry is going to all parts of Australia. We have been to Queensland, Sydney and Melbourne. We are in Adelaide today and tomorrow, and then we go over to Western Australia and around to many rural and regional areas.

We are collating and collecting all the information we can, and your opinion really does count. We want to know what the students think of the education system. We want to know of ways that you think things could change that would make your learning a little bit easier in the



classroom. Please do not hold back. We are here to listen to your opinion, and, as I say, you are the people that we are having the inquiry about. If you people can change something and make recommendations to the government, please do so.

I am going to ask something of you all. As we have so many young people in the room who may like to have their say and give their opinion, could you say your name first before you make the statement, because we have to record everything that is said. To make recommendations, we have to have proof that it was said. There is a gentleman sitting over there who is listening to everything you are saying, and he has to record the name of the person who speaks.

We really appreciate that you have taken the time to come before us today. I will ask generally if anyone wants to make a statement. If you do, please indicate and we will ask you to do so. If not, we would like to know your opinions about the school here—what you like about it and what you would like to change about it. Is there anybody wanting to have their say first?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Perhaps while you are thinking, I will add to what Kay Elson has said. When we first started this inquiry, which was only a couple of months ago, we expected to finish probably in September-October, if the parliament goes that long. Some of the initial information that was given to us was that 20 years ago in Australia the differential attainment levels of boys and girls was less than one percentage point, which is what you would expect because boys and girls intrinsically have equal abilities over the spread. The Commonwealth department said to this committee, ‘There are examples now of boys being behind in literacy, in particular, by up to 20 percentage points.’ If that is true—and we think it is true and it has been proved in a number of schools—we want to know how widespread that is, what are schools doing about it now, and what is happening in your particular school. Is that, in fact, still true?

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Chris, you might like to tell us what you think of the school you attend and what you like about it.

**Christian Bateman**—Trinity? I think it is a fairly good school. They do teach excellence in sport and education, which is good for me personally. I like some of the teachers. Some of them are very supportive in how they help us. I think some teachers have a bit to learn in interacting with students, but that is usually new people and people who have stayed on a bit too long. Overall, I think it is a pretty good school.

**CHAIR**—Excellent. Alex, do you have anything to add to that?

**Alexander Chatburn**—No, that is pretty much exactly what I think. Some teachers give you more people skills.

**CHAIR**—Would you prefer a male or a female teacher?

**Alexander Chatburn**—I honestly do not think it makes a difference.

**CHAIR**—Jarrod, would you like to make a contribution?

**Jarrod Parker**—I do not agree with Chris and Alex. I do not think it really matters what sex the teacher is, but there are sometimes negative reinforcement issues more than positive, which make you not want to work. That does not happen in many cases. Mostly it is positive.

**CHAIR**—Rod is an ex-schoolteacher. I think he was teaching for about 20 years.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I would like to ask two things. What book are you reading now, and who do you regard in Australian society as admirable? Who is your hero? Nicholas?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—I do not know.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do not know?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—No.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What are you reading at the moment?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Nothing at the moment.

**Jarrad Cody**—Andrew Lansdowne is a really good Australian poet and he writes a few books as well.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about a hero?

**Jarrad Cody**—Not quite sure there.

**David Richardson**—I am reading a couple of books at the moment. We are just about to start *Romeo and Juliet* in class. I do not really have a hero as such, but a couple of people—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are you learning the Baz Luhrmann version or the Shakespeare version?

**David Richardson**—Shakespeare, and we are going to be watching the video.

**Steven Battersby**—I am reading *Executive Orders*, a Tom Clancy book. I have a sporting hero, actually—probably Malcolm Blight or Craig Bradley.

**Shaun Cooper**—We are reading *Of Mice and Men*. My hero would probably be Sir Donald Bradman.

**Jonothon Wilson**—I am reading the same book as him—*Of Mice and Men*. A hero? I am not really sure. I do not really have one.

**Thomas Bennett**—I am reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I do not really have a hero.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Did you get any points out of *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

**Thomas Bennett**—It is a good book.

**Matthew Thame**—I am reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I do not really have a hero.

**Brody Lloyd**—I am reading *Of Mice and Men*, and probably my hero is Pat Rafter, for many reasons.

**Mr SAWFORD**—*Of Mice and Men* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are texts, are they?

**Brody Lloyd**—Yes, for English..

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any other books that you are reading at the moment other than texts?

**Brody Lloyd**—Probably not.

**Adam Goossens**—I am the same as Brody; I am also reading *Of Mice and Men*—no other texts really. For hero I would definitely have to say Sir Donald Bradman.

**Michael Hartwich**—I am reading *The Gathering*.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is that a text?

**Michael Hartwich**—Yes, and also *The Day of the Triffids*. I do not really have an Australian hero.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is *The Day of the Triffids* coming true?

**Michael Hartwich**—I don't know!

**Jarrod Parker**—I am reading *Winter* by John Marsden. I do not really have a hero.

**Tom Brookman**—I am reading *The Stone of Farewell* by Tad Williams. Does the hero have to be Australian?

**Mr SAWFORD**—No.

**Tom Brookman**—I have always admired William Wallace.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is the Scottish leader?

**Tom Brookman**—Yes.

**John Miller**—We have just finished reading *The Chrysalids*. I have no idea who that is by. I did not really read it at all.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You did not like the book?

**John Miller**—No. It was a bit unrealistic. I like Rupert McCall. He writes good poetry—*Green and Gold Malaria*. That's it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is more realistic? You said it was not realistic.

**John Miller**—No. It was set in the future. It was about oppression.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You could not connect to the book?

**John Miller**—It was after a nuclear fallout, so—yes. My hero is Gough Whitlam.

**Alexander Chatburn**—I am reading the *Legend of Humour* by Richard N. Ark. It is a good book. For a hero I would have to say a fictitious one, a guy called Brightblade in a book I read. He was a knight who grew up in a poor society. His dream was to become a knight. He got it and then he went out, he defended this tower and he got killed and he became a hero. He saw his dream, he went after it, and he got it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is a sense of humour important for boys' education?

**Alexander Chatburn**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you connect better with teachers who have a sense of humour?

**Alexander Chatburn**—Yes, definitely.

**Christian Bateman**—Yes, it makes it a little bit better if the teacher you have has a bit of a sense of humour. If a teacher is teaching strictly work, then you start to get bored pretty easily. There is nothing keeping you switched on all the time. You start to try and find something else to do to keep yourself occupied. But if you have a teacher who has a sense of humour and is cracking jokes every now and again with the class, then it keeps you a bit more switched on. It keeps you thinking about what he is talking about. If you know there is going to be a joke coming along that you can laugh about with the rest of the class, you kind of pay attention more. I think that is important for education, because you cannot learn and think if you do not pay attention.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I do not want you to name teachers, but what would turn you off in terms of the approach of a teacher? What do teachers do wrongly, as far as you are concerned, that are just a switch-off?

**Christian Bateman**—I think they just talk about nothing for a while—about the work, and that—so you are sitting there, and listening to what they have to say, and they keep on talking, so you start to just look around a bit more, wondering what is happening outside the window, and they keep on going, and then they set you things on what they have just talked about, but because it was so boring you have not listened, and then you do not know what to do. I think if you do not pay attention and teachers do not help you to pay attention, then you start to struggle a bit more in your work.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have teachers who start off lessons by making it exciting or challenging, or even provocative? How do you respond to that sort of teaching?

**Christian Bateman**—There are not many teachers that I know who would start off with something a bit more exciting.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you think they should?

**Christian Bateman**—I think they should, yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you like being challenged?

**Christian Bateman**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you like being provoked?

**Christian Bateman**—Sometimes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Nicholas?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes, I would have to agree with what Chris has said. Teachers have to be a bit more exciting towards the stuff they give us to do, like work and stuff.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are teachers too conservative?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In what way would you say they are?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—I do not know; we just have too much boring work to do in class time, like essays and stuff.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you find more interesting in terms of the way you learn?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—I do not know. Probably a bit of talking to friends and stuff, as well as work—about the work you are doing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Variety?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Active, changing all the time?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Do you talk in the classroom?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes, sometimes.

**CHAIR**—Does the teacher say something about that?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—Yes, if it gets a bit too rowdy.

**CHAIR**—Would you prefer to have a quieter classroom, or do you not mind the noise of your mates talking?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—I do not mind the noise.

**CHAIR**—What about everyone else? Would you rather have a quieter classroom, or you do not mind the chat?

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—It depends on the lesson.

**Ms GILLARD**—When we have gone around and talked to boys, particularly, about their education, one of the things we have been asking is this: ‘When you get to the stage where you are picking subjects, rather than just having to study what is given to you, how will you make that decision on which subjects to pick?’ Does anybody have a view about that?

**Jarrold Parker**—Obviously we have to do the subjects that we are doing—science, maths and English—and then I do not know. I am doing a language. That is an option that I have to do. All of us I think at the moment are doing history and geography—I am not sure—but then we get one other option each semester. I try to find an option that may not have such a heavy workload and incorporates fun as well as the work, so you end up having fun at the same time, like drama.

**David Richardson**—We make choices on subjects that we enjoy doing, not that we have to do, and it does help if they have a small workload because in a lot of the core subjects we are getting more and more homework and it just wears you down after a while. If you can have less work to do sometimes, it would probably help you in choosing your other subjects, because you would not necessarily choose some that have less workloads; you could do ones that you enjoy more.

**Ms GILLARD**—Do you think there are some subjects that boys are better at and some subjects girls are better at?

**Steven Battersby**—I think boys try and keep to practical ones, instead of writing and literature—as in PE, I suppose, tech and catering and stuff like that, things that do not involve so much writing.

**Ms GILLARD**—You reckon boys are better at those things?

**Steven Battersby**—Yes, I think they enjoy doing them more and choose them more.

**Jarrad Cody**—I reckon it counts on interests. You find that girls and boys have different interests.

**Ms GILLARD**—In what way?

**Jarrad Cody**—I personally chose my subjects on what I want to be when I am older. I think a lot of girls actually follow that as well—what they would like to be.

**Ms GILLARD**—What would you like to be?

**Jarrad Cody**—I want to be an electronics engineer, so anything to do with electronics or science.

**Ms GILLARD**—Does anybody else have a view on that? Tom?

**Thomas Bennett**—As Jarrad said, you have to give yourself some subjects you need if you want to be a certain thing, like for a university course, but also to give yourself variety, so that if you change your mind you are not completely cut out of other areas—I suppose the core subjects and some cultural things so you get a variety so that you can change your mind.

**Brody Lloyd**—You need things that you need for your future with things that you like as well, so that you can relax and have a bit of fun in lesson time. Lots of the teachers at our school let you do that, so it is good. I have chosen drama and music this semester and catering next semester. They are really good and you can let your hair down and have fun.

**Ms GILLARD**—Do more girls do drama than boys?

**Brody Lloyd**—It is two to seven in the class.

**Ms GILLARD**—Two boys to seven girls?

**Brody Lloyd**—Yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—What about music? Do more girls do music than boys?

**Brody Lloyd**—It is spread out a lot. Heaps of guys do electric guitar and all that and have heaps of fun.

**Ms GILLARD**—What about catering? Do more girls do catering than boys?

**Brody Lloyd**—I think so.

**John Miller**—What I did this year and last year was treated them as practice years. I chose subjects that I would enjoy to test them out for years 11 and 12.

**Ms GILLARD**—When you get to years 11 and 12, if boys pick subjects that mostly girls do, so that they are going to go into a class which is, like the drama class, mainly girls, do people think that is a problem—to end up in a class that is mostly girls?

**John Miller**—No.

**Ms GILLARD**—No?

**David Richardson**—It could be a bit of a problem, because that would turn them off doing more stuff with that class and they would probably keep to themselves a lot more instead of joining in with group activities. If there are no boys or their friends or anything, then they are not really going to want to go with any girls that they do not know.

**Ms GILLARD**—So if you did not have any mates there it might be a problem?

**David Richardson**—Yes.

**Jarrold Parker**—As David said, I do not think it really matters if it is more girls or more boys, as long as you have some friends, no matter which sex they are.

**Ms GILLARD**—Would a boy choosing a subject that mostly girls do get teased by other boys for having made that choice?

**Jarrold Parker**—Probably.

**Ms GILLARD**—You reckon?

**Jarrold Parker**—Depending on the social status of the boy.

**Ms GILLARD**—What do other people reckon? You did not think so, Alex?

**Alexander Chatburn**—No, I do not think they would; it is a subject.

**Ms GILLARD**—Steven?

**Steven Battersby**—Yes, I think you feel a lot more relaxed if you are with your friends. You do not have to put on a show or anything. You just act normal and do the work and stuff. It feels like safe ground.

**Ms GILLARD**—So you would not go, or that might be a reason not to do a class that is mostly girls, because you would not have your friends there?

**Steven Battersby**—Yes, friends that are girls.

**Ms GILLARD**—Chris?



**Christian Bateman**—It depends on your attitude towards the people and the subjects. If I really liked the subject I would not care who was in it. It could be Mongolian monkeys and I would not care. If it was a subject that you did not really enjoy and then it was made worse by friends not being there, I think then that would be a problem. But it depends on the relationships you have with people around you. Male or female—I do not think it matters.

**Ms GILLARD**—But most of you do not think a boy would get teased for picking child care or something like that, if that was an option—really traditionally a girls' subject?

**Christian Bateman**—Not really.

**Tom Brookman**—Yes, I can speak from experience there. Last year I chose dance as a subject. I was the only guy in the class and I do not think there was a single person in my entire school who did not pay me out at one stage or another.

**Mr WILKIE**—Was it worth it?

**Tom Brookman**—Not particularly.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Did you show them the film *Billy Elliott*?

**Tom Brookman**—No, steer away from that one.

**Ms GILLARD**—It is a really good movie. You should go and see it.

**Mr WILKIE**—We talked before about heroes, and people mainly mentioned men. What women do you admire and why?

**Matthew Thame**—Cathy Freeman. She is one that comes to mind. I do not know—I do not really see as many women in the spotlight as men—but they are coming into it more recently.

**Brody Lloyd**—My mum, because she is really good.

**Ryan Looker**—I agree with Brody. I think my mother as well, because she is very down to earth, likes to joke around, is not uptight, is easy to talk to and stuff like that.

**Michael Hartwich**—I would probably say Cathy Freeman or Nicole Kidman, because she made it in America from Australia, which does not normally happen.

**Jarrod Parker**—Probably going with the trend, my mum as well, but also some great women figures of the past, writers like Emily Dickinson and people like that.

**Tom Brookman**—The library is right next to us—Dame Roma Mitchell, because I know she went for what she believed in and was a kind of pioneer.

**John Miller**—My mum, of course, as well as one of my mum's idols named Hilda Duprano. A lot of women idolise her. She fought for women's rights, she chained herself to a building and the cops came and arrested her.

**Mr WILKIE**—Fair enough.

**Alexander Chatburn**—Joan of Arc. Through that oppression and stuff, she just went through it, did what she wanted.

**Christian Bateman**—I think probably anybody who has made a big go of their life. Catherine Helen Spence believed in what she was doing. She was the first woman in parliament, I think. Anybody who has the guts to do what they want is a hero in my eyes.

**Nicholas Pettigrew**—I would have to agree with Matthew; there are not as many women in the spotlight as heroes as there are men, just like the past. There are a few more coming in now.

**Jarrad Cody**—I would also have to agree with that. There does not seem to be as many women, that I can think of anyway. It is also about interest, as well. We are a bit more interested in what males like to do.

**David Richardson**—I would probably say someone like Margaret Thatcher, because she was the first female Prime Minister of England, and probably just the person who will say, 'I've done it so now other females can do it.'

**Mr WILKIE**—You and John can have some great conversations outside. Steven?

**Steven Battersby**—I think probably any female that stands up for what she think is right, like Joan of Arc.

**Shaun Cooper**—Yes, I thought Joan of Arc as well because she did what she believed in and did not care what other people thought about it. She just stood up for what she believed.

**Jonothon Wilson**—Women who have made it big in what they do, such as Cathy Freeman.

**Tom Brookman**—I do not really have anyone that I look up to with females, but I found it interesting that pretty much everyone here named a female that they looked up to and not a male.

**Mr WILKIE**—All right, thanks for that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How many of you have mum at home? Mum was a hero. How many are not working—in other words, mum is at home most of the time? The majority? No? Whose mother is at home, not working? A minority. Whose mother is working full-time at the moment? Whose mother is working part-time? The majority. What about at school? Do you have boys classes or are they all co-ed?

**Tom Brookman**—We did last year. It was trialled last year in English.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What was the reaction? There have been none this year?

**Tom Brookman**—Yes.

**Jonothon Wilson**—An all-boys English class.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What were the pluses and minuses of that experiment? Who can talk about some pluses? What was good about it, John?

**John Miller**—Some of the people I talked to—I was not personally in that class—said they all liked it. They liked the teacher especially. She left. But they liked it and they got higher grades, I reckon.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do boys compete against boys, or do boys compete against girls?

**John Miller**—No, not really.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Who do boys compete against, Steven?

**Steven Battersby**—Academically I think they compete against each other, but in sport they compete just against themselves.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What were some of the perhaps negative things about the boys experiment in English language or English literature? Were there some negative things, Tom?

**Tom Brookman**—Yes, I suppose because there was a big group of friends it was always louder and there was a lot less control than the co-ed class.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The co-ed class was less controlled?

**Tom Brookman**—No, the co-ed class was more controlled. The single-sex class was rowdier. I was in the class and I think it did help because we did compete against each other a bit, which meant that the grades went up by a fair bit. But that was also because of the teacher; she was a really good teacher.

**Mr WILKIE**—Someone mentioned that having a good relationship with the teacher was really good and that lifted the marks. Do you find that generally, when you get on well with a teacher, you tend to perform a lot better?

**John Miller**—Definitely.

**Mr WILKIE**—Okay, nearly everyone.

**Brody Lloyd**—Sometimes you try, and if they want you to do something, you like them and you want to do it for them because you like them and you get on well with them. But if you do not like the teacher and they tell you to do something you think, 'I'm not going to do that

because I don't like that teacher.' But if you get on with them you generally look up to them and want to do well.

**CHAIR**—If a teacher praises you, does that make you work a bit harder? Or, if you have done something that you think is fairly good and you do not get a pat on the back for it, does that make you lose your interest in that subject?

**Brody Lloyd**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**John Miller**—On the negatives and positives, the problem was that we got split up halfway through the year because they trialled it, so we had to do two Shakespeare things, which really did get boring.

**CHAIR**—On the question of teachers praising you or not praising you, Alex?

**Alexander Chatburn**—It really depends what you think of the teacher. If you like the teacher and they praise you, you think, 'Great, I'm doing well, the teacher noticed.' But if you do not like them and they do not praise you—

**CHAIR**—If you did not like them and they said something positive to you, would that encourage you to do a little bit better?

**Alexander Chatburn**—Not really.

**CHAIR**—Okay.

**David Richardson**—I reckon that if you do something good and they say, 'Yes, that's good but see if you can do better next time,' that sort of helps you along because they are giving you a kind of challenge. I reckon people respond better if they are being put under a bit of pressure of challenge. But if you do something good and they just say, 'Oh, yes, you should have done better than that,' it is just negative reinforcement. I reckon that is not good.

**CHAIR**—Excellent.

**Jarrad Cody**—I think you tend to get respect for teachers that are nice to you. If they are nice to you, you think, 'Well, they are being nice to me, trying hard, and I will try hard and be nice to them and do what they want me to do.'

**Steven Battersby**—I think if you try really hard on something and they say, 'That's not good enough,' that really makes you not try as hard next time. You think, 'Well, they're not going to give me a good mark, stuff it, I won't try it.'

**Brody Lloyd**—It is good if you get a mark and they say, 'That was good, but next time try and do this and this.' As long as they recognise the work that you have done, that is good. If they can give you something to work more on, then that is fine.

**John Miller**—What I have found from personal experience—because I have had my fair share of trouble—is that, with the teachers who do not like you, or who you do not like because they are a bit biased towards other people, if they do say positive things you will go, ‘Oh,’ just because there is doubt in your mind whether they are bad or good, but good teachers are usually really good to you and favour you and give you lots of stuff, like Minties and house points.

**Shaun Cooper**—It does not really matter if they say that it is not as good, but if they point out exactly what is wrong with it, then you know what is wrong with it and you can fix what you are doing.

**CHAIR**—Okay. Can I just ask one last question, because a lot of schools we go to are very positive or negative in this area? Do you have problems with bullies in the school? I particularly want to ask you, Tom, this question. You said you did dancing and you got bagged out on. Had your mates not said something to you, would you have taken dancing again the following year?

**Thomas Bennett**—No, I did not actually enjoy the class.

**CHAIR**—Can anyone answer me about the bullying? Do you have bullying problems at school?

**Brody Lloyd**—Trinity does an excellent job of preventing that. They have lots of things, and in RE last year there was a big course on bullying and what is right and wrong. I think that, with some people that might have been bullying, from that lesson they thought, ‘Oh, okay then,’ and they stopped. So Trinity does a good job of doing that, so there not many cases of bullying.

**CHAIR**—Excellent. Anyone else want to answer there? Yes, David?

**David Richardson**—I would agree with that statement, except there always will be a few rogue people who will still continue bullying, but it is pretty much the minority of people.

**Christian Bateman**—I think everybody seems to get along reasonably well. I do not think there is a case of outcasts that people would want to bully. Any bullying that goes on I think is strictly because you’re a mate; it is just meant as friends and is not meant to hurt, and it doesn’t hurt. No serious bullying goes on, because there are no groups that have been outcast and put aside. Everybody gets along pretty well.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How would you know if it was serious?

**Christian Bateman**—When it stops becoming a joke, when people start to really mean it—and you can tell when they really mean it. If they are just joking around, they will laugh along with you and you will laugh and you will say something back, and they will laugh. It has not happened to me, but when it starts to become serious you pretty much know it is.

**Jarrad Cody**—I think there is a lot less bullying at Trinity, because I notice there are a lot of groups, and if one group does not like another group they just do not tend to interact with them.

**CHAIR**—I understand.

**John Miller**—It states in the diary that for bullying and harassment you get DTs and trouble—and lots of that—because it is wrong.

**CHAIR**—So it is leading by example, in other words.

**John Miller**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—It tells you what the standards are.

**John Miller**—Yes. All the school rules are stated in the diary. I do not think anyone actually reads it but—

**CHAIR**—But you know it is there, and what the standard would be that controls it.

**John Miller**—Yes.

**Jarrold Parker**—There is always bullying in the schoolyard but most of it is petty and you just ignore it, take no notice.

**CHAIR**—It does not stop you from learning?

**Jarrold Parker**—No.

**Michael Hartwich**—Going back to the comment about how it is mostly just a joke, speaking from personal experience it is not a joke because I have been bullied. Trinity is good with it because you know that you can speak to people about it and they will believe you, like the teachers and the captain and the prefects. You can go to them if you ever have a problem.

**CHAIR**—You appear to have a very good fallback system. Thank you very much. We really appreciate the time you have given to us today. You have made a very valuable contribution to our inquiry, and when our report does come down we will make sure that the school gets copies of that inquiry. Your school should be very proud of your interaction with us today. It is one of the best that we have had so far. Thank you for your time, and all the best for your future.

[2.46 p.m.]

**BLIGHT, Mr Julian, Student, Trinity College**

**BUCKSEALL, Ms Carolyn, Student, Trinity College**

**CONOLEY, Mr Benjamin, Student, Trinity College**

**FALLS, Mr Shaun, Student, Trinity College**

**HAIN, Mr Craig, Student, Trinity College**

**HEWITSON, Mr Michael Gordon, Principal and Chief Executive Officer, Trinity College**

**McGREGOR, Mr Scott, Student, Trinity College**

**MEANEY, Mr Joel, Student, Trinity College**

**NEVILLE, Mr Tim, Student, Trinity College**

**ROGERS, Mr Ryan, Student, Trinity College**

**SHERWOOD, Mr Christopher, Student, Trinity College**

**WARD, Mr Ashley, Student, Trinity College**

**WIGNALL, Mr Jonathon, Student, Trinity College**

**WINTERFIELD, Mr Andrew, Student, Trinity College**

**ZORICH, Mr Michael, Student, Trinity College**

**CHAIR**—Firstly, I would like to welcome you here. Thank you very much for the contribution you have been making to our inquiry into the education of boys. The inquiry process includes a number of school visits and public hearings in locations around Australia. We have been to Melbourne, Queensland, Sydney and Adelaide. We will be in Western Australia at the end of the week, and we will be travelling to other territories and states and especially visiting our rural and regional areas.

We have heard that, on average, boys' education performance is lagging behind that of girls, although we know it is not correct to argue that all boys perform poorly and all girls perform better. We just know that there is a problem out there and that boys are not doing as well. That is what the inquiry is all about—to see what we can do, what recommendations can be made to bring the standard up slightly.

We would like to make this session very informal, very relaxed. We would love to hear anything you might like to tell us about where you think education for boys could be improved

or if you think there is something special about this school you would like to tell us about that encourages you to learn a little bit better. Maybe we could go round the room. Make a slight contribution if you can, and just say what you like about the school or what you would like to see changed. Joel, we will start with you.

**Joel Meaney**—I do not have that much to say. I do not know if it is a misconception, but it is conceived that the girls always seem to do better than we do. I just see that the blokes are put down or it is not cool to do well, that sort of thing. If a bloke is not good at sport, well, he is not that popular, that sort of thing.

**CHAIR**—Are you put down by your peers or by girls or teachers?

**Joel Meaney**—More so peers. That is not always the case, but that does happen. I cannot speak for the girls, what happens there, but I know that it seems to be a bit of a problem as far as I am concerned.

**Andrew Winterfield**—I think this school in particular has such a wide range of activities that we can all participate in and excel in something, so I do not think it has a huge effect at this school, as such.

**Jonathon Wignall**—I do not think it has much of an effect. The teachers are pretty good. They look after you; they treat you equally. I do not really see anything wrong with the school at the moment.

**Tim Neville**—I think the school does offer a lot and it helps. If you are not good at sport, you can excel in your music or your drama—or you can do all three, which makes it hard. But, yes, if you are not as good at one thing, as a guy there is other stuff you can fall back on, but sport tends to be what all the guys go for, and there are lacks in drama and music.

**CHAIR**—And why do they pick those and not the academic ones, do you think?

**Tim Neville**—Pressure, probably.

**Benjamin Conoley**—I like how the teachers will help you after school if you are struggling with a subject. I have a lot of problems in maths now, but I see the teachers a lot and they help me out after school once a week.

**Scott McGregor**—I agree with the other guys. Most of the guys go for sport and it is uncool to be smart or go well in your academic subjects, but there is a lot of range in the subjects that you can do.

**CHAIR**—If your mates say it is uncool, do you fall back on your work then—or would you do that?

**Scott McGregor**—If they think it is uncool, then that is up to them. I do what I want to do.

**CHAIR**—Good on you.



**Shaun Falls**—Yes, I agree with everyone pretty much. I think all the boys really like to go for the sport. Whether they just like it as a relaxation or it is uncool to be smart, I am not sure, but I think there is a good variety here with sport as well as academic subjects.

**CHAIR**—Have you been to other schools other than Trinity?

**Shaun Falls**—Yes, I used to go to Birdwood High School.

**CHAIR**—Did you find a problem there with learning?

**Shaun Falls**—No, but they also did not have as great a variety of subjects to choose from, so for that purpose this is a better school.

**Julian Blight**—I think a greater percentage of male teachers might help. Most of my teachers this year are female, and I do not think they can cope quite as well with some students as male teachers—like helping them understand. I think male teachers can communicate better.

**CHAIR**—Do you have a male teacher?

**Julian Blight**—Yes, I have one male teacher.

**Christopher Sherwood**—On the subject of sport, I think most boys go for that because they might find it easier than the academic things. It is just an easier way if you want to succeed, and I think the guys find that an easier way to succeed in life. But all the teachers really do help you out, like after school and things like that, if you are lacking in the academic subjects.

**CHAIR**—Now you are in the senior years do you take your schooling a lot more seriously than you did?

**Christopher Sherwood**—Yes. I do not know about other schools, but you do not really get as much work until you hit year 11. I think they are doing it better now, because they say they give us a lot more work than we might get next year. They are trying to get us ready for next year.

**Ryan Rogers**—I think it really depends what the school focuses on, and at Trinity, with education and sport, we have an attitude to succeed through everything. That attitude is spread throughout the whole school. You see all these people succeeding and it motivates you to succeed as well. I think that is good.

**Ashley Ward**—The school makes you play sport for the school, primarily, and I think that creates a good atmosphere among the boys, like with football, basketball and whatever sport it is. It creates a team atmosphere. That is brought back into the classroom, and that helps you to learn and you feel more at ease with your friends, so you feel more at ease with the people that you learn with and then you listen more.

**CHAIR**—So if your mates are listening, you will listen?

**Ashley Ward**—Yes.

**Michael Zorich**—I agree with what everyone has said. I think everyone has covered it pretty much.

**Craig Hain**—I really love Trinity. I have lots of out-of-school friends and they do not seem to be getting the same kind of benefits that I do. Trinity has so many year 12 subjects, and I have been able to pick exactly what I want. I am so happy with it. I am now enjoying school a whole lot more because my subjects are based around what I want to do, what I enjoy and things like that. As I have been through school, the teachers become more—not teachers, but more say your friends. They understand you more, and you talk about what you are doing outside of school a whole lot more. You become more friendly. Then it is easier when you have got a problem to ask questions and things like that, and also to enjoy the extracurricular activities, like sport and drama and music. We seem to do pretty well in it all.

**Ms GILLARD**—When we have talked to boys as we have gone around with this inquiry, we have talked to them about picking subjects—when you got to choose subjects, why you made the subject choices that you did. Can anybody tell me why they picked what they are doing now?

**Shaun Falls**—I am not sure what I want to do when I leave school, so I have chosen ones that I not only enjoy but I know I can do, just to keep my options open.

**Craig Hain**—I am pretty dead-set on being in the hospitality field somewhere. I have based my subjects around that. I have still left one subject open, and that is biology.

**Ryan Rogers**—It is really hard for us to decide, within a couple of years of our lives, what we want to do for the rest of our lives. Sometimes people pick subjects that they do not really like and they lose motivation to succeed. They think it is too hard and say, ‘What’s the point? I don’t even know what I want to do.’ Do you understand what I’m trying to say? It leads to nothing because they have no idea what they want to do past school.

**Ms GILLARD**—And they pick those subjects because there is a—

**Ryan Rogers**—Because they have no idea. They have nothing to focus on. Do you understand what I’m saying?

**Ms GILLARD**—Yes, I do. Do you think that there are some subjects boys are better at and some subjects girls are better at?

**Michael Zorich**—I reckon it is variety. It is hard to say girls are better at one subject and boys at another one. In most of the classes I am doing for law, there are a variety of boys that are good. There is not really one person who is bad in the class. It is a matter of how much you try in the end.

**Ms GILLARD**—What do the rest of you think? Are there some subjects girls are better at and some subjects boys are better at?

**Craig Hain**—During the younger year levels, it tends to be that girls are better at cooking and sewing and stuff that girls like. Guys are tech and PE orientated, and that seems to be what they excel at. But as you slowly get towards year 12, it becomes broader, because they can pick what they like. They mix really well and the skills are passed on because you get along better with your friends, so you do not leave the girls out; you tend to include them more in your PE games and things like that. Towards the end, it gets a whole lot closer.

**Ms GILLARD**—One of the boys we were talking to earlier said that he was the only boy in a dance class and basically got teased by his mates a fair bit for picking that. Do people think that is a general thing? If you pick a subject which mostly girls do, would you think you would get teased for that, or people would bag you a little bit for it?

**Ryan Rogers**—I do not think it is right but I think it does happen.

**Ms GILLARD**—I do not think it is right. Does it happen?

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—Does that affect how you think about picking subjects? You wouldn't pick one of those subjects because you wouldn't want to be in a position where you are going to get bagged like that?

**Ryan Rogers**—I guess, to a certain extent. I am not too sure. If you really want to do it, it should not really matter what anyone else thinks. But if you have an inkling of doing that subject and then you have that in the back of your mind, you would probably change.

**Joel Meaney**—Ryan has pretty much covered what I was going to say. I remember a specific case with child studies. There was one bloke in the class and he used to get picked on a fair bit because of that. I was never interested in child studies anyway, but that is one I would never dream of doing.

**Mr WILKIE**—Are any of you guys doing dance this year?

**Joel Meaney**—No.

**Tim Neville**—The same thing happened last year in our year level. We had a child studies class with one guy in it, and he copped a fair bit of snook from everybody. The girls in his class even said stuff to him about it.

**Michael Zorich**—Sometimes guys can joke about it, though, with a full bunch of girls in the class. They think, 'Oh, yeah, I'm with all the girls and you're with the guys,' and stuff like that. They can turn it around positively from their point of view. It depends on how mentally strong you are as to whether you can block out all of what your peers say. You can turn it into a positive view and joke around like that person did and say, 'Yeah, I'm with all the girls and I'm having a good time.' That is how they can look it, but I am sure there are other views and ways of doing it.

**Ms GILLARD**—You would have to be pretty confident to do that though, wouldn't you?

**Michael Zorich**—Yes, that is right.

**Christopher Sherwood**—In my electronic engineering class at the moment, there is only one girl, and nothing has been said at all really. She is probably one of the best students in our class.

**Ms GILLARD**—You do not think it necessarily works against girls who pick—

**Christopher Sherwood**—Yes, it does not. Mostly guys would bag other guys if they are in a more girlie kind of subject than girls would bag girls if they are in electronics or something. I do not know if electronics is only for guys, but she is there more in the class than—

**Ms GILLARD**—We have had material before this inquiry that says that boys disproportionately select the maths, physics and chemistry style subjects, even though a percentage of the boys who select that seem to struggle in them. The girls seem to think, 'I'm going to struggle with physics' or whatever, so they are broader in their subject choices. That might be part of the explanation when we look at statewide results. There is a difference between girls' attainment and boys' attainment. Boys have gone into too narrow a range of subjects, not necessarily the right subjects for their achievements.

**Ryan Rogers**—I think that is right.

**Ms GILLARD**—You think that's right? Boys get streamed into those subjects a bit?

**Ryan Rogers**—Last year a couple of my friends and I did maths 1 and maths 2, physics and chemistry. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. We were sitting there in chemistry thinking, 'What is all this stuff about?' We had no idea. When we were in it, it was too late. So this year I am not doing any of the subjects I did last year. I think what you said is right.

**Ms GILLARD**—Why did you pick those subjects?

**Ryan Rogers**—They are the smart subjects that will get me somewhere, but I did not choose what I really was good at and what I like doing. I thought, 'I'll do these subjects because they're hard subjects, so they must lead somewhere good—university or somewhere.' I do not think I was educated enough to choose what I wanted to do. This year I am only doing one subject—maths 1—that I did last year. So it was a bit of a waste last year.

**Michael Zorich**—Just going on with subject choosing, I think parents play a big role in that. They want to see their sons succeed, and they place a lot of pressure on them. They say you have to do something to get into some course they want you to get into.

**Ms GILLARD**—Like medicine and courses like that?

**Michael Zorich**—Yes.

**Ms GILLARD**—High status courses?

**Michael Zorich**—The amount of pressure they put on them to choose the hard subjects is so they can make themselves happy, not thinking about what their child really wants to do. He might not be cut out for doing schoolwork. He might just want to—

**Ms GILLARD**—Do child care?

**Michael Zorich**—Yes, but they put pressure on all the time to get what they want instead of thinking about what their child wants.

**Ms GILLARD**—Do you think parents do that more to boys than girls, more to sons than daughters?

**Michael Zorich**—Probably, because they think girls can do it on their own. We had a meeting about it in year 12 a couple of weeks ago. They were stressing how parents should support their child and what they do. It is both sides as well, but boys, from what you are saying, just stream into the subject they choose, and that is what their parents want as well.

**Craig Hain**—It could also possibly be that as a society we are still trying to level out the equal rights thing. Males have a higher standard. Guys were the ones that made a living, so they were the smarter ones and the ladies stayed at home. Maybe parents are thinking, 'They're the guys. They're going to be the ones bringing in the income. They have to be doing this, this, this and this,' and the girls do not have that pressure. They can do it if they are smart, but if they do not it is okay.

**Benjamin Conoley**—This year I picked maths 1, maths 2, chemistry, physics and literature based English. I picked them because I do not know exactly where I want to go. I want to be in the armed services as an officer, but I do not know what subjects I need. I picked ones that, if I did not do them, I could not do next year.

**Ms GILLARD**—Are you finding it hard?

**Benjamin Conoley**—I got the marks to get in there. I am finding I can do the maths; I just need a bit more practice at it. But the other subjects I am doing okay in.

**Ms GILLARD**—That is good.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And it is only March. Julian, you said that some female teachers do not cope with boys. What are some of the attributes of those teachers that cause that situation?

**Julian Blight**—Sometimes you feel like you are isolated and being ignored, and sometimes it is a chore for them to come and help you. Sometimes it seems like they are siding with the girls on some things—just little things like that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How would you describe the lessons? Are they organised? Do you know the purpose of the lesson every time you front up? Are the lessons monitored? Are they active? Are they structured, or are you just set to work and away you go?

**Julian Blight**—It varies. We can be set work and the teacher might come around and check it. I find it really hard sometimes when I am doing work and a teacher is glaring down from behind me. Sometimes that can make it uncomfortable.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What would you prefer?

**Julian Blight**—I get down and do my work, so I do not think I need to be checked on every two minutes. They should just set the work and we will do it. There are some students that would not work for, of course.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Ryan, you made mention of attitude to success. Are you talking about team success? Are you talking about loyalty? Are you talking about courage? Are you talking about winning?

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes. I was talking from a personal view. With the school, with athletics in particular, when we go out running at Santos stadium, I run and I want to win because I do not want to let the school down. I want to make the school proud, if you know what I mean. I want to make a good name for the school. I think everyone thinks that. I see these other people succeeding at school and it motivates me to achieve higher. It motivates me to work harder, to put more effort in.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are saying very positive things about competition.

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any negative issues about competition in schools?

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes. We will be in a classroom doing work and all these people will be getting really good marks. You do not get as good a mark as they do and it does not make you work hard enough. If I get a really good mark in a subject, it makes me work harder. I think, 'Yeah, I'm doing well in this subject. I've put more work in and I'll keep on doing something, keep my marks up.' If you get low marks it has a negative—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you ever had low marks? I am putting you on the spot here.

**Ryan Rogers**—I get low marks but not low, low marks. I am not talking about low marks but in comparison to other people—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Self-confessional. But in terms of recovering from a low mark and getting back to average grades or even higher than average grades, what sort of things need to happen to boys in order to be able to do that, particularly if it is a subject you like?

**Ryan Rogers**—I know, when I get low marks in comparison to what I want to be getting, I have to work harder. I motivate myself, if you know what I mean. I have a goal; I want to get up with everyone else, so I follow that. I do not know what other people do. I have no idea really.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are highly self-motivated.

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes.

**Tim Neville**—I am in a group at school where they are all very high achievers. Probably 80 per cent of the group is doing maths 1 and 2 and physics-chem. We are all doing the same course. We will be going into classes, competing against each other. There are probably seven guys. We find that we are competing against each other and our standard is rising. I will be getting 85 or 87 for a test and, if you look at results from previous years, that would be a good mark, but the other 10 people in the class that I hang around with all the time will be getting 87 or above, or just below 87, so the standard is higher. The competitiveness with people helps in that way.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You made the proviso ‘with high achievers’. What happens in a situation where someone is bombing out in an area, say the dear old maths 1, maths 2, physics-chem disaster, as I used to call it? If someone is doing badly in that scene, how do they recover? Do their peers help them, or do they drop out?

**Tim Neville**—I do not know. I cannot speak for other people. But I know, if I get a bad mark, first I find out what I have done wrong, but I also ask other people who have got good marks what they did differently. That has helped me get a better mark for the next test.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does anyone else want to make a comment on the competition aspect?

**Christopher Sherwood**—It all depends on who you hang around with. In the group I hang around with—it is just me and Ben over there—we are doing quite a few hard subjects and the rest of the group are mostly doing the business maths and the normal English and all that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you two compete?

**Christopher Sherwood**—Not particularly, because we are not in the same classes, but we are doing the same subjects. All of them do give you a bit of a bagging if you are doing all the hard subjects, but you just get by and you know that you will end up getting further than them, probably, if you are trying harder than them. You have to look at it as if you are giving yourself personal motivation and not just fall back on your peer pressure.

**Craig Hain**—If I have a problem I tend to go to my teacher and find out exactly what I did wrong, where and how I can fix it and stuff like that. Then with the next one I get them to check it. If it is an assignment, I get them to check it a week in advance and fix all the stuff in it, and then hand it in, hopefully for a higher mark.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You mentioned one of the great attractions of this school was the choice of subjects.

**Craig Hain**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Some people have mentioned to us in this inquiry that size of school matters as well—that you can get impersonal by having huge numbers. You have large enrolments in this school. What is more important—the size of the school, or the choice of the subjects?

**Craig Hain**—I think that comes hand in hand. If you do not have the size of the school there with the number of students, then the amount of subjects would have to be less, because you would not be able to fill the classes. Some of the classes only have 10 people in them. It is just enough. It is like a little study group. You get to throw ideas around with each other and teachers tend to be a bit more closer and tight-knit, so you work very well in these subjects. If it was too small, it would be one or two; you would be probably getting too much attention, and you most probably would not be doing your own work, but then if it was too big you would not be getting enough attention from the teachers.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are any of you in all-boy classes?

**Ashley Ward**—Not this year, but I was last year, in tech.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can you tell us some pluses or minuses about that?

**Ashley Ward**—It is a lot of fun. Not that when girls are in the class—but you do not really care what you do, like you can just muck around and act like idiots, but you do that anyway when the girls are—well, I do, anyway—in the class.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is not a self-confessional, Ashley.

**Ashley Ward**—Sorry, I do not do that! No, it is just the same, I think. It is just a subject that you do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One of the things I have noticed wandering around to all the co-ed schools we have gone to—and it does not matter whether they are primary or secondary—is that at the play period, when you are out in the yard, the girls are standing around talking, and the boys are all, in the main, playing games of some sort, usually with a ball. I think when I came here there were some girls on a swing, but basically they were talking; the swing was incidental. Are there different ways in which boys and girls learn? Should schools be aware of those differences? Do you notice anything about the way girls and boys learn in your classes?

**Craig Hain**—That is something I have realised with our year levels and maybe the year 12s from last year. Most schools have tight-knit little groups of 10 or 12 friends, and they see each other on the weekends and that. With our year level we have basically one big distinct group and we all get along well together. I think that helps as well, because you do not have breakups with other people. You might have the occasional one or two, but it is a better environment and when you go to class you do not say, ‘They are talking to me, I can’t talk back to them.’ You get along with everyone.



**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not suggesting there is a rightness or a wrongness about all this. All I am suggesting is that there is a natural way in which sometimes girls and boys choose to spend their leisure time at recess and lunch. My observation is that in every co-ed school we have been to the majority of girls are standing around, sitting around, talking, quite calmly—no big deal about it—and the boys, in the main, are being involved in groups of one or two but often with a ball and playing a game. That would suggest to me that boys and girls like different things, and maybe those differences are not only in the play area, but they happen in the classroom. Sometimes, boys are more successful in learning in a particular way, and sometimes girls are more successful in learning in a particular way. Are you aware of any of those things?

**Tim Neville**—The other day I commented on a girl's work. She kept changing pens all the time. She had all these pinks and purples and yellows. I said, 'Why are you doing that?' She said, 'Well, it makes it pretty and I can understand it.' She said to me how she finds her work easier to understand if it is looking good. I think that happens out in the yard as well. If girls are looking good they feel better about themselves, but the guys do not really care that much.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So, for girls, presentation skills are highly important?

**Tim Neville**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And for boys less important?

**Tim Neville**—Yes.

**Scott McGregor**—Yes. It depends on the subject. I know last year in science I always liked doing the practical side of science and did not like looking in the textbook, writing down notes and parts of it. It depends on the subject. This year it has changed around. I am doing physics and I like sitting down and looking in the textbook and actually learning what happens instead of doing the practical side of it. It changes around, but definitely the practical side of work is a lot easier—or I find it a lot easier.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Easier or more interesting?

**Scott McGregor**—I do not have to put as much effort into the practical side of work. I suppose it comes easier to me because I actually see what is happening and it is easier to understand.

**Julian Blight**—I personally think that guys have got a pretty small concentration span. If you listen to a teacher talking for an hour or just half an hour on a subject, you tune out after 10 minutes and it is pretty boring; you do not really want to learn.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do the girls do in those circumstances?

**Julian Blight**—They are usually pretty attentive. You do not see them mucking around and getting into trouble much.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So are they more task oriented?

**Julian Blight**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—They can be set a task and they can go for long periods of time without needing to be entertained?

**Julian Blight**—Yes, that is usually what happens.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does anyone else have any comments on the different ways you have noticed that boys and girls learn?

**Andrew Winterfield**—The girls are not as fussy about the environment in which they learn. You said the guys are there outside playing with a ball or something, and even in class they are the ones who do not complain about the window open when it is cold, or something. They like a bit of the outdoor atmosphere, even when they are in the classroom learning. The girls seem to be content with any atmosphere for learning. For the guys, it is almost like the outdoor atmosphere is a bit of an escape, even though you are still studying hard.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This is really putting Carolyn on the spot. Do you want to make any comment on the way in which you have observed boys and girls learning—without getting you into lots of hot water?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—You mentioned that in going to different co-ed schools you noticed that girls would be maybe standing around and boys were kicking footballs, but you also have to realise that football is pretty much a male orientated sport, and cricket is a male orientated sport, so girls do not really get that environment on the weekends. They mainly play netball. There is a smaller area for girls sport than there is for the male sports, so you do not see them doing that much at school because there is not the bigger area. If we could go out and do hurdles—I am sure we could, but there is always an oval there. There is always a footy around, but girls do not do that as a sport, so they do not do it at school.

**Mr SAWFORD**—A lot of the boys I watch are not playing organised football or cricket at all. They are throwing a ball. There are two of them and they are throwing a ball against a wall or bouncing a ball. They are not necessarily playing an organised game. What I am suggesting is that girls seem far more comfortable to be talking with each other rather than being active. Boys seem to—as a generalisation: not all boys, not all girls—want more active leisure time than just standing around talking.

**Carolyn Buckseall**—It is an activity that boys do, because I know that from year 3 and up I used to play football with boys, but as you get older—

**Mr SAWFORD**—You got too good for them?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—When boys play football for the clubs, they get too good for you and they do not want you playing with them. Girls just stand around because they do not know what to do basically, so we talk. That is all we are good at.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But there is a contradiction in what you are saying, in that people talk about success of males in sport, but actually in Australia girls are far more successful at sport

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than boys are. The biggest participation sport in Australia is netball—far bigger than any of the male sports. At the Olympic Games, who won more medals than the males? It was the women. For the last 20 years they have been far more successful in Olympic sport than males have. There is a contradiction here somewhere, isn't there?

**Craig Hain**—You are saying netball is the most popular sport. If there are 100 girls and 100 boys, how many sports are there that boys can play compared to how many sports that girls can play? They can play netball and tennis.

**Carolyn Buckseall**—That is what I am saying.

**Craig Hain**—We can play soccer, footy, cricket—there are numerous sports. The guys get split up into all these sports they like, and the girls go to netball because it is just generalised and it is what their friends do. The same with the Olympics—around the world there are not as many women competitors, so it is not as competitive. They are not as competitive as the males. That is why the girls in Australia tend to achieve more.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Carolyn made a very good point in terms of looking at the school grounds. If you look around here, there are cricket ovals, football ovals, soccer ovals.

**Carolyn Buckseall**—It is easier to pick up a football and start kicking it around with your mates than to find a netball and then find netball rings that need to be put up when the curriculum starts. There are more basketball courts than netball courts, so the boys have more opportunities to have physical activity.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Have you raised that matter with the staff or the principal?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—I have not found it a problem.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You have not found it a problem?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—No, because the girls have their activities outside school, or with their school curriculum or in PE.

**Ashley Ward**—Not talking about me again, but I would not go out of my way to find a footy. If there was a footy in front of me, I would kick it, but I would not go out of my way down to the sports room and pick up a footy or whatever.

**Ms GILLARD**—In lunchtime?

**Ashley Ward**—Yes. That is the only reason I would do something; otherwise I would just sit there and do nothing.

**Ms GILLARD**—What would you do during most lunchtimes?

**Ashley Ward**—I would just sit there and do nothing. There is sometimes a basketball there and I would go and play basketball; otherwise—I am just getting too lazy in my old age. I play sport, but—

**Mr SAWFORD**—You have just defeated your argument, Ashley.

**Tim Neville**—I found if we encourage the girls to come out to football with us they will do it. In a mixed group of boys and girls—about even-even—the guys will get a football at lunchtime and we will get the girls to come out with us and they will actually start kicking the football with us. It is just the encouragement.

**Ms GILLARD**—But if you were just going out to have a kick at lunchtime you would just grab your mates to do that, wouldn't you, rather than bother about organising the girls to come in?

**Tim Neville**—No, we have asked the girls. Every time we have asked the girls, they have wanted to come out with us. It is just their personal choice. We have virtually worn them down and they come out now and they will kick a football with us.

**Mr WILKIE**—I noticed at lunchtime that the girls were playing basketball with the guys out there, so there was some interaction.

**Ms GILLARD**—There is a probably a whole psychology about who claims the space, though, because once the boys are out there kicking the football you cannot get in amongst that to chuck the netball around.

**Mr WILKIE**—I noticed they could all run really quickly when they worked out they did not have their hats on.

**Ms GILLARD**—There is certainly a problem with hat wearing!

**Mr Hewitson**—If I could just respond on that, visiting teachers are amazed at how much they actually interact and do both play in that space.

**CHAIR**—Before we round the meeting up, would anyone else like to make a contribution?

**Mr SAWFORD**—We will do the reading question. I want to ask you what books you are reading. If you are reading a school text, that will be quite obvious, but if you are reading something else, add that in as well. Who do you admire in international society, in the world, today? Who do you admire? What are you currently reading? We will start with Craig.

**Craig Hain**—I am not reading anything, because I have too much work on. I am not sure who I admire in Australia—a few people, but I am not sure—sports figures and a few politicians.

**Michael Zorich**—I am reading three books at the moment: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy and *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. You said it could be international as well?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes.

**Michael Zorich**—Michael Jordan.

**Ms GILLARD**—Are they texts, those books you are reading?

**Michael Zorich**—Two of them are texts and one is for my own general purposes.

**Ms GILLARD**—That is *American Psycho*?

**Michael Zorich**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why did you choose *American Psycho*?

**Michael Zorich**—It's heaps good!

**Ms GILLARD**—It is a good book?

**Mr SAWFORD**—Come on, you know exactly why you are!

**Michael Zorich**—A couple of my friends are reading it and they recommended it to me.

**Ms GILLARD**—It is the gore aspect.

**Michael Zorich**—Yes.

**Ashley Ward**—I am reading *The Shining* and my hero is Andrew McLeod.

**Ryan Rogers**—I am reading *Fight Club*, and *American Psycho* like Michael. I do not really admire anyone in particular, just people who are not afraid to stand up for what they believe in.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So you admire courage?

**Ryan Rogers**—Yes.

**Christopher Sherwood**—I am reading *The Client* and the *Pelican Brief*, both by John Grisham. I admire anyone who will not fold under pressure, who will actually do what they think is going to help other people out.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Courage again.

**Julian Blight**—I am in the process of reading *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay, and in class we are starting to read *Hiroshima*, which I have not started yet.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How far are you through *The Power of One*?

**Julian Blight**—About halfway through.

**Mr SAWFORD**—An enjoyable book?

**Julian Blight**—Yes, it is a pretty good book. I admire the whole Indian cricket team.

**Shaun Falls**—I have just finished reading *In It Up To Here*. I cannot remember who that was by. I do not really admire anyone in particular—just anyone willing to give something a go and, if they do not get it at first, to try again or review their options.

**Scott McGregor**—I have just finished reading *Hiroshima* in class and finished reading *Con Air*, as well. I admire Steve Waugh.

**Benjamin Conoley**—I have just finished reading *Hiroshima* but I am always reading survival books and army texts and I like the Bush Tucker Man.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So you are into the nonfiction library?

**Benjamin Conoley**—Definitely.

**Tim Neville**—I am reading *Executive Orders*, I think it is, by Tom Clancy and *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller. I am just about to start *Maestro* in English class. I admire anyone who does not give up and who comes through life doing 100 per cent effort, especially Danny Hume from Centrals.

**Ms GILLARD**—Are you reading *Catch-22* because it is a text or because you picked it up?

**Tim Neville**—As a journal book on war mainly. I am reading three different contrasting books on war.

**Ms GILLARD**—For school?

**Tim Neville**—Yes, for journal entries.

**Jonathon Wignall**—I am reading *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey. I do not really admire a certain person, just a whole heap of people really.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do they have some characteristics, Jon?

**Jonathon Wignall**—Basically they are musicians.

**Andrew Winterfield**—I have just finished reading *Brave New World* and just started *A Clockwork Orange* for my journal reading. We have also just finished, as a class, *Pride and Prejudice*, which I have to say was not one of my favourite novels.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Tell me why.

**Andrew Winterfield**—I guess I was not big on the whole topic of marriage and finding husbands for daughters. The person who I admire is the Prime Minister, who is sticking by a lot of the stuff he has said and taking the criticism for it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I will come back to you in a minute, Andrew!

**Joel Meaney**—I am reading *Lazarus* and *The Hurricane* because I saw the movie *Hurricane* and I really liked it. I admire Tony Lockett. He is my idol.

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is an interesting trend, isn't there, in terms of the personal books you have chosen. They are almost extremist views; they are different views; they are active; they have a bit of horror, a bit of gore. They are probably more nonfiction than they are fiction. They are not *Pride and Prejudice*, are they? I know my first book in English—you just reminded me when you said *Pride and Prejudice*—was a book by an Australian author called *The Getting of Wisdom* which was about a young girl growing up. We all revolted. I came from a boys school and we actually revolted and had the teacher changed for choosing unsuitable texts. It is interesting, the choice of text. The books you have acknowledged have a certain genre to them all. You just pinpointed a different genre altogether.

**Ms GILLARD**—If you are going into girls books, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Pride and Prejudice*, but *Catch-22* is not a girls book.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, it is not.

**Ms GILLARD**—*Catch-22* is about war.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, that is what I am saying. We are talking about *Pride and Prejudice*.

**Ms GILLARD**—Yes, but that is a text.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, I am not suggesting that. What I am saying is that there are some texts in English literature studies that do not turn boys on; they just cannot connect. A couple of the earlier people mentioned Shakespeare. There are certainly some plays of Shakespeare which, when you are 14, 15 or 16, you cannot see anything of an attraction to, but you might see it a bit later on. Who is doing English? Are you satisfied with the texts you have in a general sense in the school? What do the girls do in terms of those choices of text?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—I did English last year.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What were the choices of text that you liked?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—We have to pick a theme for our journals.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So you had some flexibility in the choice?

**Carolyn Buckseall**—I did more poets, and *Snow Falling Over Cedars* and *Empire of the Sun*.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Who is going to be the professor of English in the group?

**CHAIR**—That is what I was going to ask. Does anyone want to be a schoolteacher?

**Jonathon Wignall**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—At what level, Jon?

**Jonathon Wignall**—Basically upper primary, early high school.

**CHAIR**—Did anyone want to form an opinion as to why they would not want to be a schoolteacher?

**Christopher Sherwood**—I just think it would be a lot of stress. I do not know how anyone would want to be a teacher. I admire anyone who is. I do not know how anyone could sit and put up with a bunch of school kids, really. I couldn't.

**Benjamin Conoley**—I am in cadets and I teach lessons to younger people about the army things. I would not mind being a teacher in the armed services but I cannot see myself teaching school kids.

**CHAIR**—Why is that?

**Benjamin Conoley**—Too little.

**CHAIR**—Okay. I want to thank you and we appreciate the time you have given us this afternoon. You have made a very valuable contribution and, as I said to the group beforehand, you are definitely a pride for this school. Your teachers should be very proud of the contributions you have made here today and we wish you all the best for your future. Thank you. We will make sure you get a copy of the report when it comes down so you can see if your contributions are in there.



[3.39 p.m.]

**HEWITSON, Mr Michael Gordon, Principal and Chief Executive Officer, Trinity College**

**MUNNS, Ms Linda, Head of Senior School, Years 8, 9 and 10, Blakeview Campus, Trinity College**

**PHILP, Mr Wayne Raymond, Head of Senior School, Years 9 and 10, North Campus, Trinity College**

**RUSSELL, Mrs Deborah, Head of Senior School, Years 11 and 12, North Campus, Trinity College**

**SLOCOMBE, Dr Michael Gordon, Principal, South Campus, Trinity College**

**SMEDLEY, Mr Robert George, Principal, Blakeview Campus, Trinity College**

**CHAIR**—I formally welcome everybody this afternoon and thank you for the time you have given us to participate in this very important committee, which is the inquiry into the education of boys. Over the years, we have seen or had proof that numbers relating to the performance of boys have declined. I believe we are coming right to the coalface of the problem by talking to the teachers. We do have an all day inquiry tomorrow with other sections of the community, from the state education department through. Today I must say your students have created a very good impression of Trinity College. We would like to look further into it. We would love to hear from you about anything you can help us with and contribute—any programs that have been successful, that you have seen, which have made a difference to boys' education.

I formally declare this public meeting open, the inquiry into the education of boys. I thank Mr Hewitson for his hospitality today and also for agreeing to have this inquiry at Trinity College. I thank everybody else involved in this afternoon's proceedings and those who are about to give evidence. I am obliged to remind you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. The deliberate misuse of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but if at any stage you should wish to give evidence in private, please indicate this and the committee will consider your request.

I would now like to invite someone to make introductory remarks about your school and the issues that you think are important to this inquiry before we proceed with questions.

**Mr Hewitson**—I think boys education in Australia has been an issue for a lot longer than is publicly recognised. I can remember attending the town hall where the female leadership of schools were bemoaning the fate of girls being behind in ever diminishing areas. I asked questions about the SSABSA results at year 12 about 10 years ago, and it was terribly unpopular to raise concerns about boys education.

First and foremost, I am very pleased that this issue is to be addressed. 'It's cool to be a fool' has been the sort of sociological status of boys in the middle class and working class across Australia. Its evidence is quite clearly there in terms of the level of performance of students

across this country. I found a file on boys education and had a look at some of the stats and things. Even seven years ago in New South Wales—even two years ago—the girls have outperformed in just about every single subject area. Some of that is exaggerated and picking off suitable stats to prove a point. That is the problem in an area like this but it is quite clear.

We have had to work very hard to overcome that; we succeeded two years ago but we do not succeed every year. Every group of boys has got to be won individually. When we do succeed, it is quite clear: the boys match the girls in every single area when the results came out. If our results are down in a year, it is generally the boys who go down, not the girls. It varies from campus to campus, so it is quite specific. Wayne has been very involved in boys education. He has attended interstate professional development conferences, as has Mr Currie, who is Wayne's south campus counterpart, but he is teaching.

We have taken it as quite a major issue. We have also taken girls education seriously. We have had single-sex PE for many years, because half the girls do not mind being with the boys but half the girls like doing single-sex PE by themselves. Wayne has also introduced single-sex English classes in the year 9 age group.

As an introduction, I will touch on a few little points about what we are doing to address it. First, it is an issue at this school, like every other school that serves the middle class and working class. Second, it is an issue that can be addressed, and it needs to be addressed with honesty. You tell the students the truth about 'It's cool to be a fool' and that working-class and middle-class males in Australian society are a flop. You give the evidence to say why it is such an unsuccessful species. Then you have to look, clearly, at what they can do about it. So being truthful is the first issue—to acknowledge the problem and work from there.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to make a contribution before we go into questions?

**Mr Philp**—Three years ago I asked Michael Hewitson whether it was about time we started getting involved in boys education. I went to a conference in 1999 at Newcastle University, which was run by the university there, and it was an eye-opener to see something like 180 educators from all over Australia very concerned about the plight of boys in education—declining standards, youth suicide amongst males, male culture, the drug culture. At that time there was a general consensus that they did not have any answers. It was really 'Hey, we have some problems.'

As a consequence of that particular conference, there has been a lot of work proceed from there. It was good also that there were a lot of people from Australia who said, 'Hey, look, in our community I've been doing this and this has been working,' so there were a few ideas that came back. I implemented a single-sex class. It took eight or nine months to get that set up, and last year Jackie Doman ran that. She is not with us any more, unfortunately. She did a fantastic job with the boys. Their results, on average, improved from somewhere between 17 and 25 per cent. That was in their exams and term marks. There was only one kid who went down, and he went from 87 to 86 in the exam, which was pretty good. It was phenomenal, and the number of boys who started to be involved in English was excellent. Hopefully the boys talked about some of the activities they did. Did they talk about some things they did in English?

**Ms GILLARD**—They did not talk about what they did. They said they liked it. They really liked the teacher.

**Mr Philp**—I remember studying Shakespeare and thinking Shakespeare was fairly boring at school. I hope there are no English teachers here. I must admit most of the boys did exactly the same. She did *Richard I*, I think, or *Richard II*. She had the kids outside acting out certain parts of the play. There was a bit of concern from some teachers that they were out there playing, but the quality of their written literacy because of acting it out and being in motion and being involved was quite phenomenal. Kids were producing pieces of work that they never produced before.

That was a real positive from that point of view. Also it worked well for the girls because we had the single-sex girls class. There were some issues there with girls as well, so that was also successful. This year, the year 10 who were in the boys class are even involved in mixed classes, and that is doing very well. What they did last year they are referencing to this year, so it has not stopped there. That has been positive.

We introduced this year a reading program where the year 9 single-sex boys class was involved in listening to years 4 and 5 boys who are at risk of—at the moment, they are not reading; they are bored with reading. They are working together to find books that interest them and then reading to these boys. That is working very well too. Year 9 boys are getting some good experience of what it is like to actually listen to and communicate with young kids. There is some good role modelling there, so that is another thing we initiated this year.

**Mr Hewitson**—There is an English teacher down the end. The senior school runs as a separate school and they would not know that Linda was head of English in her previous school.

**Ms Munns**—We do not have the experience at our campus of having single-sex classes in most of our subject areas. In PE we are trying single-sex classes, and these were brought in last year as well. Coming back to the English though, it is an experience which is different for each teacher, I believe. As I said, we have not trialled single sex in English at our campus because, to this point, we have not perceived there being a need to do so.

We trialled very similar things in some ways as described by Wayne, within our various mixed classes, and one of our year 10 English classes works with the juniors but the boys and girls go together. We have seen very similar responses in that both boys and girls have responded very positively to that. On the basis of that I have not really got anything to add in terms of boys education alone.

**Mr Hewitson**—The co-curricular program seems to be pretty important for boys, in our observation, particularly Aussie Rules football. You can improve year 9 boys' maths results 10 per cent by them participating in a team sport where there is a lot of cooperation. If you have been a hero on the footy field you do not have to mess around in class or play dumb in case you cannot do the maths. You are allowed not to do it. But music kids are probably good at it anyway. We have a lot of students involved with music in the school in co-curricular programs. The relationship between performance and music is already there. I do not think one causes the other; that is going much earlier.

**Ms GILLARD**—What motivated, in part, this inquiry was a concern in the community reflected in parliament and amongst this committee, and ultimately the minister for education as well, that if you look over time at boys' results vis-à-vis girls' results, you can say as a broad generalisation that 20 years ago they were within cooee of each other. Now there is a big difference, with the boys underachieving compared with the girls. There is a big statistical argument to be had about whether or not we are comparing apples with apples over time, but that seems to be the broad picture.

What I have therefore asked people as we have gone around in this inquiry is to try and focus on those things that have changed in the last 20 years. One of the difficulties we are going to have when we come to write the report is that people tell us things like 'Boys prefer more active learning styles.' I am sure that is right, but if that is right today I do not see why it was not right 20 years ago. For example, in literacy development people have told us that boys develop literacy more slowly than girls in the very early preschool years and prep and grade 1 ages. I am sure if that is right today, that was right 20 years ago as well. We have even had evidence that hearing defects and things like that are disproportionate in boys compared with girls, but I am sure that is probably longitudinally right.

At some point this committee is going to have to take out all the factors that were true since Adam was a boy, and try and concentrate on the changing factors which explain the changing results in the last 20 years. I would be interested in your views, as education professionals, about what those change factors might be.

**Mr Hewitson**—Lack of sports in schools. When I first went to state schools, after-school sport was common; when I was teaching, you were expected as part of your job to take a team after school. They competed against other schools, originally on Saturdays but later on a Wednesday afternoon type of situation. That is different. That does not happen now.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The sport or the competition?

**Mr Hewitson**—The sport does not happen. You might learn it in PE but you do not actually compete with a team from your school against other schools.

**Ms GILLARD**—Can you just chase that through for me. What effect do you think that has on educational outcomes?

**Mr Hewitson**—I have said that one of the things that I have discovered that makes boys accessible here is the participation in sport. Do you remember I said that?

**Ms GILLARD**—Yes.

**Mr Hewitson**—This school puts a lot of effort into maintaining an after-school sporting program. It probably will not be too good tonight playing cricket out there, but if you go out on a normal afternoon this place will be full of kids playing sport. On Saturday every oval is full, all the courts are filled, and it means that there is the team. Why? I think it is because they coalesce and yak quite happily, naturally. Boys will form a team through physical activity like sport or music; when you have formed a team, it is all right not to succeed in maths—your mate will help you. But suppose you are only going to maths class. Boys have got testosterone,

particularly at year 9, and that testosterone tells you you have to be a hero, you have to always win, you have to have a go at things. So, if you see your chance as fifty-fifty, you think 'I mightn't be able to do this maths problem, I don't want to look a dunce in front of my mates, I'll duck'—it is cool to be a fool. What happens with taking part in sport, is that you have been a hero so it is all right to be a fool; you take a risk, and I think that is it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But, following on what Julia was saying, the book *Year 9 are Animals* was written by a secondary teacher, and that was a long time ago. It goes back to the period that Julia was referring to, and that has always been the case.

**Mr Hewitson**—Yes, but playing sport in schools was the case and it is not today.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Right, the sport angle.

**Mr WILKIE**—But do you think with sport it is more about the opportunity for the participants to build some positive relationships outside the classroom?

**Mr Hewitson**—Outside the classroom, yes. As I said to you, music does it, drama does it, Aussie rules does it very well.

**Mrs Russell**—I think it builds their self-image. One of the things that I think is really different is that many of our kids are now in single-parent families; and very often with family breakdowns they end up with mum. I think a lot of our boys have missed out on a male role model. I do not know whether any significant research has been done—

**Mr SAWFORD**—A 300 per cent increase in 20 years.

**Mrs Russell**—I think Michael is quite right about the sport. They can be a hero, they can build a positive self-image and they then do not have to worry so much if they are not the great performer in their maths or science. It is interesting because we have a situation with student leaders—and you met some of them just now, the campus seniors. I asked this question of all of my boys who applied last year. I said, 'Why is it that I have got so few boys applying for this leadership role?' because clearly the girls outnumbered them. We talked a bit about the self-image, how important it was for them amongst their peers to be seen to be cool, and whether being a leader and doing things that were responsible was a bit uncool. I questioned the relationship between the lack of a male role model in a relationship that is working, where two parents show what cooperation and sharing of leadership and all that is about and how that has impinged on our boys.

**Ms Munns**—Schools are also really microcosms of society, and what I think is a very significant issue is that in the last 20 years you have had a societal and cultural revolution. If you consider the change in perceptions of women, it must have a bounce-back on how men, young men or boys perceive themselves. There is a lot of literature around now about how much of an influence that has had on young men and their sense of self-worth—where they belong in society, what their role is in society, whether they are the breadwinner, the touted term of hunter-gatherer.

That perception of the male role has changed, and changed significantly, over the last 20 years. What we are seeing now is the next generation coming through, which is also questioning where their place is, what they are meant to be like, and where they are going. I do not think we can look at this issue without understanding that it is a global change, and that our Australian boys are a part of that and at the receiving end of something that is far greater than just education.

**Mr Hewitson**—Greek boys do all right in Australia; so do some Vietnamese boys. It is Anglo-Saxon males in particular who are the particular failures.

**Ms GILLARD**—I think Wayne had something to say on the change factors.

**Mr Philp**—Linda said a lot of it, but one of the strengths of this school, I found, having been here for a long time, coming from a state school, was that the sense of community that the school has built is so strong. You talk to boys, 8s, 9s and 10s. They want to belong, and some do not have good relationships with their fathers or their family—they do not feel as though they belong to a family; there is not a strong family body there. One of the things school offers is not just sport; it is the drama, the public speaking, the music bands, the leadership opportunities. There is a wide range. The kids get involved in languages. It is all right for a boy to be involved in languages here. We fight this lowest common denominator type of mentality that you get amongst a group of boys.

Some of the boys I deal with who have influences outside school are drawn between their friends at school and playing sport for school or being in a band for school, or hanging around with their friends who do not go to the school, who are heavily involved in a gang mentality. That is something that I think was around 20 years ago. I remember when I went to school there were gangs, but the gangs now are very different in their structure, in that they have access to weapons and they have access to drugs. I think drugs are a real issue amongst our young kids.

They have access to drugs very easily and at very low cost, and that has sucked them in. That is a real temptation with the kids, because they are getting bad with that. They are getting worse with their images. They talked about self-image and self-worth, and that is all part of their self-esteem. I think that has really changed since when I was at school 20 years ago.

**Mr Hewitson**—Sixty-six per cent of school leavers use marijuana, 50 per cent of year 11s, 25 per cent within the last week. Our laws are stupid. It produces a society that allows our kids to be corrupted and put into the hands of those who make money out of them.

**Mr Philp**—And that comes back to one of the strengths, and I am talking about north campus, because that is where I work. One of the strengths for us is that we have developed a harassment policy and a discipline policy that is really prescriptive, yet is done in a caring way and is administered in a caring way. But it is really prescriptive, which means the kids know what the harassment policy is. Boys do need to know that when Mr Philp says, ‘Don’t throw something,’ you don’t throw a ball or a stone or a brick. It means all those things. Boys are very good at saying, ‘Well, that wasn’t descriptive enough.’ So that has been one of our positives, too—that we can actually work and have a harassment policy without bullying. I know all the campuses have been working in that area, and we have spent a lot of time developing the harassment policy.

**Ms GILLARD**—I think you are the only group that has ever talked of sport, so that is interesting. Two factors have been put to us—and I would be interested in your comment as to whether or not this is right. People have said the curriculum has been feminised in the sense that even the maths-science subjects are now much more literacy based than they used to be and that has had a consequence for boys—so it will not be ‘Solve this problem’ but ‘Sally and Fred went to the shop and ...’, to give you a mathematical problem. That has been put to us as a factor.

The other thing that has been put to us as a factor is that the move from examination based testing towards continuous essay based module testing—modules or whatever they are called—has had a differentially negative impact on boys, too, in that they are better at a quick run at an exam rather than a sustained effort. Would you agree that those things have had an effect, that they are factors? There is a debate. People have put different views to us, so I am not sure what is right. I am genuinely asking.

**Dr Slocombe**—I have written that one down here. Changes in assessment procedures I think have made it easier for girls to be successful than used to be the case. That was one point you wanted to raise. I will just mention a couple of other things I have written. I went to a talk the other day about Generation Y. These children we are talking about are in Generation Y, people born since 1982. This fellow had done some research on these students and found that a couple of things they were really after was relational security. For boys, he said it is really important that they do not get embarrassed in front of other people. They can easily be embarrassed in class, so some of them tend to turn off a little bit.

I would endorse what has been said about our sporting and co-curriculum program. I think that is really important, because it gives them a chance to be in an area of their choosing where they are not going to be embarrassed—in fact, they are going to do well. Another thing that I think is very important in what we do is that we pick up another of those things that this generation want: they want to have influence; they want to make a difference. In general, they do not want to cop out; they want to be part of the future.

What we do with our pastoral care, and especially with leadership opportunities on the sporting field and elsewhere, is particularly important to the boys. We have always had quite a few boys getting into leadership positions—not as many as girls, it is true, but there has always been a strong group as role models for other ones—and they do have an opportunity to make a difference.

**Mrs Russell**—I am interested in your comment about the feminising of the curriculum, because I worked for a long time in a girls school where we were struggling to get girls to get twenties and get through into engineering and all of those sorts of subjects. I guess that was in the eighties, when we broke through that kind of barrier that had been perceived to be there to girls. I guess it would be quite true. I would concur with the view that there has been in the past a push to make girls more successful, and it may have swung around to the point where it has been done in a way that boys are not able to feel comfortable with some aspects of the curriculum.

**Ms GILLARD**—And the examination point? Would you agree or disagree with that?

**Mrs Russell**—I am not sure. I see both genders performing better at short-term tasks. I can see boys and girls have responded when SACE came in with short-term objectives that could be reached within a foreseeable future. Boys and girls have responded better to those things than to the examination coming at the end of the year.

**Mr WILKIE**—I have a query about the English class, the same sex English class. I am just wondering if you analysed whether it was successful because the boys were together or whether it was successful because the teacher was fantastic. From what the boys said, they really got on and did it well because they really liked the teacher. We have had a lot of evidence that suggests that where boys tend to get on very well with the teacher they do tend to perform, whereas for girls it is probably not the case to the same extent.

**Mr Philp**—We were lucky that Jackie was a pretty dynamic teacher. At the same time, after her first three weeks of that class she was pulling her hair out because it was very different; she earned their respect. As they started to be more interactive in the type of activities they were doing, I think that was of benefit, but Jackie was a good teacher. I think that is part of the issue, too. I wrote some things down here about what I think we need to look at, and one of the things I wrote down was to develop appropriate teaching methodologies for boys, because I think many teachers do not know how to communicate with boys.

**Mr WILKIE**—Yes, that was one of my next questions.

**Mr Philp**—Many teachers do not know how to communicate with boys, and we have not actually developed appropriate teaching methodologies to give them some of those skills also. I think they are some issues. But also, with the structure of the class, we did not say, 'Let's take the 30 worst boys and put them together.' We actually took a cross-section of some very talented boys and some boys who were not so talented—some boys who were at risk of illiteracy, not interested, and some boys who were really interested in literacy but were not very good at it. We did take a cross-section there.

**Mr WILKIE**—Do you think the curriculum that is given to teachers when they are being trained is adequate? That might be a bit awkward to answer, but I am wondering if teacher training needs to have some changes made to its curriculum so that the quality of the teachers is a lot better.

**Mr Philp**—Yes. I have a wife who is doing private teaching at the moment. One of the things that has been disturbing me is that she is not getting information. She talks to me about what she is actually learning. Now she is suddenly doing prac teaching and says it is not actually translating there. She is not getting information. 'How do I communicate to these boys?' She is actually not getting that as such. But that is one institution.

**Mr Smedley**—That is one factor amongst many, but that is one factor you can change. There are a number of other factors which relate to your question of what is the difference from 20 years ago. Realistically, we cannot actually change many; we have to deal with that, but that is a factor that you actually can change.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But that teacher in English last year did change. When we had I think our first public hearing, the Commonwealth department of education reported to us that right across



Australia 20 years ago the differential attainment levels between boys and girls was marginal—less than one percentage point, which is what you would expect, because boys and girls intrinsically would bear the spread of intellectual ability. Now there is increasing evidence—and even when we were going around the schools it was being reinforced—that that has been a part of the last 20 years, that sometimes the differentials are 20 percentage points. You have just given a classic example. You said the boys improved 17 to 25 per cent with a good teacher who chose an active way of teaching English language, who chose *Richard III* instead of *The Tempest*, who chose a whole range of things. It was the educational program of that teacher, plus that teacher's skills—she was fun, had a sense of humour, and the kids liked her. That teacher had the three characteristics of a successful educational program; it worked, and in a short period of time there was a significant improvement. My other question to you was: why were those boys 17 to 25 per cent underachieving? That is really the question that we need to address ourselves to, because I think that is what has been going on right across Australia.

**Mrs Russell**—I think you used a word there that bears more looking at, and that is 'fun'. A lot of the boys are looking to enjoy education, and do not. If you sit and read or take notes or whatever, that activity in itself is not fun. Girls might be more inclined to say, 'Well, I need to learn this, and the best way to learn it is to write these notes out. I'm just going to go and do it.'

**Mr SAWFORD**—Slog it out.

**Mrs Russell**—Yes, and boys look for—

**Mr SAWFORD**—What Wayne is saying is right, because every boys student group we have talked to has mentioned sense of humour as a desirable quality in a teacher. They did not think the gender of the teacher mattered, though some thought that the balance was out of kilter. They wanted a better teacher first, but they wanted one with a sense of humour and one who was organised. They used the term 'organised'—someone who knows what they are doing and can control the boys.

**Mr WILKIE**—It appears that the curriculum has been the same. It is just that the teaching style of the teachers changed.

**Mr Philp**—That was the challenge to the head of English, who said that year 9 studied Shakespeare. She was able to look at the whole year 9 program and say, 'We have to do Shakespeare. I can do this one, because it fits in,' and she was able to do that with the literacy, also with the types of book that they read.

**CHAIR**—Some of your students also made a comment that, if a teacher told a joke every now and then, they would actually listen more closely to their lessons because they were waiting for the next joke. I know it sounds strange, but I think that is what the fun bit was about. Another very interesting fact that I also have heard at other inquiries is that they like to get a pat on the back. Some teachers will look at a girl and say, 'That's good, keep trying.' With a boy they will say, 'You can do better than that.' They do not try then, they said, because they have done their best at that particular time. If the teacher had said, 'That was really good and I know, if you just do this, this and this, that will make it a bit better,' they will go and do it better because they feel they have made that teacher take notice of them and that they are happy with their work. We talked to only a few of your students, but I am just saying that is a story we have

had from other schools, too—that boys tend not to get the pats on the back as much as we give our girls.

**Mr Hewitson**—In relation to the change thing that you were talking about, employment opportunities are very different from the way they were 20 years ago. Suppose you were struggling a bit at school. You heard these kids who are here for the open learning centre, and you heard that in most schools they would either be back at school messing up and not succeeding, or dropping out altogether. In previous generations, you did not have to do a program like that. The program we are doing is essentially ‘Get out into the work force.’ That means those boys then are going to provide leadership downwards to other boys.

This is a guess—this is not very good evidence—but it is a hypothesis that has come out of discussion: the girls who left 20 years ago to go into the work force were not going to drag the other girls with them, whereas the boys that have left to go into the work force have since dragged the other boys with them, for what it is worth.

And in relation to the other issue of relationships, we talked about the importance of relationships and boys education. I think that is where the co-curriculum program wins. It is about building trust in relationships. It is kids on your side, the Duke of Edinburgh and stuff. It might not just be a hormone, teen thing. It might be in fact that they build relationships with teachers as people other than as disciplinarians in a class.

**Dr Slocombe**—It is a case of ‘Show us you care.’ If they know that you care about them as individuals and if you tell them some funny stories, that is good teaching, because really we are talking about what is good teaching. Maybe that should be in the teacher training course.

**Mr Hewitson**—And mums are at work now too. That is another change. Boys might be going off the rails after school. You see, I am thinking about this as we are doing it. None of this is very well thought out. But, from what Wayne was saying about the mates who hang out with the kids from other schools and tend to get into trouble with drugs and gangs, previously mum would have been up and down if you hadn’t got home and reported in. She would have said, ‘Who are you going out with?’ ‘I’m going off with Johnny to go and ride the bike up to Brownhill Creek.’ You were allowed to do anything, really, but it was supervised at a distance.

**Mr Philp**—One of the other things that we do on all the campuses is have a year 9 camp, where we take all the years 9s away now. It is not really an outdoor camp, but we use the outdoors as a venue. The girls go off in groups of 10 to 12 with a female staff member. There might be four or five groups of girls, and four or five groups of boys, and they disappear. Last year, for example, I disappeared into the Grampians for four days with a group. There were two teachers, but in the end we just combined two groups because one teacher did not know the area too well. So there were basically 24 or 25 boys with two teachers, and the relationships that developed out of that were just phenomenal—strength. They can tell me; they can talk to me; they can communicate to me. You teach them. It is a different relationship, because that relationship is changed, and you do that with sport or bands and whatnot.

Now, that actually makes a big difference when they come back to school after this year 9 camp, after being a week away from mum and dad and friends and family and school. Yes,

having goals. And they come back with a better appreciation of their peers and their friends. The teachers are different. 'Mr Philip, you're not an ogre.' Not all the time I'm not.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But, Wayne, is there a bit of truth in that we have forgotten how to teach boys? We went to a school in Kay's electorate. It was a low socioeconomic area. A pretty enthusiastic principal arrives in 1997, does the diagnostic testing in the school, finds huge differentials—boys and girls failing, but a huge differential between the boys' and the girls' attainments. He sets up a program using teacher aides, which was the facility available to him in the school. Within four years, they have got the differentials down to less than three per cent and the attainment levels of both boys and girls improved.

We go to a school in Sydney. Basically four years ago they diagnosed the kids in terms of literacy and numeracy attainments. Two-thirds of the problems are boys, a third girls. Again there is a program that is structured, that is active, that is monitored and that has additional adults involved. After four years it succeeds and there is basically no difference between girls and boys who have been diagnosed as having problems. All right, we have substance abuse, we have low socioeconomic areas, we have an increase of 300 per cent in terms of marriage break-ups and all the rest of it. But, notwithstanding any of that, it happened. I am a teacher too. When teachers talk to me about those things, I say, 'You're talking excuses,' because schooling can make a difference. It does not matter where they are, in low socioeconomic areas or middle-class areas. Successful schools change the differentials by their programs.

**Mr Philp**—But just not one program.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, a whole range.

**Mr Philp**—That is why I am saying that the year 9 camp was part of a program—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, a whole range of programs. In other words, the educational program in the school and its breadth and the kids—that is the degree of success that happens in a school as far as boys and girls are concerned, but it is far more noticeable with boys. Girls seem to succeed; they are far more adaptable in learning than boys. They can succeed in a very laissez-faire environment, whereas boys will fail. That is my experience.

**CHAIR**—Sorry, Wayne, did you want to add something to that?

**Mr Philp**—No. I agree with what Rod is saying. One of the strengths of the school is that we have so many of those little programs. They all add up, and they add up in a building block. We do not always succeed but we—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have any measures of boys' and girls' attainments in this school that would be available to us— even if you did not want us to name the school—and that we could use in terms of data? Do you have any data that you have measured, Michael?

**Mr Hewitson**—Yes, the year 12 SSABSA results we measure.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And you have monitored those over a period of time?

**Mr Hewitson**—That is why I wanted Dr Little here. Yes, we do them each year and I am just hoping he has got the records.

**Dr Slocombe**—Well, I know for the last two years he has certainly separated out north boys, north girls, south boys, south girls.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Could you make that information available to us, and if you do, tell us whether you want to put any conditions on it. We do not want to use that information against your wishes.

**Mr Philp**—That talked about from one semester in mixed ability classes to one semester in boys classes. I can produce that. That is easy enough.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That would be excellent, too, if you could.

**Mr WILKIE**—We could use that evidence as closed evidence if you did not want it public.

**Mr Hewitson**—That is fine. As I said, some years the boys match the girls and do very well, and other years we get a miss.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But over a period of time, you would agree, wouldn't you, that they ought to be within the same percentage?

**Mr Hewitson**—They ought to be. They are not always.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You always have blips and hiccups, but over a period of time they should even out.

**Mr Hewitson**—What is the difference between them? The worst extreme would be about 10 points on the TER score, and the best would be that they match—in fact, the boys slightly ahead. We did get a variation and it is a group thing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I know we are running out of time. I have three questions which always create a bit of controversy, and I do not want to try and add to that by a value judgment. Do you have gender equity programs in the school?

**Mr Hewitson**—No idea. Do We?

**Dr Slocombe**—For the students I would not say that we do, no. For the staff we have an equal opportunity committee.

**Mr Hewitson**—And we have equal numbers. We try and balance the sexes in our teachers.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You do not do any construction of male and female gender programs in the school?

**Mr Hewitson**—Sex ed we do. The girls go off with the female doctors and the boys go off with the male doctors.

**Mrs Russell**—That is not quite what he is asking. The answer is no.

**Mr SAWFORD**—He knows exactly what I am asking! No. Okay.

**Dr Slocombe**—We might positively discriminate. I know I have done. If you are getting a team of leaders together at say year 11 and you have 16 girls and six boys, the next couple you choose might be boys, just to even things up and make sure there are role models—those kinds of things.

**Mr Philp**—On the north the year 11 leaders are selected, and there are always more girls than boys. Then we have another intake of interviews about four or five months later, and that is because many of the boys are actually still developing. So we do cater for those boys who are developing late, to give them an opportunity there.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Two last ones. Bullying and violence: are they an issue in this school?

**Mr Philp**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How do you deal with it?

**Mr Philp**—We have a harassment policy which we have developed, which includes bullying, but all sorts of harassment. On the north campus, and I know other campuses have done it, too, we have been sending staff off to Mission SA. They have been trained in a no-blame counselling method. We have done some work with the P&F body as well, off the top of my head.

**Mr Smedley**—I think it is an issue that you have to work at constantly. It has to come from the leadership of the school and it has to be put in front of teachers on a regular basis. I do not care what program you want to put in place; you will never have it completely eliminated. It is human nature. But you have to be able to control it to a level that you are constantly reducing it, and you have to be able to be willing to spend time and listen to concerns. You have to have your staff ready to be able to follow those concerns up, and that often involves working with parents as well.

I think the way you deal with it is very important, because, if you deal with it in the wrong way, as teachers we will actually make it worse within our schools. There are certain forms of bullying which need strong action, but there are a large number—in fact, I would say the vast majority—where it is not appropriate to punish.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can you give us a couple of examples of that?

**Mr Smedley**—There is obviously quite a deal of difference between the way bullying and harassment occurs in a group of girls and a group of boys. In lots of those cases it is very rarely clear-cut. 'Here is the innocent victim. This is the nasty bully.' Usually there is interplay between the two; it is very difficult to sort out exactly right and wrong. That has to be a situation where you have in place in your school a chance to work through those issues and from there build a positive relationship. That has to be something that children take

responsibility for; they must know the opportunities they have for having that dealt with and the fact that there are certain forms of behaviour that are unacceptable in this place.

Secondly, if those things are happening to me, I know that I can go to certain people and have it stopped. If I deal with it in a way which sends the perpetrator away thinking, 'I've been dobbed on'—I am not with the child 24 hours a day—it will come back to that child again. I have to be able to deal with it in a way which sends that child away thinking, 'No, this is wrong. These are the feelings involved.' In one of the surveys that is being done at our school, one of the things that came out very strongly about why children, as they grow up, reduce their involvement in harassing and bullying was the understanding they gain about the hurt that it causes. It is the feeling that has to be brought out and explained to children.

**Mr Hewitson**—We have got seven chaplains in the school. It is not just a matter of values clarification. The Judeo-Christian heritage does help set a suitable standard.

**Ms Munns**—The harassment and bullying issue is always complex, and it is no less complex now. One of the major things we face in schools now because of our increased responsibility as tutors and models for our students is that the behaviours, the gender stereotyping, the stereotyping in different forms, occur in the literature our children read, the games they play, the films they see, the television programs, the radio programs they listen to. It is a growing barrier or frustration for schools, and it leads to what Robert is talking about—that increased need to continue to work at it, change our approach, and teach our children there is a different way of approaching it. What is modelled to them is increasingly more violent and is increasingly less equal.

**Mrs Russell**—It is less about negotiation.

**Ms Munns**—Less about negotiation and contracting, which is what we are trying to teach in schools. For our students sometimes our reality in our schools does not meet with the reality they face for a greater number of hours per day.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Some academics, every state education department we have seen thus far, and every union—both independent and state that we have seen thus far—have mentioned the issue of homophobia and its increasing negative influences on young people. Is that a problem in this school?

**Dr Slocombe**—We certainly get students calling each other gay. That is one of the things we all have to deal with from time to time. It is not something you come across every day. It is there, as it is in Australian society.

**Mr SAWFORD**—If you put a finer point on it, not just anecdotally—I am not trying to hold you to it either—is this a problem with 95 per cent of the boys, 10 per cent, 50 per cent? What is it?

**Ms Munns**—Within different age groups you are going to get a greater percentage of concern.

**Dr Slocombe**—Ten to 20 per cent or less.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Say under 12.

**Mr Hewitson**—I would say under 12.

**Mr SAWFORD**—No, under 12 years of age.

**Mr Hewitson**—I do not think it matters much.

**Ms Munns**—Very small but increasing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Increasing?

**Ms Munns**—I believe, yes, because of society's changes too. That is a broad term that probably does not say very much. If we look at a variety of different things, because our children are being exposed to more, and much sooner, these issues become real much earlier. Depending on the social group again, which clients we have at our school, it may be an issue.

**Mr SAWFORD**—As an issue to be discussed and having a negative impact on children are two different things. What I am talking about now is in terms of having a negative impact. What would you say, as a straw thing? What would you say, under 12 or over 12?

**Mr Hewitson**—We have not got our primary school people here.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about secondary?

**Mr Hewitson**—I would say it is very low.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not going to quote you on the figure.

**Mr Philp**—I deal with years 9, 10 and 11. Every year at any year level, I would say there would be at least one or two kids who are severely victimised. I would not say it was 10 or 20 per cent. There is, amongst the 13 and 14-year-olds, a sense of looking at sexuality, and that is something they look at. Talking about homophobia, I think there is an increase amongst the parent body of younger kids. There is a sense of homophobia amongst them towards male primary school teachers. I just have to talk to them. They get a bit nervous, especially with single males.

**Ms GILLARD**—The trouble with the term 'homophobia' is that it is not—

**Mr SAWFORD**—It means all things to all people.

**Ms GILLARD**—The sense in which it has been used before this committee I think is that homophobic terms of abuse are being used by boys to define sex stereotyping norms. It is not actively an allegation that 'You are a homosexual child; therefore I am going to persecute you.' It is 'That's a girlie thing to do; that's a poofy thing to do.' So you are reinforcing gender norms through the use of homophobic abuse. It is broader than a concept of picking out one kid and victimising him because of the perception he may or may not be a homosexual.

**Dr Slocombe**—Last year we had a Flinders University researcher come and talk to our boys and girls at the south campus. It is part of a research program which could be very useful for you to find out about and follow up. Flinders University is doing a study.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We have people from Flinders talking to us tomorrow.

**Dr Slocombe**—Excellent, because it is probably this gentleman. I think he is called Malcolm. You will find out some very interesting things from him, I am sure.

**Ms GILLARD**—I cut you off. We probably should get that on record—the thing about male primary teachers.

**Mr Philp**—You talk about homophobia. There was a sense of kids being very scared.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But from the parents' viewpoint?

**Mr Philp**—From a parent's viewpoint there is that sense that they do not want a male teacher who may be—

**Mr Hewitson**—My wife works with the R to 4s, and she finds the reports to be the opposite. So many parents have been keen for their kids to have a male teacher.

**Mr Philp**—No, I am saying they are keen to have a male teacher but they get concerned. There is a sense of concern about having a male teacher. The paedophilia thing is a real issue. That is one of the reasons we find it hard to get male teachers.

**CHAIR**—Would that be one of the reasons why there is a shortage of male teachers?

**Mr Philp**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—I think we are running out of time and I know the teachers are anxious to get on with their work. Again I sincerely thank you for the time you have given us here today, and the evidence you have passed over. Michael, can I ask your permission to publish the students' names?

**Mr Hewitson**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Again, thanks for your hospitality. We enjoyed your lunch and your facilities. We have to do a little bit of homework here and then we will be out of your hair. We will make sure you get a copy of the published report as soon as it comes down, hopefully by the latter part of this year.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms Gillard**):

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

**Committee adjourned at 4.37 p.m.**



