COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

**Reference: Education of boys**

WEDNESDAY, 25 JULY 2001

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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

**Wednesday, 25 July 2001**

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

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

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

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

## WITNESSES


**BAILEY, Ms Alison, Teacher, Grade 2/3, Herdsmans Cove Primary School........................................1085**

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**CLEARY, Mrs Leanne Maree, Parent Help, Spalding Program in Lower Primary, Bridgewater Primary School........................................1085**

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**RUMLEY, Ms Lisa Gaye, Teacher, Advanced Skills; and Acting Principal, Bridgewater Primary School........................................1085**

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**Committee met at 10.40 a.m.**

**BAILEY, Ms Alison, Teacher, Grade 2/3, Herdsmans Cove Primary School**

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**PYKE, Mrs Della Patricia, Teacher, Grade 5/6, Bridgewater Primary School**

**RUMLEY, Ms Lisa Gaye, Teacher, Advanced Skills; and Acting Principal, Bridgewater Primary School**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into the education of boys and thank the principals of Bridgewater Primary School and Herdsmans Cove Primary School, Ms Pam Clarkin and Mrs Lynne James, for agreeing to host the committee's visit here today. I think Ms Lisa Rumley—and Mrs Clarkin, in her absence—for hosting our visit to Bridgewater Primary. I also thank everyone else involved in this morning's visit and those who are about to give evidence.

While we are your guest, I am obliged to advise you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. A deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public but at any stage if you should wish to give evidence in private please ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. Who would like to make some introductory remarks about the school and issues that you think are important to the inquiry before we proceed to questions and answers?

**Mrs James**—I would like to welcome you to Herdsmans Cove and thank you for coming and taking the time to have a look at our school and what we are trying to do. Basically, Spalding has provided a key element to our whole school literacy plan—it is one element. It really looks at teachers being able to focus on teaching children all the elements that make up language and bringing it all together for them. For our students, we have seen really good learning outcomes from that work. It allows teachers to be explicit and it ensures that children are able to build on their learning step-by-step through scaffolding on what they already know, challenging them and taking it on to the next level. It really takes the guessing out of what children are trying to achieve in their literacy program.

The teachers will tell you much more about that and with much greater knowledge but as I said it forms part of our literacy program, which also involves reading recovery and all of the elements of PASS, and part of our whole school plan. Any program, I guess, would be able to do some of those things. We think Spalding holds a key, though, for us. It has to be part of raising literacy expectations in the school and the community. It also has to be well backed up with professional development and learning for the teachers and it also needs lots of resourcing in terms of very good literature for the kids to be able to access.

**CHAIR**—Would someone else like to make a comment?

**Ms Rumley**—On behalf of our principal, Ms Pamela Clarkin, the students, parents and teachers at Bridgewater Primary would like to thank the committee members for the opportunity today to share with you our literacy successes. I will tell you a bit of the background as to why we adopted the Spalding method in our school. In 1997, staff assessed that over 50 per cent of our grade 6 students who were going to high school were still not achieving appropriate skills in literacy. In spite of many students receiving years of extra teacher support, we were still sending a significant number of them to high school who could not read or write. During this same year, we developed a mission statement emphasising that literacy skills were necessary to prepare children to live successfully in our world.

In looking for a solution to our literacy problems, the teacher responsible for 'inclusion' students in the school attended the Spalding 1 method training in April 1998. The Spalding method was seen to be a more focused and explicit way of teaching reading, spelling and writing skills. While still being a total language program, the emphasis on the instructional model was on learning how to decode and encode words using a multisensory approach. For the remainder of 1998, this teacher used the Spalding method as an interventionist approach for targeted students in grades 3 to 6 with very low literacy skills. Eighty-eight per cent of these targeted students improved in reading and spelling by the end of the year. Because of this success, the teachers and parents were enthusiastic to extend the use of the Spalding method to a whole-school practice that could be incorporated into the classroom English program. Thus, in 1999, the inclusion teacher began training all grade 3 to 6 teachers in the Spalding method. It was in this same year that an early childhood teacher completed the training also. The ECE teachers began in-school training and introduced the methodology into their classrooms at the beginning of 2000.

Alongside the introduction of the Spalding method came the implementation of a variety of quality practices in literacy teaching, which included a two-day workshop, conducted by Julie Shepherd, entitled 'Improving literacy practice'. This resulted in the introduction of other

explicit instructional practice such as guided reading, modelled writing, guided writing, shared writing, interactive writing and reader's theatre. We developed a teacher resource document for English which included components of a quality English program, including a comprehensive and sequential genre program and sequential grammar program. We also purchased four new reading schemes.

Our literacy program is supportive and all inclusive. All students from K to 6 are targeted, irrespective of their ability or background. During 2001, flexible ability groupings for literacy were introduced and students were grouped by performance across two grade levels for a dedicated English block, three days a week. One staff meeting per month is set aside for teachers in each block to plan cooperatively. Since 1998, parent training sessions in literacy have been held each year, covering the Pause, Prompt and Praise Program on reading technique, as well as handwriting and the home reading scheme. Over the last two years, five parents have successfully completed the parent workshop in the Spalding method.

This year, during the dedicated English teaching blocks, we experienced a substantial decrease in the number of students 'refusing', and consequently students in time-out. Teachers have commented that because students are working at their ability levels they are more engaged and that the structured teaching style ensures they are more focused. Therefore, we feel that the success of our literacy program lies in the following points: (1) it is a multisensory approach; (2) it provides a sequential program of instruction; (3) it actually teaches the skills of decoding; (4) it is metacognitive—that is, we are getting children to verbalise their thinking; (5) it is a whole-school approach; and (6) it teaches one objective at a time. We believe that all these things lead to an explicit and child centred program which has directly influenced students' performance in literacy.

**CHAIR**—Would anyone else like to comment? No. We will go to questions. I am quite sure that the committee would like to ask you a few questions. This program seems to be very successful, from what I have observed this morning at both Bridgewater Primary School and Herdsmans Cove Primary School and from each school's submission. My question is: this is not being taught at teachers college?

**Mrs Brown**—This method is not being taught at teacher training. What is valuable about the method is that it gives the teacher a sequential basis and foundation for learning so that explicit teaching can take place. It would be very valuable to have it as a part of teacher training because of its explicit nature: there is sequential learning. Each part is broken down into key learning components so that the student achieves success at their level. It also gives a good foundation for a literacy teacher to develop her literacy program.

**CHAIR**—I think you said that you have been using the Spalding method for about three years. Has there been an interest in it, in particular from students at teachers college who come to your school?

**Mrs Brown**—From a recent course which I participated in, I noticed that there was a real interest from students, because they want to be able to focus their teaching to produce positive literacy outcomes for their students. At the moment, because of that need for teacher training, I am undertaking training as a Spalding instructor.

**Mrs Eade**—Having done the Spalding training, which I did not learn at university, I can say that it is the first time I have felt that I have the knowledge to teach children literacy skills. I understand now more about how children learn. I understand how the language works. And I feel now that I have the skills and strategies to actually teach children how to spell, read and write. I did not get these at university. I got them through the Spalding training. I really believe the greatest difference that we as teachers can make is with high quality teaching. I think that is why Spalding is so successful: it has improved our teaching skills, and having quality teachers makes the biggest difference to children's literacy. Through this program we have changed the culture at Bridgewater Primary School. We have high expectations. The students know what is expected of them when they go to their English block. They work. They are focused. It is a great systematic, structured and cumulative program. The decoding and the encoding of words is the basis. Once they know this lower level skill, we go on to the higher level skills of comprehension and writing.

**CHAIR**—Do the students who are involved with the Spalding system attend those classes each year that they are in primary school, or are they involved in such a class for one year and then someone else gets a chance to learn it?

**Mrs Eade**—Every school does it differently. At Bridgewater, we are using it as a whole-school approach from kindergarten to grade 6. Although all teachers are not trained, the trained teachers train the others and model for them so that all children are receiving the Spalding method. I do not know if I have answered your question.

**CHAIR**—I was indicating that the students are not in the Spalding classes for a set period of time, that they learn it all the way through their primary education.

**Mrs Eade**—All teachers use it as the method in their English block, but the transfer to other subject lessons is definitely there.

**Mrs Brown**—I think the significant difference between this method and other methods that I have been taught is that we were originally taught to model well to children and then to put them into independent practice straightaway. However, we missed a key element of teaching. We missed a coaching stage where we get the children to articulate their thinking before we put them into independent practice. I find the key thing with this method is that the teacher presents a good model and then the students are coached—they put their L-plate on—and then they go into independent practice, which makes their learning far more meaningful. They achieve greater outcomes. They can go away, and we know that they can experience success. They have had the coaching, and they have coached the teacher—that is, they have told the teacher what they are doing. It is significant that they can tell us the thinking that is going on in their brain. That is the step that has been missed. But this method gives the link between model teaching and independent learning. Children's contribution in how they think has been undervalued, yet it is the significant difference in how they learn.

**Mrs Pyke**—I have been at Bridgewater for nearly six years so I have seen a really huge change. I have seen both teaching practices in the time that I have been there. When I first started at Bridgewater, if we were asking the children to do some writing of their own, narrative writing, the comment would be, 'I'm not doing that,' or they would produce about a quarter of a page of writing and say, 'That's it; no more.' The change in the children has been incredible.

They see themselves now as writers. They are really willing to join in, to write, and they are just writing so much more and enjoying what they are doing. It is just incredible.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just follow up the change process? One of the things that impressed all of us who came to the two schools this morning is that they are very highly organised—highly organised—and not just in terms of what is going on but in terms of the layout of everything around: everything is in its place, there is a place for everything. I have always thought if teachers cannot organise things that do not walk and talk, they have no hope of organising children to do all of those things. The differences that you started to focus on when you were here before and now—the change—which came first: the organisational strength in the school, or the method? Were both schools highly organised before Spalding, or did that come afterwards?

**Mrs Pyke**—I think the schools have always been well organised. The thing that we noticed was basically our test results. We knew that we had a problem with literacy, and Susie went to the Spalding course and she brought it back to us. We had a few people who were a bit dubious about it to start with because it was a big change from what we had been doing. There is still an argument—some people are pro Spalding, some people are pro language. I believe that the two can blend quite well and I do not like the argument that some people are on one side of the fence and some are on the other. You can do both really well. You can have wonderful whole language activities where the children are being really creative and writing freely, but they need the Spalding component first. If you can't write a sentence you can't write a story. It is like learning your music scales: you can't play the piano unless you can play the scales properly. So both blend really well. Susie was just brilliant. She came back and told us what she had done. She was brilliant; she was just marvellous. Because we had difficulties with the children in their literacy, we embraced it because we needed a change.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Someone may have mentioned behaviour changes. Would you like to comment on that?

**Mrs Pyke**—And the behaviour changes have been incredible. We do not really have behaviour problems during English block.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Why is that?

**Mrs Pyke**—The kids are so focused. They are confident, and they are really happy. They know that they are learning, and they know that what they are doing is helping them. They think it is fantastic.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Any differences between boys and girls?

**Mrs Pyke**—The difference we see in the boys is the behaviour. Unfortunately lots of the behaviour problems are from boys. I have two of the most difficult kids in the school, and we just don't have those behaviour problems from them during English time. They are focused, they are facing the front. There is talk about people being put in rows. Some people are against that; some people are pro that. We know placing them in rows makes them really focused—they haven't got the chance to turn their back to you and do something else without you seeing what

they are doing. With boys and girls it is the same thing. The boys are doing a fantastic job, and we just don’t have behaviour problems.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are there any negative aspects to the Spalding method?

**Mrs Pyke**—Not that I have seen, no. We have just had to keep learning. Susie has done the Spalding 2 course which is the comprehension and the five mental actions and more into the writing. We have focused on the spelling so far, and we are really keen to get into the writing as well.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What do you think teachers’ colleges should be doing?

**Mrs Pyke**—They should be doing it. They should be embracing it. We have talked about this so often. We talk about teachers’ college a lot. I have been teaching quite a few years, and we often go back to ‘Did we do this at college’ or ‘Did we do that at college?’ I know certain people are concerned about what we should be doing in colleges.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you think the education department needs to apply more resources to implementing more explicit teaching schemes in schools?

**Mrs Pyke**—Yes.

**Mrs James**—Can I add something to that? I think the education department has recognised that in this state, and maybe it has come from a groundswell of teachers who have started using Spalding, and then the word has spread through networks and things. At present, there are approximately 200 people who have been trained in Spalding 1, and we did that by people coming from the mainland who are instructors. But the department has recognised that that is an issue, so Caroline Brown and two other people in this state are being trained as instructors. It is a big commitment for a school to make for a teacher to go out, because Spalding 1 and Spalding 2 are each 10-day courses, so there is nearly $3,000 in relief costs per teacher to train a person. But that is going to continue to grow as courses are offered. Our education department has, through the state literacy and numeracy reference group, put aside funding over the next few years for that to continue, for people to access that professional learning.

Can I make a point about the structure part of it—which came first, the chicken or the egg? It all has to come together. For us, using literacy as a sort of vehicle or impetus to look at all of the school is one way of doing it. There might have been something else but because the structure that is within Spalding is so precise that is a nice easy sort of thing to hang it on, and then you have the opportunity to have the discussions with staff and with other people in the community about expectations, how would we structure our timetable to be able to do this in a two-hour block every day. We changed our school hours. All of that has to come together, but it is just lovely that Spalding really supports those structures across a whole school as well.

**Ms GILLARD**—This inquiry is focused on boys’ education. One of the reasons it started was that there was a lot of public concern about differences in attainment between boys and girls, and that is true in retention rates to the end of secondary school but it is also true in the literacy tests that kids do in primary school. I do not know if this is a question for the teachers

or the principals but, given that you do the ability based groups, do you notice that there are more boys in the lower ability groups, as a general rule, or that would not be right?

**Mrs Eade**—I take the support groups. In my 5/6 I have nine children, eight boys.

**Ms GILLARD**—And why do you think that is?

**Mrs Eade**—That is a really difficult question to answer. If we knew that we would fix it.

**Ms GILLARD**—We would get you to write the inquiry report.

**Mrs Eade**—I do not know why. Research shows that, I suppose, it could be the physiological development of boys. They do not seem to be as good with communication as girls as they are developing, and perhaps this is where Spalding comes in. I think research shows that boys are perhaps better when it involves facts and subjects like maths. So perhaps Spalding's strength is the fact that it almost says to boys, 'Here is a formula, and this is how you apply it.' So it is, for them, 'All right; I can actually take this. It does not have to be intuitive as there is structure to our language. If I learn these rules and I apply it this way, therefore I can do it,' and I do not think we have done that with our language before with boys. We do it in maths, but I do not think we do it in literacy, and Spalding does give you that sort of structure.

**Ms GILLARD**—So even though boys are disproportionately represented in the lower ability groups you would say from your experience that they respond better to Spalding than the method that you used previously.

**Mrs Eade**—Yes. The reason I did the Spalding training was because I worked with the children at Bridgewater in my first year there as a support teacher, and I made little difference—and I mean very little—and I could not have worked harder, but I did not have the right method. I tried everything that I had been taught and picked up as a teacher. But from the beginning of the year to the end of the year I made very little difference. Then across my desk came this invitation to do a course that involved phonics and I thought, 'I will try this because everything else I have used has failed.' So I did that course and came back and thought my kids are not going to understand this, it is too hard, but they did. If you break it down into the parts, and you build it up methodically, you do stacks of repetitions, stacks of practice until they get accurate, then you move on. Yes, at the end of the year I had made a difference when I had not the year before. Now some of the boys are keeping pace chronologically. They have a lot of years to catch up. But some of those children—not all of them in my group—are starting to keep pace chronologically. In other words, this year they will have gone a year ahead in their spelling and reading, and they never did that before.

**Ms Bailey**—In my teaching experience I have also found that it is often the boys who are struggling in the English area. What I have noticed is that a lot of the problem seems to be with actually engaging their attention. Their behaviour problems stem from their concentration. I think boys like to be actively engaged in things, and the Spalding method, because it provides a multisensory approach where they are listening, saying and doing constantly, focuses their attention so that they do not have the opportunity to wander around and get bored and frustrated because they are not learning. For me, that is where it has really made a difference: with focusing the boys. Therefore, they are learning and achieving and not being frustrated. It is

obvious that even those children who have been really struggling with reading and writing have very good oral language skills and have a general knowledge, but they just have not learnt the skills to express themselves. Now that they have learnt a way to get their ideas on paper and through logical application, their behaviour and literacy skills have increased beyond belief.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Right at the beginning of our inquiry, the Commonwealth department of education reported to us. They were mainly talking about Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, but nevertheless it affected every other state, including Tasmania. They told us that in 1980 the differentials between girls' and boys' attainments in literacy and numeracy were less than one percentage point, which is what you would expect, because they both average out in terms of intelligence and ability and whatever. Over the last 20 years, something dramatic has happened, because the differentials now are up to 20 percentage points. I would think that in a school like yours, where you have highly structured programs, you would not have those huge differentials. That is the evidence we have found after around three or four years of people doing this on a consistent basis. But there is plenty of evidence that there are huge differentials. Basically, this is an analysis program where you look at the whole thing and you break it down into its constituent parts. We have known since Aristotle and Socrates' times that, basically, that is how boys learn. Have we forgotten something in the last 20 years? If so, what is it and what happened?

**Mrs Brown**—What we have forgotten is that children need a logical sequence and boys need to have a sequential, logical program where there is one part that builds upon the next so that they have a foundation to work upon. I think somewhere along the way we forgot that we have to give children key steps to achieving whatever—in this case, literacy—so that they have a part that is built upon. It increases literacy learning because it is broken down and is logical and sequential.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is interesting that both your schools took note of this around 1997 or 1998. Am I correct? That is when the focus started to change. When we went to Kay's seat in Queensland, there was a school there in a very low socio-economic area, and again their initiative started in those years. We went to another class school in Roseville in Sydney, and that is when they started. The Western Australians and South Australians also started in that period. But not all schools, obviously, are doing this, and obviously those differentials between boys and girls are still there. What sorts of things would you recommend that education departments and governments ought to be taking seriously?

**Mrs Pyke**—I have been a teacher for the last 20 years, and we have given children wonderful enriching lessons, but we have expected it to be taught by osmosis, really. I did not get a lot of skills in specific teaching when I was at college, so we really believe the college system and teacher training has to change. Until I did the Spalding approach, I did not have those specific teaching skills. I knew what I wanted to teach, because I grew up in the system in the sixties, when it was fairly specific, but the children I have taught in the last 20 years have not had the skills taught to them that I was taught as a child and that I am now teaching them again, because of what I have learnt through what I know through my background and from what we have learnt through the Spalding method. Unfortunately, there is really a 20 year generation of children who have not had specific teaching.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do all your colleagues defend what happened in the last 20 years?

**Mrs Pyke**—A lot of people do, yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does that cause problems in schools?

**Mrs James**—There are interesting discussions. But from those discussions we learn more things as well. We are not saying that everything we have done in the last 20 years is wrong, but we have learnt from the current knowledge that we have now and what we have been using, and we build what suits our context. This is what we feel suits our context at this time. Again, that will evolve. Our program has evolved every year. Last year, for example, we did not do the ability grouping across grades 3 and 4 and split up the classes. We learn every year, and it changes every year, based on the best knowledge that we have.

**CHAIR**—What do other schools within Tasmania think about your system? Do they come over here to inquire about how it is working? Do they embrace it, or is there some negativity about the way in which it is taught?

**Mrs James**—More than 100 visitors came to the school at different times last year to observe during the literacy block. Of course, some people embrace it and some people say, 'It wouldn't work in our context, for a whole range of reasons.' Some people take parts of it away and feel that they are useful. Others want to access the training. There has been a big interest. At times, we were known as a 'Spalding school'. That is not a tag that we want or like, because we are just a school that uses an approach for literacy that encompasses lots of different things, Spalding being one of them.

**Mrs Brown**—I have noticed that visitors to the school have been impressed with our expectancy that our children will succeed. This method has caused some expectancy that the children will succeed in their literacy. It has improved the children's literacy learning, because they have a higher expectancy of what they need to do. Because of that there is greater success. In the past, near enough was good enough, so the children got into that mentality—'Whatever I give the teacher, she'll praise and reward me.' This method has increased our expectations of what children can do, therefore they are having greater success. Visitors to our school notice that we have a quality literacy program with high expectations, and that has impacted on what they think about the method.

**Ms Rumley**—Lots of visitors have come to review our programs over the last year. Some of those teachers have been really impressed with and enthused about what they have seen. They knew that they could put it into their classrooms, but when some of those teachers got back to their schools and tried to share it amongst their school they had no support. It is very hard to do Spalding in a single classroom. It needs to be done throughout the whole school. You need leadership and drive, together with support from teachers and the parent community as well.

**Mrs Musgrove**—What has not been mentioned is that one of the reasons we have been so successful is that we have excellent professional development. We have done that by having Susie trained first. She has been able to come into each individual class and be the model. I would have three literacy blocks during the week. On one of those days, Susie would by my model, and I would sit and watch and join in what the children did. That was the best way for me to learn. I have also done the course, but it has been terrific to have the funding to have a teacher come in and support me and have meetings with her.

**Mr EMERSON**—How does the Spalding method interact with reading recovery, which is one of the schools but not the other? Where does the funding come from for both of those programs? Do you know to what extent it is state funding and to what extent it is federal funding? Following on from that, what would you do with more funding?

**Mrs James**—We utilise reading recovery. That is a very focused program. It looks at our four eldest weakest grade 1 performers. I must say that 90 per cent of those at the moment are boys and 80 per cent of the children who access that are Aboriginal. That program is funded. We have $6,500 from central funding. The state Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group looks at the moneys from the state and Commonwealth. That was one of the programs we felt across the state we would like people to be able to train in and access. That is a yearlong training program. The school's commitment to that was to have 0.5, which is half a week of a teacher, release time for the teachers to be able to access that training. The teachers travel to Launceston one day a fortnight at the moment for the reading recovery training. They work with their four children during 0.5 of that week and Rosie, who is our reading recovery teacher, also works across the early childhood classes with literacy support for her other 0.5. So it is not a cheap program, but the results are outstanding. Our grade 1 children access that without being able to attain level 1 in reading and by the end they have attained usually about level 14.

Training for the Spalding program is also quite expensive and it is very intensive and focused. I guess it supports a wider range of children if you then come back into the classroom and can use it with the whole group. I really support what Lisa was saying: you cannot have one person go away and train and then think that you can do Spalding. It needs to be supported for that person across a whole school approach.

If there was more money, we could have more people accessing those sorts of programs. At the moment in the state about 13 people a year are trained in reading recovery. So we could bring another 13 schools on line with a reading recovery teacher. In terms of the Spalding training, I think there are about two or three courses that are run every year. So there could be greater access to those things. But, again, looking at some affiliations with the university and getting more at the ground level with teacher training would assist in having more teachers have access to that information.

**Mr EMERSON**—Can I get an idea of orders of magnitude of the money? I will tell you the reason I am asking this question. We have two schools in disadvantaged areas here. You say that money is not the answer to a lot of problems in society, but here is one area where I think money is the answer because here we have at least two proven methods. During our inquiry I have heard other schools say, 'If we could get one or two more teachers it would be magnificent. It would make a big difference. We know what we are doing, it is just that we do not have that.' I do not mean to embarrass the education department—this is a problem for us as parliamentarians involved in the appropriation of funds every year—but what would be a really good outcome for you in terms of extra resources for a school like this to really make this a terrific program?

**Mrs James**—I guess being able to have all of the teachers being able to train together and to have the time to spend on those teachers coming back and using that training. We do it a little bit piecemeal, I guess. In the last fortnight we have had three teachers do the Spalding 2 course. That is probably more than any other school in this state was able to send to a course at once.

That cost us about $6,000 in relief money. It would be good if we could do that as a group together, without people coming and going and things like that. People transfer from this school every three years as a category A school. So, with the next group of teachers, you need to start again and train again. Having the structures in place is important. You can have as much money as you can possibly have and still not spend it on the right things. It is important to be able to focus on the professional development and to have the time afterwards for people to come back and say, 'Okay, we've got this knowledge; how are we going to make it work in our context? We need to be able to have release time to do that sort of thing—staff meeting time, program meeting times and those sorts of things—and then to have really lovely engaging resources for kids. We have spent around $10,000 in the last couple of years on looking at our reading materials, so that, for example, the boys do have books that they find interesting.

**Mr EMERSON**—Let me put it this way: if someone came along and said, 'We've got $50,000 a year more for the school,' what difference would that make in staff funding?

**Mrs James**—We could then look at our literacy resource people. Our school puts 2.2 or 2.3 of our staff quota into literacy support, so that means bigger classes for other people. If you reduce classes by one or two, it is not going to make a huge difference, but if you are then able to have during your literacy block time two trained teachers working with the four streamed groups that you have got in that class, that makes a huge difference. If that person has also accessed the training that they need to be able to do a really fantastic program, that makes a difference. So I guess we would be more intensive in what we are able to do. We are trying to pick up children that sometimes do slip through the net with things like reading recovery. We would be able to put more children into that sort of program.

**Mr EMERSON**—Would $50,000 do the trick or would it require $100,000? I am just trying to get a sense of how much it would take.

**Mrs James**—I think we would say, 'Ask for more and you'll get—' Anything would be lovely. With $50,000, we could do some really exciting things; for example, we could train 10 teachers in Spalding or we could have an extra person on staff working across all of the classes in literacy. With $100,000, we could do double that.

**Mr EMERSON**—Would your outcomes rise—I am an economist—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Let out a 'boo' now!

**Mr EMERSON**—I am not a banker—it is okay. Do the benefits level off fairly quickly? With every extra $10,000 would the graph curve taper off or are you on the almost vertical where, if you doubled the resources, you would double the returns? At what point would you start saying, 'Yes, we can always use more money, but we cannot get the kids' attainments much higher with another dose of money.'

**Mrs James**—There would be some sort of drop-off, I guess, at the end of that.

**Mr EMERSON**—Yes, but you probably would not be anywhere near that.

**Mrs James**—No, we are not near that yet. In our first full year when we had more than one person trained, we noticed that our spelling results, for example, improved greatly: 97 per cent of our children were spelling above the state average—they were really spelling well. That was a huge leap, but then you get a plateau effect. Linking other areas like information and communication technology to literacy would give us avenues to explore more of those sorts of things as well.

**Mrs Limbrick**—I am a parent who did the four-day crash course. I work with grade 1 and grade 2 kids, so I do not get to use the rulings and syllables. I have put up my hand now to work with grades 4, 5 and 6 kids that are having trouble. Starting next week, I will be at the school every day—and that is voluntary work. If funding were given to the school and more money were spent, more parents could go in. I think that all parents should learn basic phonograms, because I have now got an advantage over my son. He is in grade 2, but he is reading chapter books and he is picking up phonograms, because they are actually popping out at him. My daughter did not start until grade 4. She is in a top group—and I do not really know how she is going—but she does not actually use it quite as well as David does. He actually sees the phonograms, whereas I have to say to Jacinta, 'Sound the word.' Because I know the phonograms, I have an advantage: I can say that there is a phonogram in there and I do what the teachers do—I use my fingers.

I think more parents should know the basic 70 phonograms to help their kids at home with home readers and guided reading. I have been in classes doing guided reading. I have been a helping parent for six years and this is the best way that I have helped the kids. When you get one on one and they get their phonograms right, they go, 'Yes!' and it is a real high for the boys. I get really emotional because I see how good they are. I cannot praise them enough. I am a cleaner and when I told the parents that I work with about it—I was telling them about coming before this committee—they thought I was talking double-dutch. So I actually took the Spalding cards and showed them and one lady said that it was a way for her girl to improve, because she was comparing her daughter with my son and David was more advanced than this girl in the same grade.

**CHAIR**—Can I ask another follow-on question and perhaps one of the other parents can answer if they have daughters on the method. Does the Spalding method disadvantage girls? Mrs Limbrick, you said that your daughter did not take it on as quickly as your son.

**Mrs Limbrick**—She did not start the Spalding method until grade 4, so at the beginning she was being taught the old way. It was a bit confusing for her grade. It was for me too: when I did the course I thought, 'My God.' David actually started in prep and he looks at it as just a normal subject. It has come so easily to the ones that started doing it from the beginning, even the kindies: you can go through the basic 26 cards and the kindies can name them—bang, bang, bang, bang. But, because Jacinta started in grade 4, the problems had already started and she had become set in her ways. But the boys and girls that work one on one with now are on equal par—they are going along at the same level.

I work with the ones that do need a little bit of help—so does Leanne, actually. When you do one on one, you have got more time to spend with them, and I tell them that it is not a test and I make it into a game. I will say to the teacher, 'They deserve a jelly bean or a sticker or something.' When they write them and get them right, they get this real buzz and say, 'Yes!' I

wish that it had been in the school when the Jacinta had first started, I really do, and I think that all schools should have it.

**Mrs Brown**—A problem that I have noticed at our school and many schools is that the population is transient and we often have new students arriving. So I think that some of that additional funding could go towards early birding students, because those student sometimes missing out on the components that would make their learning effective. We would be more able to early bird those students and get them into the program very quickly. As Sandra was saying, it would also give a chance to train the parents as well to help with the early-birding problem.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Can I just chase up that question that Craig asked about funding. There is a limited amount of funding—it is run by the state government and you are in the system. Is it better for the system to respond? For example, you could have a mobile principal and 20 staff that would relieve the whole school. They come into the whole school and everybody goes—including the parent bodies, if they wanted to—and you train the whole school for two weeks in a particular method. Is that the way to go or should you be trying to do bits and pieces in every school. One of the things that worries me about the scatter gun effect is that we have had lots of scatter gun effects in the last 20 years and I have to say that I have not found them to be terribly successful from a cold, economic point of view. Would it be better to look at a system response rather than an individual school?

**Mrs Eade**—I will not answer the whole question—I will pass it on—but one thing that I really want to get across is: please start at teacher training. Yes, I agree that in the scatter gun approach you are probably not going to get all the teachers trained well, but you have the opportunity to make a difference at the teacher-training level.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So do we take teacher training away from the universities and re-establish teachers' colleges in a modern context? Is that what we do—because the universities do not seem to care about teaching?

**Mrs Eade**—The training has to be more practical—

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are very polite, Susie.

**Mrs Eade**—All I learned when I did my teacher training was the difference between universities and colleges and other theory. I really believe that teacher training is such an important part of the solution—it is the way to change the future of literacy.

**Mrs Brown**—I too was going to say that a key component would be: how does this method get embedded in a teacher's practice? A part of that, I think, is in the training. It takes 10 full days of professional development, and I think the key is having everyone trained within that school because then the method is embedded in their practice. If they are getting only small parts, it is hard for the key learning to become embedded in their practice as a teacher.

**Mr EMERSON**—When you talk about professional development and you then get back into the school environment, do you have experiences of a team approach where some teachers say, for example, 'I found with little Billy that, if I do this or if I encourage him this way or

whatever, I get the best results'? Instead of it just being a case of 'Here is the Spalding method; apply 1.3 doses,' do you actually get interaction going on amongst the teachers, who say, 'Look, I've tried this' or 'I've tried that and it didn't work; what do you think?' And do you get a better system, better teaching, out of that sort of process? Is that how it happens?

**Mrs Eade**—At Bridgewater we have monthly team planning sessions and they are essential. You cannot just say, 'Apply the method.' You apply the method looking at the needs of your children—their abilities—you adapt the content to the level of the children and you are forever looking at the children's outcomes.

**Mr EMERSON**—Refinements.

**Mrs Eade**—Yes.

**Mr EMERSON**—Does it happen over a cup of tea in the morning, as well, when you have conversations?

**Mrs Eade**—No. We have one staff meeting per month set aside for team group planning.

**Mr SAWFORD**—In school or out of school hours?

**Mrs Eade**—It is a staff meeting, so, yes, it is in school hours. It has been a very good approach.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How much no-contact time a week does a teacher get in either of these schools, or are you in front of the kids all the time? Would it be two hours a week, two and a half hours a week?

**Mrs Eade**—Not enough—for the planning, et cetera.

**Ms Bailey**—I would like to comment on having everybody trained within a school. Unfortunately, there does seem to be some resistance to teachers who have not been trained. When discussions begin about the benefits of the program, teachers who have this ingrained theory about immersion and osmosis of teaching—sometimes there is resistance to it. Unless they have spent a 10-day course going over all the philosophies of it and arguing it out with somebody who is completely familiar with the program and the philosophy themselves, it is very hard for them to see the benefits. I think that is one problem that we have been faced with. Even though quite a large number of our staff have been trained in Spalding, when we come back and try to impart our knowledge—what we have learned—to the other staff, because they have not actually sat there for the full 10 days arguing out all the questions and everything, they are just not as willing to take it on as we have been. So the children who have not had the benefit of having a Spalding trained teacher start the next year at a disadvantage.

My class this year comprises children from three classes—some that I myself taught last year, some who have come from Carolyn's class and who have had a very rich Spalding background, and students from another class. Even though the children have been on an intellectually quite level plane, the children who have not had the rich Spalding background have started at a real

disadvantage, and it is has been my job to try to bring them up to the level of the other children, which has been quite a difficult task.

**Ms GILLARD**—In relation to the parents program, in each of the schools, how many parents would assisting with teaching, whether at Sandra's level or at another level? Are fathers involved as well?

**Ms Rumley**—Five of our parents have gone to the Spalding parent course. Not all of those parents can come and help in the school. I think four are helping, but I do not think any of them are dads.

**Mrs James**—We also had five parents who did a week long sporting course and, because of our transient population, only two of those parents are left as parents of our community. Donna was one of those parents. Generally, those parents have used it more with their own children rather than within classes. However, we also have teacher assistance with some training.

**Ms GILLARD**—And does the school meet the cost of the parents undertaking those training programs?

**Mrs James**—Yes. It pays for their training course fees. However, they volunteer their time and effort.

**Ms GILLARD**—What sort of cost is involved in training a parent?

**Mrs James**—I think it was a reduced amount of about $250 for the week whereas a training course for a teacher is $500 plus the relief.

**CHAIR**—Unfortunately, time has run out. We would love to continue. We could all ask at least another dozen questions. However, before we close, would any other parents here like to share their experiences and opinions with us? Are you quite happy with what you have heard?

**Mrs Cleary**—As far as funding goes, I find it really sad that the principal and teachers at our school had worked out the literacy program for the year; they had restructured their groups to have children at the same ability levels together and then, due to funding, we lost a teacher and they had to restructure all the groups. My daughter was disadvantaged in the classroom. Her learning level had to stay where it was until the new students who came into her group reached her level. It all comes back to funding. All the schools need more money so they can do these sorts of programs properly and introduce them so these kids are not disadvantaged—and I am not just talking about my daughter; I am talking about all of the kids.

**CHAIR**—Very good. I thank each and every one of you for the time you have given us. We truly appreciate that. You have given us a lot of food for thought and I think that we have finally come across something that really works in practice and not just in theory. I have learned a lot just sitting in your classrooms. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Good principals, good teachers, good schools. You have the three.

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

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

**Proceedings suspended from 11.38 a.m. to 2.00 p.m..**

**GALE, Ms Jennifer Patsy, Director, Office for Educational Review, Department of Education, Tasmania**

**JACOB, Ms Alison Joan, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Tasmania**

**SHIPWAY, Ms Kate, Director, Equity Standards Branch, Department of Education, Tasmania**

**CHAIR**—Welcome.

**Ms Jacob**—I would like to introduce Kate Shipway, who looks after our equity part of the department, and Jenny Gale, who looks after all of our evaluation and review aspects of the department. She is responsible for our student data and assessment, that sort of thing. They will be in a position to answer some of the questions a little better than I can. I am speaking to you, obviously, as a deputy secretary of the department, but I want to emphasise the fact that I am an ex-guidance and special ed teacher. For most of the 24 years that I have worked in education I have been working with kids who are on the fringe of success. I have particular affinity with that group of kids. I have certainly seen what happens when children are unsuccessful as far as literacy is concerned and I have a fairly deep commitment to doing something about that.

We have been keeping records of literacy results in this state since 1975, I think longer than any other state. We certainly did have what I think everyone would now accept did happen during the late 1970s and 1980s—a decline in general standards of literacy. We were able to arrest that in about 1993. We can see a graph going down and then starting to come up again. We have been able to do that through a variety of methods that are starting to have some effect. A lot of that is in relation to what we are doing with younger children, trying to start early with kids in the young age group and make sure that as few children as possible slip through the net and start to fail as far as literacy is concerned.

It was mentioned this morning that for a long time we have known that there is a substantial gap between the performance of girls and boys, particularly in relation to literacy. We started looking at gender differences from about the mid-1980s and, yes, that difference has always been there. In our state it has been in the region of five to seven percentage points fairly consistently. We have not had a huge increase in that gap over time, but what has happened, I think, is that some of the areas where traditionally boys were doing as well as girls if not better, such as in the maths areas and science areas, girls seem to have made gains and the boys have not made gains or there seems to have been a decline in their relative performance in relation to girls. What may well have happened is that the effect that we were seeing in relation to literacy is also showing up in some other areas of the curriculum.

We can speculate as to why that might be the case. Part of it is because literacy is so all-pervasive in everything we do that, whereas once you might have been able to do a maths test without really having literacy skills, now that would be absolutely impossible. You need particularly good reading skills in virtually everything you do. There have also been changes in assessment practices which may well have favoured girls over time—assessment methods

which are more essay type responses which need people to be able respond in a narrative way rather than simply giving right/wrong answers. That may well have had some effect.

We have also been doing some work on some of the behaviour difficulties that boys experience and their performance in literacy. Some of the research work that Jenny's branch has been responsible for has shown quite clearly the link—which came up a little bit this morning—between inattentiveness in boys and their performance in literacy. We did a research project with Ken Rowe from Melbourne University. In our results, he was able to show quite clearly that up to 17 per cent of the variance in literacy was a result of the students' performance on an attentiveness scale. In other words, the more inattentive the student was the less well they performed on literacy, and certainly there was a substantially larger group of boys who fell into that category of inattentiveness. So that link between inattentiveness, boys and poor literacy is something we are very aware of.

What are we doing about it? We have a number of programs in place. You saw some of them this morning. Some of those are starting to have results. We have an early childhood program called Flying Start, which has put extra teachers into every early childhood classroom. That is seeming to have an effect in improving literacy across the board, particularly for boys. We have evidence that it is particularly improving the performance of boys. You saw some of the specific purpose programs this morning—the Spalding program and Reading Recovery—which, again, seem to be having an effect, although we do not yet have sufficient hard-core evidence to put in front of you. We are working on that and we hope that we will get more of that over time.

**CHAIR**—What are the Tasmanian Department of Education's thoughts on the Spalding method and going back to the teaching colleges or the university where they are teaching teachers? Is there anything being done there, looking at the success of the Spalding? How successful is the Reading Recovery program? Can you name any schools that are doing very well in that particular program?

**Ms Jacob**—The department's view of Spalding is that we see it as something we are trialing and we are monitoring the effect of that very closely. I brought Spalding into the state because I felt that it had some strategies around the Spalding method that could be useful with some of our kids who otherwise were not making progress. That certainly has been picked up at the grassroots level. Basically, all the department has done is fund the infrastructure to allow that training to happen. It has been spread by word of mouth, by schools wanting to get involved and by teachers speaking to other teachers. We have encouraged that. If as a department we came in and said, 'Everyone is going to do Spalding,' that would probably be counterproductive, but letting it grow from the ground roots, supporting it from behind and putting more money into it as we can, it certainly seems to be gaining momentum. The official view of the department would be that we are encouraging that as one method that seems to be having effect with particular groups of children. We certainly are not saying that it should be in every school or that every school should pick it up, because that would be a fairly silly approach to take.

As far as Reading Recovery is concerned, again we do see that that has a good track record, if you look at the research results on that. From that point of view we are encouraging more and more schools to pick it up. This year we have sent two of our staff members to Melbourne University to be trained to become Reading Recovery teachers so that they can come back and train our own teachers. Up till now we had to rely on Victorian trainers coming across and doing

the training here—obviously, it would take us a long time to get sufficient teachers trained. So we are putting more money into that as well.

As far as working with our own university goes, I would have to say that, although we have had lots of discussions with them over the years about improving the kinds of skills training that beginning teachers get, it has not improved greatly. They would say they do a substantial amount in that area. I think it would be true to say they do a lot of talking about literacy teaching but not a lot of how to do it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Or why.

**Ms Jacob**—They even do a fair bit about why but not actually the practice of what to do, and that is a constant source of frustration for us. I spend a lot of time in schools looking at literacy programs; I have been in about 20 this year. When you talk to beginning teachers, they say that they did not really do anything until they came out. Then we are trying to catch them up by some of the programs that they entering into. That is a frustration for us.

**Mr SAWFORD**—This morning we had highly experienced teachers saying that, particularly those who had been out over the last 20 years. They said that they found the Spalding method a revelation. One teacher was talking about osmosis in language—a laissez-faire approach—and that it will all happen from experience, et cetera. Everybody in education knows that there is never one thing that works; there needs to be a balance. Like you, Alison, the attraction that members of this committee have to Spalding is not for Spalding per se, but in terms of the education of boys we are all now totally convinced that you will not be successful if you do not have an active, structured learning program that has a clearly delineated purpose and process and it is measured. That is the attraction we see in the Spalding method.

**Ms Jacob**—As we all know, literacy is a very complex and multifaceted area—we could debate it forever. The fact that Tasmania has picked up some of these commodity products—as people would term them—in relation to teaching literacy has been severely frowned upon by a high proportion of the literacy fraternity, both in our own state and in other states. It is certainly not universally accepted. It is criticised for dumbing down literacy teaching and, for some people, reducing literacy to simply teaching children to read and write. From my point of view, that is absolutely not true at all. We are trying to ensure that all children have foundational skills so that they can move on to the level of critical literacy, enjoying literature and participating in all of those very rich and wide definitions of literacy that we would all want to see. But we have to accept the fact that there are some children who are simply not going to get to that point without very explicit and very structured teaching. That is still an unpopular view amongst many people. Many people in our department now take the view that some children need that. At an official level we have been fairly successful in getting that approach accepted into a lot more schools than would have been the case five years ago, but I would not want to give the impression that it is universally agreed to—it certainly is not.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We acknowledge that, with the people who come before this committee, for every Ken Rowe there is another person putting the opposite point of view. People from academia tend to come to this committee. My view is that we have balanced that about fifty-fifty, with 50 per cent going for a far more structured approach in the education of boys and the other 50 per cent disavowing those views. I find the disavowing group a bit of a worry, and I

find the views of education departments on the mainland a bit of a worry in the sense that there seems to be a lack of balance in the orthodoxy that comes out of those departments. Even in your own submission, if I can use some examples, there is a belief in the construction of gender view, which is a nurture view, and the biological view seems to be totally dismissed—it is out of favour. There is a view about disaggregating information being the be-all and end-all when we all know that aggregating information can also produce useful information and insights.

We see examples of analysis type programs which are very boy-friendly—Spalding, for example—being ignored in favour of synthesis type programs. I would have thought that both of those are important for boys and girls. In other words, the orthodoxy that we are hearing on this committee seems to me to be a little unbalanced. I would worry when people talk about a nurture argument and then forget nature. I would worry if you had people arguing synthesis but not analysis. I would argue disaggregation, yet in a lot of the education department submissions, including this one, you can read into them a lack of balance in the sense of where it is. I have written down here that the disaggregation argument is used, but there is no aggregation argument. The qualitative data example is used, but there is no reference to quantitative data. There is mention of the Spalding approach, but nothing mentioned about structured approaches. There is a significant paragraph on behaviour, but not the other part of the equation which is poor teaching or poor curriculum. In other words, I agree with you, Alison: there is not one answer; there is a multitude of answers.

**Ms Jacob**—I accept the criticisms that you put forward.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not trying to be impolite, although some of my colleagues think I am.

**Ms Jacob**—With a complex issue it is always difficult to present a balanced argument.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Yes, it is.

**Ms Jacob**—I suspect that we probably did not do that very well in our submission. One thing I have noticed over the years is that there is a ‘tyranny of or’—you have to be that or that; you cannot do both.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is nonsense.

**Ms Jacob**—It is nonsense. It is quite possible to teach explicit teaching skills and still teach children to have a love of literature. It is possible to have graded books, but still to have good literature in schools. It is possible to use foundational teaching methods, but still to encourage children to develop in an open-ended way. To constantly polarise positions has not favoured anybody.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The other thing that fascinated me in our trip around Australia is that in all the good schools we have seen, and we have seen good schools in poor areas—

**Ms Jacob**—I am sure you have.

**Mr SAWFORD**—middle-class areas and even in very affluent areas, there are some commonalities in the success. The methodology is quite different, but there was a recognition

that there was a problem. They have reorganised and identified the resources and purposes in their schools so that the parents, kids and teachers all know that the processes are all spelt out, and it is all monitored.

**Ms Jacob**—It is all clear and expressed.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The information is carried on, even though the schools are very different in the sense of where they are. They all have had tremendous success, which seems to indicate that in the education of boys—it does not harm the girls—if you do not have an active, structured program that is clear to everyone, you will have a huge drop-out rate. I have heard departments and even education unions argue that that is the socioeconomic disadvantage. I really burn when I hear that, because it is nonsense. Good teaching can be found anywhere. There was a classic example at one of your schools this morning concerning a child whose IQ was very low, but they had done remarkable things in 14 months. In other words, there was no deficit modelling.

**Ms Jacob**—We have had to fight that one. There is still a widely held view that we should expect to have lower performance in our schools with a higher needs index—in other words, where there is a high level of disadvantage. We have been able to show in the monitoring that we do that that does not happen. Obviously, there is a correlation between socioeconomic disadvantage and literacy—there is no question about that—but it has probably been exaggerated by some of the statistical analysis that has traditionally been done. Now that we are much more sophisticated in that, we can show that the effect of the teacher and of the particular class that the child is in are much more significant than any of those background factors.

**Ms Gale**—We conducted research as a result of our 2000 monitoring tests. One of our statisticians uses multilevel modelling to factor out the various variables in relation to literacy achievement. The 2000 figures show that the class and school effect is about 17½ per cent. In other words, the class and school combined make about 17½ per cent difference to students' literacy achievement, whereas things such as ENI or STAS are less than five per cent. ENI is the educational needs index. It is a school based measure, not an individual student based measure. STAS is the student assistance program. It is another socioeconomic index. Those things are very minor compared with the class and teacher effect. In fact, gender is probably on a par with ENI. Clearly, the class and the school effect, which is what you are saying, has more impact than any other factor, according to the research that we have conducted.

**Mr SAWFORD**—International research would back that up.

**Ms Gale**—That is right.

**Ms Jacob**—Countless reviews have been done in the last three or four years, and they have all come up with the same factors: strong leadership from the principal, the recognition that there is a need, the high expectation of the school, the involvement of the community, and the putting in place of good, explicit, clear teaching methods which include a balanced approach, including not only phonics but also all the other things. Unfortunately, that message is not being picked up by a lot of people.

**Ms GILLARD**—One of the problems in this inquiry is that there have been lots of claims made over time about how boys are achieving now vis-à-vis girls. When we come to the end and have to write the report, we will have to pick through what is right and what is not right. In your submission you produce the reading score, the literacy benchmark or curve, if I can use that terminology—it is probably not correct. Obviously, that shows some disparities between boys' and girls' achievements. Are there other areas that you would be concerned about in the Tasmanian schooling system? If so, in what areas are boys faring badly or not showing the same levels of attainment as girls? I am trying to focus in on what is the actual difference today in Tasmania in schools.

**Ms Gale**—Across the learning areas?

**Ms GILLARD**—In terms of any indicator, whether it be retention rates or truancy figures. Is there a statistical compilation which we could say points forensically to where boys are doing worse than girls rather than theorising about it in the absence of statistics?

**Ms Jacob**—We can pick that up in a number of areas. In relation to retention, yes, there is a difference. Our retention rates have considerably improved over the last 10 years, although we are still not doing nearly as well as we should. In the year 2000, our overall government retention from year 10 to 11 was 73.4 per cent. For boys it was 70.9 and for girls it was 75.9, so there is that difference. As far as suspensions are concerned, again there is pretty clear evidence that boys are out of school for discipline reasons more often than girls are at every level. Our overall rate of suspension last year was 5.62 per 100 students, 8.59 for boys and 2.61 for girls—a very substantial difference.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is the mean age of that group who were suspended?

**Ms Jacob**—That goes through from kindergarten to year 12, so it is right across the board.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is the biggest group?

**Ms Gale**—The majority are secondary, years 7 to 10.

**Ms Jacob**—We do not yet—we are working on it—differentiate between truancy or non-explained absence and just absence from school. That is one area where we have not got a clear male-female difference. In some years there are more girls away and in some years there are more boys away. Certainly as far as suspensions and retention rates go, there are clear differences.

**Ms Gale**—If I could speak to the absentee data, the methodology that we have used in the past has not really been conducive to an in-depth analysis because we have taken a one-week snapshot throughout the year. We have done that for a number of years, and we vary the week that we take year after year so that we have a comparison of term 1 weeks over a period of time, term 2 weeks and so on. But it really is only a snapshot. From this year we are collecting our attendance data on a daily basis, so we will be able to do more detailed analyses of attendance at various times throughout the year and look at that from a gender perspective as well. The other thing that will enable us to do is to cross-reference attendance with achievement. In terms of the years 3, 5 and 7 testing that we do, we will then be able to track individual students who are, as

an example, below the benchmark, and look then at their attendance and suspension patterns, if they exist. We will be able to look pretty closely at the demographics of those particular students and try to isolate factors, perhaps to explain their achievement. In areas other than literacy and numeracy we do not monitor.

We have done some behavioural monitoring in years 3 and 7, I think it was. That was conducted by Ken Rowe. It was the basis of the statistics that Alison was talking about before. The only other information that we have at the moment that I can think of readily is the TASSAB, the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board information about achievement at particular levels on various syllabuses. I think some of that was presented in the report.

**Ms Jacob**—I honestly think that the differences are so difficult to isolate in different subjects that it is probably not useful to table that. Clearly, as I said earlier, there seems to have been a generalisation effect from literacy to some of the other areas of the curriculum. We suspect that may well be because of assessment practices and also because of the fact that literacy and reading in particular are so all-pervasive for pretty well everything that you need to do. It may also be that some of the assessment criteria that are used these days—such as being able to work in teams, being able to communicate, being able to get on with people—may well favour girls. It may be some of the assessment criteria rather than the content knowledge of the particular areas that are changing.

**Ms GILLARD**—Looking at the three areas that you have mentioned where you do have statistics—literacy attainment, retention rates and suspensions—is there any data to show that the differential between boys and girls in those things is worsening over time, is it static, or is it getting better?

**Ms Gale**—It is about the same for suspension rates. That has not varied much at all. In terms of literacy and numeracy, I have looked at only the last couple of years, and there does not seem to be a significant difference between them. In the early years, our collection of data for the flying start evaluation that we did showed, over a period of four years, that boys had improved slightly—statistically significantly more than girls, but educationally it was only a slight improvement. We might be picking up a it there, but generally the gaps appear to be about the same.

Also, we have numeracy data. Looking at the year 2000 figures for our numeracy in years 3, 5 and 7, one can see that on each of the strands of numeracy—measurements, space, number, chance, data and so on—boys outperform the girls in most of those in the top levels. In the middle levels it is more on a par, or girls slightly outperforming boys. At the lower levels there is about an even mix between boys and girls. There is very little difference between them at the lower levels. So there is a bit of difference between what our numeracy results are showing and what our literacy results have shown. The difference is not as great there, and in some cases boys are performing better than girls.

**Ms GILLARD**—You referred to more than these two programs, but the two that I have picked up on were No Quick Fix and the Flying Start program. Could you describe them and their costs to the department—I do not think the cost figures were in the submission?

**Ms Jacob**—Flying Start is our major early childhood extra intervention program that we started some years ago. That is about an $8 million program. As a total figure, we spend somewhere around $14 million per year on literacy. Of that, about $5 million would be Commonwealth money and the rest would be state money. The large part of the state money is the Flying Start program. When we were trying to turn things around, we took a conscious decision to concentrate on the young children and to try to make a difference there. Even accepting the fact that we have some casualties further up the system because of poor teaching or whatever that has occurred, the fact that our grade 3 reading results in relation to national benchmarks are about 10 percentage points higher than our grade 5 results is evidence that what we are doing in the early childhood areas is starting to turn things around.

Unfortunately, in the upper end of the school system we still have quite a few children who have not achieved sufficient literacy skills to be competent. That is a real concern to us. However, it is also very difficult to come up with any strategies which are successful in the upper years of schooling. That does not mean to say we can give up and say, 'Too bad, some children have failed,' but it does mean that intervention is much more difficult at that end.

No Quick Fix was very much a professional development program for schools to try to make them conscious that boys and girls may have some different needs, to try to avoid a kind of competing victim syndrome where people were saying boys are the ones having a terrible time or girls are the ones having a terrible time, and to try to make them conscious of the fact that there are some things which we all do as teachers, sometimes unconsciously, which may be favouring girls or boys without us necessarily picking up on it unless it is brought to our attention. The program was also very much about what you have been saying: that if you have good teaching everybody benefits. At the moment we do not have any designated officer working in the department specifically on gender issues, but we are trying to incorporate that into a more general approach to that goal.

**Ms GILLARD**—So the Flying Start program is really about the extra provision of literacy staff?

**Ms Jacob**—Yes. We have tried very much to focus that program on some particular characteristics which we know will help children be more successful. When Flying Start first started, we left it largely to the schools to use the resource in the way that they felt would be most beneficial.

**Ms GILLARD**—Was the resource an amount per school?

**Ms Jacob**—Extra teaching.

**Ms GILLARD**—One extra teacher per school?

**Ms Jacob**—No, it was formula based. They got at least a point 4 into every classroom for a period of the day. So it was a substantial program. Over time we have identified factors which seem to mean that some schools were really improving a lot and others were not. They are things that you would expect: for example, a time of the day when they focus on literacy, and a two-hour block seems to be an accepted period of time in a lot of schools that are making progress; having very close monitoring of the progress of the students, with teachers who really

knew what level the children were at and each child was working at their level of success, which again is very important; having a system of graded texts, so that children were always reading texts at the level at which they could be successful, rather than simply choosing a book that may have been well above or well below their level, and that has had a substantial impact in many of our schools; and using some of those strategies that the teachers talked about today—guided reading, guided writing and all of those kinds of things. More and more those things have become accepted as part of what happens in our classrooms.

We have had to try to break down people's reactions to a package such as Spalding. We believe that there are a lot of elements of Spalding, a lot of elements of reading recovery and a lot of elements of just good teaching which, repackaged and called something different, would be a lot more acceptable to a lot more people. People have their own connotations about that word, which has been a problem for us.

**Mr EMERSON**—Do you remember where you got the name, 'Flying Start' program?

**Ms Jacob**—I think we just made it up. I do not think it was from anywhere.

**Mr EMERSON**—We used it in Queensland in 1995.

**Ms Shipway**—I think they stole it.

**Ms Gale**—Initially it came from the principals association campaign to give early childhood people a flying start, and that was picked up by the department.

**Mr EMERSON**—Is reading recovery available across the board in Tasmanian schools?

**Ms Jacob**—At the moment we have had to rely on Victorian trainers, which has limited the number of people we could train. As I said earlier, we are training two people ourselves this year in Melbourne. They will come back and be able to train 13 teachers a year. So, from now on, we will be able to train 26 teachers.

**Mr EMERSON**—Do you have a year 2 diagnostic net?

**Ms Gale**—At the moment we have our kindergarten development check, which all students are put through by their teachers. It covers a range of areas, but one is cognitive development. From that, students are identified by teachers as being at risk. Those names are passed on to our district support service managers who can then liaise with schools to provide some kind of intervention for those students. We are going to be using the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools package. We used that in a trial this year in about 70-odd prep classes. We hope to collect some baseline data and some diagnostic information for teachers to use. That is going to be implemented across the state next year. So we have the kindergarten and the prep as, if you like, nets or checks for picking up students who need intervention.

**Mr EMERSON**—Do you have a supporter reader program, involving not especially highly trained people, including parents, coming in and doing reading?

**Ms Gale**—Many schools have different approaches to that. Many schools across the state involve parents. It has different names in different schools, but it is that type of approach. But I could not quantify it in any way. Somebody else might be able to.

**Ms Jacob**—We have had 45 parents trained in Spalding. But, as far as school based programs go, I would not have any idea.

**Mr EMERSON**—Do you have a view of the sort of yield you could get out of $50,000, not necessarily per school but per school in a disadvantaged area? Would that make a material difference, or are we talking $200,000 before you expect to see any substantial returns from extra funding in these areas?

**Ms Jacob**—As a system, so far we have spent only around $200,000 on Spalding. That does not include what schools put in from their own pockets. It has not been a substantial amount. It is something that has grown very much from the grassroots up. Next year we will be putting in about another $200,000, so we will be doubling the amount going into our Spalding program. That does not allow us to provide much support to schools that want to pick it up, so extra support to some schools to allow them to pick up that option would certainly have a huge benefit. Similarly, with reading recovery—as I said, from next year we will have the capacity to use our own trainers to train staff—at the moment we are budgeting on being able to give only $6,000 to each schools which releases a teacher to be trained. That will go nowhere in being able to replace that teacher or to compensate that school, so schools will have to put in a fair bit of money.

Additional money to allow schools to take up that option would certainly have an enormous benefit. From my point of view, it is a really good strategy to give funds to schools to allow them to access what we are providing rather than to work from a top-down model by saying, ‘Everybody should do this.’ That immediately gets schools’ backs up. That is the approach we have tried to follow.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Alison, you are the first education bureaucrat who has not defended the lack of balance in what happens in education.

**Ms Jacob**—I am usually out of step, I am afraid.

**Mr SAWFORD**—God knows what is going to happen to your career! I appreciate your frankness in doing that and I want to push it a bit further. What is the Tasmanian department’s attitude towards competition?

**Ms Jacob**—We think that data should be used as an incentive for schools to improve their own performance. We have encouraged schools to use their data as a wake-up call in some cases. Some schools which thought they were really doing well, when they were confronted with data, realised that they were not doing well compared to like schools. They realised that they were just coasting and that they were not really adding value to the education of those kids. Some schools have used that data constructively and have shared it with their community. They have been really honest about it and have had parent meetings, et cetera. Jenny might want to comment on this because, until a couple of years ago, she was the principal of a small primary school in a country area where she had the job of saying, ‘You thought our school was doing

really well. We're doing okay, but our data shows that we could be doing a lot better.' In nearly every case where a school has zoomed ahead, the principal has taken that attitude: 'We have to be up-front about the fact that perhaps we're not doing as well as we were; we have to use the data for our own purposes.' They have then used the data to show the improvement that they were able to achieve. That is a really powerful weapon.

Schools that have put in a lot of effort, time and money and then seen their results going up have the best reward you can give anybody. I have no problem with schools using their own data with their own community and comparing themselves with other similar schools so that they can get a fair picture of whether they are doing very well. It becomes more problematic when you have a league table approach—

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am not suggesting that for a moment.

**Ms Jacob**—No, but I think a lot of people do in terms of competition. One of the problems we have had with getting teachers, schools and parents to use data constructively is that they immediately assume it will be used in a very negative way. We have tried to put the ownership of the data into the schools. We have a process where schools are encouraged to review themselves using objective data—in conjunction with their superintendent and so on—and then to set their own goals. Then those goals have some meaning, whereas goals, or targets, that are set from the Commonwealth level or even the state level are only inclined to get people's back up.

**Ms Gale**—For your information, Rod, what we provide to schools is their own data on literacy and numeracy in years 3, 5 and 7, broken down into strands, as well as an overall literacy and numeracy score. We provide them with information that enables them to look at like schools—that is, aggregated information using ENI and a couple of other factors—and we also provide them with the state score. So they are in a position to compare themselves with like schools and the state. The process that Alison is talking about is called school improvement review. It is probably more mandatory than was implied because schools are required to participate in certain aspects of it.

One of those aspects is data analysis. Then schools negotiate with their district superintendents, after a collaborative process with the whole school community, looking at the data that they have collected throughout the school improvement year to a set of outcome targets. For the first time this year we are requiring schools to show contribution towards the state targets which this year were set in literacy and numeracy and some other attainment targets in relation to indigenous students. So schools are required to actually show contribution towards those state targets in literacy and numeracy.

**Mr SAWFORD**—One of the great failures in the last 20 years has been the inability of the profession to supply to politicians actual data in order to be able to make judgment one way or the other. Turning to assessment systems, Alison, you mentioned a bit about assessment systems changing. Girls seem to do far better in continuous assessment schemes; boys seem to want and like Sydney or the bush examination systems. There is a whole range of other systems. What I do not understand is why there is not a mix of them.

**Ms Gale**—In Tasmania there is.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I am pleased to hear that.

**Ms Gale**—With the approach to the Tasmanian Certificate of Education—and I am talking here about the pre-tertiary syllabuses—with the ones that lead on to university, in most cases there is a combination of internal and external assessment, and put together they then come up with the final award. There are certain criteria that apply for each syllabus for a student to get a satisfactory achievement award—I do not have those off the top of my head, but it is a combination of internal or ongoing assessment and the external assessment which would be the traditional exam at the end of the year.

**Mr SAWFORD**—When I look at the Adelaide declaration, National Goals in Schooling, as an ex-school principal, I pull my hair out. It does not even have a coherent rationale. It has rationale mixed up with process and there are no clear outcomes—it is all over the place. I have seen year 7 kids distinguish between ideas, process and task far more effectively than that Adelaide declaration. I would like you to think about that for a while. What is your response to that in terms of the Tasmanian context?

Concerning the introduction in 1997 of the gender equity framework into Australian schools by MCEETYA, what worries me about that program is the total lack of identification by anyone in academia, the education department or anyone in Australia who can point me in the direction of one piece of quantitative research—quantitative; there is plenty of qualitative—that backs up the introduction of such a massive program into Australian schools. Would you talk about the national goals first.

**Ms Jacob**—I think most people would agree that the national goals for schooling are so huge, so all-embracing and, as you say, have so many layers or a combination of processes, targets and outcomes that they are difficult to navigate your way through. That probably applies to pretty well any global description of curriculum or educational aims. One of the issues we have had over the years is: how do you reduce that huge complexity of what we are requiring teachers in schools to do to something which is manageable and something which teachers can basically hold in their head and get on with? At the moment in Tasmania we are at the beginning of a fairly massive review of our curriculum which has a central aim of trying to make manageable and meaningful, and simple enough to get hold of and implement, some sense of what we want every child to know, do and understand in our schools system.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is a very polite answer. Is it that difficult to put the ‘why’ into a box, the ‘how’ into another box and the ‘what’ into another box? I would not have though it is that hard.

**Ms Shipway**—The ‘what’ is very hard.

**Mr SAWFORD**—All right. I acknowledge that it is not hard to put it in there, but it is hard to limit the scope; I agree with that. It should not be hard to put the other two bits in, should it? When a teacher or a principal sees an Adelaide declaration and this document comes to you, off the record, I know where it would go: it would go in the bin. That is a tragedy in the sense that as a nation of 20 million people we come up with all sorts of toots and whistles but no-one has acknowledged that it is a bit of a flop. We have not done anything about remedying that. Maybe we need a Hobart declaration that is coherent.

**Ms Jacob**—We had one of those before the Adelaide one.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have a coherent statement in terms of the national goals of Australian schooling?

**Ms Shipway**—Working in the area of equity and social justice in the department, as I do, the Adelaide declaration did at least serve the purpose of having a set of goals or processes or whatever we would like to describe them as.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Confused or otherwise!

**Ms Shipway**—Confuse or otherwise, but at least it did have a set of about six statements about social justice and equity across the board for students. It is unusual at a national level to get that into a document of that type. I suppose from where we were, we thought that that was a step in the right direction. As you read that set of goals, you get a bit of a warm glow, but when it comes down to the strategic level, then it obviously falls apart. I believe there are some quite nice visionary things to hold to in that set of goals. But, as you say, they is a bit of a mixture, which is unfortunate.

I do not think they will go terribly far unless people with perhaps some particular interest grab onto some of them. For example, with work on the indigenous task force, we have found that to be a very useful set of statements to work within in relation to indigenous students. It can serve some purposes, but I do not think it serves the purposes for which it was intended.

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is a much more polite response than I would have given. What about the gender equity framework?

**Ms Shipway**—It is awkward for us in our department. We have had some staff turnover over the last couple of years which has meant that gender has become encompassed within a broader set of tasks and orientations.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Would you like to decode that for us?

**Ms Shipway**—I cannot, really. We had a gender officer for years and whom we no longer have. Felicity Gifford was appointed in place of that officer. That earlier gender document came out of the work that had happened in relation to the education of girls. There is no doubt about that. These last few years have been very difficult. What we are doing here today is a sign of some of the difficulties that systems have had in dealing with that movement, with that transition from the time of thinking, for 10 years or so, about the education of girls and the issues there, to looking at gender in a different way. I believe we are—at least, I hope we are—moving to more of a middle ground. Those transitions are very difficult and the backlash that has happened in relation to some of the gender work has been problematic.

We are now attempting in our department to take a balanced view. I think you can see that in what we are doing, how we are thinking and how we are working. Our equity in schooling policy takes a fairly equitable view, I believe, of gender issues. Our department has arrived at a situation where we can work ahead to try to deal with the issues that exist for groups of our students, whether they are boys, girls, students with disabilities or indigenous students who are

not succeeding—whichever sets of students require some particular attention. I am not going to answer your question. I will leave that to somebody else. It is too hard to answer.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I appreciate your response. Over the last 20 years—perhaps we could go back a lot further—there have been a lot of things introduced into education without quantitative backup. They just happened to be the fancy of the time for some unknown reason. To go back to the good schools in my electorate, you find that these are all very practical people who do what works. They do what Jenny was saying before: they measure where they are and where they are going. Have we lost a lot of that in the last 20 years?

**Ms Jacob**—There has certainly been a real shift in this state towards more evidence-based decision making in schools and at the system level. As I work in a policy area, I can relate to what you are saying in terms of policy that was politically expedient, popular or whatever. In the time that I have been working in this role, there has been a shift to asking, 'Where's our evidence for wanting to do this? How can we monitor what's going on? Will we know whether we're making any difference?' We are also a lot more sophisticated in the kind of monitoring we carry out. We do not just accept global averages as sufficient. We want to unpack that a bit more. We understand that we cannot talk about all girls or all boys; we have to look at which girls and which boys and under what circumstances. We will continue to do that.

I have attended forums where we have presented results of what has been achieved, for example, with things like Spalding and reading recovery. That has been knocked on the grounds that all we are doing is showing short-term gains and people ask, 'How can you sustain that over time?' I suspect we have to wear that. If we have learned anything about monitoring, it is that we really have to have much longer-term, substantive monitoring in place. We are not very good at doing that as educators. We seem to have fads which we quickly evaluate, and we do not do that very well. A classic example of that is in the area of management of students with challenging behavior. If you try to find any kind of good data about what approaches work well with those children, you will not find that in Australia. No good evaluation has been done. That is a tragedy because we all keep reinventing the wheel and making the same mistakes.

**Mr EMERSON**—Does ENI stand for education need index?

**Ms Jacob**—Yes.

**Mr EMERSON**—How would that relate conceptually to the Commonwealth SES—socioeconomic status—formula?

**Ms Gale**—I would need to look that up because I am afraid I do not have that information here. However, as I understand it, ENI involves the SES index. It has distance from the centre. Three factors are taken into account. I can certainly find that information.

**Mr EMERSON**—Could you provide that information to the secretariat? I ask for that because we learned of a problem in Queensland to the effect that funding for programs like reading recovery is greatest where the results are the worst. When you get a good program in, they say, 'Look, we've got a problem here because a whole lot of kids are being caught. They've been identified in the year 2 diagnostic net so you need remedial funding.' The remedial funding comes in and a school, like Eagleby State, does a really good job, lifts

performance and they say, 'Your funding is automatically taken away.' You have all these people and all this enthusiasm and, while this has not actually happened, if you stuck to that approach, the money would go or be diminished. Can you link funding to the socioeconomic circumstances of the area surrounding the school rather than to the performance of the school?

**Ms Jacob**—That is what happens. That is okay, but only to a point. Basically, you are implying that a greater proportion of students will have difficulties in schools in disadvantaged areas. That is true, but it is also true that there will still be some children who have difficulty in schools that do not receive that additional funding. That is an issue for us at the moment because all of our funding is formula based—you get more if you are in a school with a high ENI. That is fine for those schools, but we have substantial proportions of students, particularly in the middle ENI groups, who get virtually no additional funding and they are really struggling to put those programs in place.

**CHAIR**—A lot of witnesses who have appeared before us have placed great importance on having a male role model within schools. What is the percentage of male teachers in Tasmania? In your view, how would you encourage men to become teachers? What is discouraging them? I notice that New Town High School is the only all boys school there. Do you know how many male teachers they have?

**Ms Jacob**—No, but I am sure they could tell you. We could certainly provide you with details of the proportion of male teachers, but we do not have that information here. We often have the discussion about whether a factor in the issue of gender equity is the lack of male role models in our schools. I suspect that it has been slightly exaggerated. While I can see that it is useful to have a nice balanced group of role models, particularly in homes where there often is no father where it would be good for them to have a male role model, at the end of the day, it is a matter of how good a teacher you are rather than whether you are male or female.

**CHAIR**—The students tell us, and we usually take a lot more notice of them.

**Ms Jacob**—I have certainly had male students who would say that their best teacher is a woman because she is a really good teacher. I suspect that we can make a bit too much of the gender issue. A good teacher is a good teacher, as far as I am concerned.

**CHAIR**—Has the department determined why men are not entering the teaching profession?

**Ms Jacob**—I do not think we have any clear cut evidence on that one. I suspect it is probably tied to the status of teaching as a profession, and that is obviously tied to salary levels et cetera. Teaching has traditionally been a female dominated profession. I suspect that the status that we have as teachers in the community has not been very high in recent years. Maybe as that increases more males and hopefully more good females as well will be attracted to the profession.

**Mr SAWFORD**—On that same level, in 4.4 in your submission on the curriculum issue and the agenda debate there is an interesting part in the way language is used in putting forward an idea, and this is a common sort of thing. It says there is:

> ... a gender bias in English and Biology, with girls significantly over-enrolling—

Rather than having more enrolments. In other words, there is a value judgment attached to it. It continues:

By comparison, boys are over-enrolled in computing and, to a lesser extent, the physical sciences.

Interesting language. And the more important point is the last sentence in the paragraph, where it says:

Year 10 English enrolments show a marked gender imbalance, with more boys taking lower level courses and more girls taking higher level courses.

In other words, they get the language right in that sentence. So what? Is there a problem that more girls do biology and English?

**Ms Jacob**—Not at all. I take your point that it is probably a language issue. I guess the point is basically—

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is an Australia wide comment that has been made by departments and academia. I always find it fascinating that there is a value judgment attached to a mathematical concept.

**Ms Jacob**—It is a point well taken.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is the way mathematics is going, isn't it? It is not important, is it?

**Ms Shipway**—That is an excellent point.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Does it matter if there are more girls doing English and biology—is it a problem?

**Ms Jacob**—I think it only matters if they are making those choices for—

**Mr SAWFORD**—For valid reasons.

**Ms Jacob**—For invalid reasons.

**Ms Shipway**—The invalid reasons are the problem, Senator, and if they are not being given a real choice.

**Ms Jacob**—One of the things which has happened recently is that we have introduced a new method of statistical scaling for our tertiary entrance subjects. That has meant that basically students are now choosing a subject because that is the subject they want to do, rather than perceiving that that is an easy subject or a hard subject. That seems to be making a substantial difference. Students are choosing a subject because they perceive the subject will be useful to them or because they want to do it, rather than because they think it is one that they can do easily or whatever. And maybe that is what we would want to encourage—people making choices for the right reasons.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Many people in the last 20 years have had such an imbalance towards the way they see and perceive education. Have we also dudded some of our girls?

**Ms Jacob**—I think we have.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are we still doing it?

**Ms Shipway**—I think so. I do not think you turn anything like that around as quickly as we might think or hope.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is the answer really a more balanced approach; is it a new approach that we should be looking at?

**Ms Shipway**—Yes, it is how you get the balanced approach. What we have been talking about today is that desire to get balance in whatever it is that we are doing. When young people leave schooling, we know that boys, despite their schooling outcomes—and for some groups these outcomes might be quite low—are still getting better outcomes in employment than young women.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It tends to reflect very badly on the teaching and secondary schools, doesn't it?

**Ms Shipway**—It all reflects on society and what is available.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Or does it reflect badly on the concept of a comprehensive high school?

**Ms Shipway**—It is hard to know what it is.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Or on the structure of secondary education?

**Ms Shipway**—It is too complex, I think, for us to attribute these outcomes to anything, but it is a problem nonetheless for young women as they try to move into the workforce and find little there for them.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What is your view about comprehensive high schools in Australia?

**Ms Jacob**—That is a broad question.

**Mr SAWFORD**—We did not have that system over 25 years ago.

**Ms Shipway**—From where I am as a bureaucrat in a public education system, I have a very strong commitment to good comprehensive schooling. I do not have a very strong commitment to any education which is less than very good. Whether it is a comprehensive school, whether it is a selective school or whatever, if it is not a good school I would not be committed to it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Isn't diversity strength?

**Ms Shipway**—Diversity is very strong, and that is why I believe comprehensive education is the powerful way to go.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is uniformity weakness?

**Ms Jacob**—I think that that good comprehensive schooling also encourages students to be grouped for like purposes when it is appropriate. I think it is a fallacy to believe that you cannot ever do ability grouping within good comprehensive education. At the same time, I think it is healthy as a sort of democratic principle to have kids educated with the full range of their peers. I would certainly agree with Kate that I am a supporter of good comprehensive education. Again, it is this tyranny of 'or' thing. You can have good comprehensive education and still do grouping of children for like purposes for very good reasons, without any detrimental effect, and I think that is what we ought to do. That does not mean that you put kids into a stream in the beginning of high school and they stay in that stream until the end of their schooling. I think that is detrimental. I went through a schooling in that kind of system. It was fine if you were in one of the high streams, but probably not if you were in one of the low streams. But that does not mean to say that you cannot very well educate for a diversity. In Tasmania, we have the highest proportion of students with disabilities educated successfully in our mainstream schools. Again, I think that is a very healthy practice and something that we should be encouraging. That does not mean that for every one of those student's lessons they have to be in a mixed ability group. That is a nonsense. There is a very good argument for grouping children who need an intensive program in a particular area for that reason.

**Mr SAWFORD**—A couple of principals have put to this committee, both on and off the record, that they believe that you have to make a choice about what sort of school you are going to be in second year education. You are going to be either an academic high school or a vocational high school. I refer to Peter Turner at Salisbury High School in South Australia. Salisbury High School is now called an enterprise high school; it is a directly vocational school. In relation to the question that Kay asked, parents want single-sex schools and they want a more vocationally orientated school or technological school—I do not care what you call it. One of the things that principals will tell you is that the academic staff and the vocational staff—and I know this from having had colleagues and family members in both camps—fight like hell and dud each other on this issue.

When I wander around, I do not see successful vocational high schools anymore. I see successful academic high schools, often with very piddling vocational programs attached to them. It is only when you get out-of-the-ordinary principals or teachers that you get strong vocational education in a school—and I do not mean the Mickey Mouse variety; I mean those sorts of vocational educational schools that are at the edge of design, at the edge of technology. They are rare in Australia. They are not so rare overseas. I notice in the recent election campaign in the United Kingdom that Blair and Plunkett, who was the previous education minister, gave comprehensive high schools the biggest kick in the behind that they have ever had.

**Ms Jacob**—Isn't it a shame that we have to put a label on something and say, 'All comprehensive high school is bad.' Surely, what we ought to be doing is picking up the things that we really want to see happen in a good school. We would certainly want to see a strong vocational program provided. In fact, in some of our good schools in Tasmania that is being

well provided for, alongside a solid academic foundation, without making value judgments about which is better or which should be emphasised, or putting them in a kind of polarised stream. That goes back to what I said earlier about the danger of polarising: you either have to be vocational or you have to be academic; you either have to do ability grouping or you have to have value diversity. That is a nonsense. I think that a good principal is able to take those elements and combine them in a way that will serve that community well.

**CHAIR**—I am sorry to have to interrupt this hearing now but time has run away with us. I would like to thank you on behalf of the committee for your input to this inquiry. As soon as the report comes down with its recommendations we will make sure there is one in your hands. Thank you very much.

[3.10 p.m.]

**CORDWELL, Mr Ian, Assistant Principal, New Town High School**

**MORGAN, Mr Ian Geoffrey, Principal, New Town High School**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this section of the public hearing into the education of boys and welcome representatives from the New Town High School. I would like to remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House and that the deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The committee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but if at any stage you wish to give your evidence in private please ask to do so and the committee will consider your request. Would you like to make an opening statement before we ask questions—just to tell us a little about your school?

**Mr Morgan**—Sure, very briefly. I will start off by saying that we have not really prepared anything for this hearing. This is the first we have ever been in front of such a committee, and that is not in any way an excuse. I guess we will talk about things that we feel reasonably compassionate about. New Town High School is in the northern suburbs of Hobart. It primarily draws from the working class northern suburbs but also from the inner city areas. It has a population of 760 at the moment, and it is a growing school. Of those approximately 760 students, half come from what we call in area and half come from out of area. In other words, at least 50 per cent of the population have parents who have chosen to send them to the school.

It is a school for boys. I use that term continually. I say that it is a school for boys and not a boys' school. I think there is a subtle message in that as well, in that the curriculum and what we are offering has to be as broad as possible and cater for the needs of our students in a way that all schools do. I guess the advantage I see is that we are able to tailor things rather than having to deal with them in a much broader sense. I have mentioned about it growing. At the moment we have put a cap on the school's population, in that we do not wish it to get too large. I think the actual size of the school is an important issue. It is one that has a bearing upon culture and tone. At the same time, you need a reasonable size to be able to produce certain offerings.

Ian and I are newcomers to the school. We took up our appointments at the beginning of last year, and we wrote this submission several weeks after taking up those positions. We came from co-ed schools and, as New Town High School is the only school for boys in the state of a government ilk, obviously if you have not taught there before then you do not have experience in that all-boys environment. Ian will speak for himself, but I know that after a short time of having been there we can talk fairly extensively about the advantages of boys being together at that particular time in their education. We have enjoyed it. We certainly see that we are taking some directions, and we have alluded to some of those directions in the paper. Some of that is really background. Ian, do you want to add anything to that?

**Mr Cordwell**—No, other than that all my experience in district high schools has been in coeducational establishments and that I came to a single-sex school not really knowing what to expect, be it good or otherwise. Eighteen months down the track, I think it is fairly obvious that there are some significant advantages for the boys in the school that compensate for some of the

things that they do miss out on in a coeducational environment. They are very positive advantages. They are obvious, and in many ways the boys respond very favourably to that single-sex environment. I am sure we will talk about that in a bit more detail.

**Mr Morgan**—A point I would like to make, and I think this is something that comes through in our submission, is that we are becoming a little concerned about the continual media emphasis upon boys failing. I think 'The lost boys' and 'Let's get real about boys' were some of the headlines that have been bandied about recently. I think one of them related to a recent *Bulletin* article which referred extensively to that. I noted with interest a comment in that article by a principal who said that on presentation night or prize night—or whatever the term was—24 of the 27 prizes went to girls.

I can be quick and glib and say that in our school, all 27 of those prizes would have gone to boys. However, it is a theme that I have used continually in our newsletters to parents and I always try to find as much evidence about it as I can to reinforce the idea that it is not boys who are failing. We need to be very careful about that because, if we are not careful, we will have a self-fulfilling prophecy. I do not believe our boys are failing; in fact, quite the contrary. There are certainly some boys in our community who have difficulties and who perhaps have been labelled with poverty, learning difficulties or social disorientation, but I do not believe that it starts off with gender. We need to be very careful about that as an issue. We have tried at all times to ensure that we are being very positive about our programs which, no doubt, are aimed at maintaining kids in school at all times to make it as meaningful as possible. We could talk about a couple of those programs if we need to.

**Mr Cordwell**—It would be fair to say that a great deal of our work involves establishing self-belief in the school so that the boys believe in, and enjoy, what they are doing. It is hard work when articles in newspapers and on television are constantly saying that boys are having trouble at school. It is not all boys; it is some boys for specific reasons. A lot of energy goes into working with the boys to make them feel good about what they are involved in so that they enjoy participating in school.

**CHAIR**—Considering the fact that you have both been teachers in co-ed schools, what is so different about the programs or the way you teach in an all boys school? I notice that you say that they are 'stimulating and challenging educational experiences.' What is so different between the two?

**Mr Morgan**—I said earlier that there is the possibility of tailoring the curriculum.

**CHAIR**—In which way? I am trying to find out whether it is structured.

**Mr Morgan**—With regard to tailoring the curriculum, I said earlier that it would offer the things that all schools would offer and that may be through absolute subjects and extracurricular programs. For example, information technology is a motivating influence with boys so we would try at all times to use IT as a way to tackle literacy. We believe that many boys need a hands-on approach. Our students at risk programs consider putting boys into the work force and giving them work experience days and they then link that back to the curriculum. I am talking about some programs. We would try to find the link, but at the same time we would try not to

lose sight of that focus. The focus is literacy and it is about how, and which way, you go about it.

As another example, James Maloney has just been a writer-in-residence at the school. I am sure you are aware that he is a pre-eminent children's author in this country. He would talk about the need to establish structured reading programs that encouraged the boys to read and that we should not become too hung up on classics or too structured about what they are reading, but that we should encourage reading to take place. In saying that, I do not want you to assume that all reading in the school is of that ilk. We have the full range of boys in the school and it is necessary to have the full range of teaching and learning styles.

To answer the question directly, it is a matter of making sure that we have that motivating influence and link that into our overall aims. For example, at the end of 1999, the school had one computer lab. The interest was so high, and the boys' requirement to work in that area was such, that we have had a rapid explosion in that area. We now have five labs and an up-to-date CAD laboratory as well. That is having a significant effect on the motivation of kids in a variety of subjects. It stretches across the curriculum; it is not just in a particular area.

**Mr Cordwell**—Another specific area where we can see significant benefits for the boys is health/PE. It is a real participation subject. In the single-sex environment the boys do not sit on the sidelines and not have a go. There is no pressure for the boys to sit down and have a chat, as you see in some coeducational environments. Also, in health/PE they are able to talk about what it is to be a boy and about manhood without that pressure from the other side of not being able to open up and talk about their ideas and feelings. It is a very rewarding experience for the boys to be able to talk about those things honestly and openly without feeling pressure from the back of the room or from somebody sitting next to them. And they do open up in the classroom. It is not just in a health/PE sense; a lot of those issues might be tackled specifically in English or social studies, be it the study of a piece of literature they are looking at, or whatever.

We push a number or common themes: that we care for each other, that we talk, and that there are answers in communication. It is not just what we say, but how we say it to the boys. They get involved in those discussions in a meaningful way. Boys work on an individual level differently from girls in a school environment. In many ways, they are less complex in what they say and think. They are quite honest and forthright and will come out with what they are thinking.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I refer to boys' reactions to what is going on in secondary schools and your remark that media comments are all over the place, but sometimes they are not far off the mark. I do not know whether you are aware of the work of Professor Faith Trent, who is professor of education at Flinders University in South Australia, and Martin Slade, a research fellow at that university. Earlier this year, they interviewed 1,800 boys. They confirm that in South Australian public, private, rich, poor and indifferent schools there is a problem from the boys' perspective of what is going on in secondary schools—the huge repetition and the boring years of 8, 9 and 10. Here, the boring years are 7, 8 and 9. At the beginning of this inquiry this afternoon, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs gave us some data that reflected the position in the eastern states of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The differentials—they are true of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania—before 1980 were less than one percentage point. They were up to 20 percentage points in those three states,

and in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania they varied from six to nine percentage points.

There is a problem, and parents perceive it. Sometimes they are doing the walk to the private schools in search of an answer. There is never a simple answer to all of this; there is a multiplicity of answers. Basically, parents are saying that they want more diversity in secondary education. Boys in secondary schools say that they want far a more meaningful curriculum in years 7, 8 and 9. The problems do not seem to be as accentuated in years 11 and 12 for the ones who survive that far. There is a problem. Perhaps the media have missed the problem, as they often do. I think that all members of this committee are convinced that there is a significant problem that needs attention.

**Mr Morgan**—I would not say that there is no problem with secondary education. Are we saying that the answer is single-sex schools? That is not true.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I do not suggest that, either.

**Mr Morgan**—For some boys there are some advantages. I noticed that some recent research that has been reported in the *Age* talked about single-sex schools being better for boys and girls. However, the devil can cite Scripture for his own purpose. There is no doubt that there is a need to revamp the secondary curriculum, and that is going on in a number of states around the country at the moment. It has to become a bit more relevant. I read somewhere recently that the only thing that you need to learn these days is how to learn. That is probably fairly accurate, but it is a glib statement. How do you turn that into practice? What sorts of things—

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is so wrong, because you have to know why you are learning, how you are learning, what you are learning and how to measure what you have been doing. Nothing is so simple, to use your own words, as a single level.

**Mr Morgan**—I am not sure it is totally wrong. I said to start off with that it might have even seemed as though it was a little bit glib. But I believe it does highlight the need for us to look at what we are doing in the secondary curriculum and how we can make sure that kids are going to be able to cope with a changing world. At the moment there is information talking about employment in the future, but many of those jobs do not exist yet. We have to be able to provide a situation in which kids are completely flexible and have appropriate communication skills to do it.

I would not disagree that they are huge challenges we are trying to face. I guess we are saying that we are trying to do those things through looking at appropriate curriculum offerings for boys within our environment, as well as providing other socialising activities that are part of a general curriculum. For example, I would talk about providing all sorts of leadership opportunities. As a simple example in our school, I think over half the boys last year nominated to be prefects. That sort of process means that they are quite happy to take that on, and that is an indicator of a willingness to pick up those processes. We have to build upon that. If you have got a willingness to take on leadership within a school, how do you build upon it? How do you fit that into the curriculum? How do you make that part and parcel of it?

I am not providing any answers to this. I am not sure I can sit here and give those at this stage. We are in the process of developing those curriculum changes. At the moment we have a committee which is really looking at what we are going to provide in 2003—such is the lead time of what we are doing. I am not here to advocate that single sex schools are the solution, but I would say that it is an option that many parents are choosing at the moment. You talked about where people are choosing to send their boys. They are choosing to send them to our school, and I think that is one of the reasons for it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there a role for selective high schools in New South Wales?

**Mr Morgan**—That is a pretty big, broad sort of question. My inclination is to say no—that there is not a role for selective high schools. But it might be easy for me to sit here and say that because we have a good range of boys in our schools. We have very capable students at the top as well as the bottom. I can throw in as an indicator of the top the fact that the current Rhodes scholar is an ex-Newtown High School boy. It is easy for me to say that if you have that range and if you have a general positive feeling—and I believe we have in the school—then it is a truly heterogeneous school. If it were not completely heterogeneous—and some schools do not do that—perhaps there might be a different feel about it. That is a roundabout way of answering your question.

**Mr SAWFORD**—People are now questioning the wisdom or otherwise of having a single secondary school public system in Australia whereas before we had a diverse system—in other words, there were different vocational high schools or agricultural high schools, there were academic schools and there were expressive arts and specialised schools. There was a greater diversity. Some people have argued that the change in the last 25 years for all the best reasons has in fact had a bit of a sting in the tail and the parents are reacting. You have got a school and you are going to put a cap on it, so obviously you are meeting a need here in Tasmania by creating a boys' school. Could you also be creating a need among parents if there were a selective high school, if there were a vocational—or in the modern terminology—an enterprise high school set up? Does public education at the secondary level need a little bit more diversity in order to get a more positive message across?

**Mr Morgan**—In theory, that sounds as though it is an attractive proposition, but diversity can sometimes be a name that stands for, 'Let's have schools for those who can and those who can't.' We can use terms like enterprise or arts, but they do not always represent those things. That is also a general response to it.

I do not know the answer to that. I do not know whether it is appropriate that we have much more diversity in that situation. I suppose that the response we would make is that we feel as though we provide that diversity inside our school. We have, I believe, an excellent music and related arts area, we are talking about extending our brighter kids and we have writers' workshop programs to be able to do those things, and we have work related learning programs for kids who are at risk. I guess that we are talking about having all of those things under the one heading.

**Mr Cordwell**—I think we would say that it is a broad enough curriculum, yet offers a range of choices for the students, many of whom, at the end of the year 10, have not yet decided what direction they want to go in. I would be a little bit apprehensive about channelling students into

certain directions too early, because in our community in general, people are leaving significant decisions in their lives until much later.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you have senior colleges here in Tasmania?

**Mr Morgan**—Yes, and they themselves are huge institutions. They tend to have about 2,000 students in them, so that that incredible range of diversity becomes even greater than it does in a secondary high school like ours. And our school, with almost 800 boys, is probably the second or third largest school in southern Tasmania.

**Mr EMERSON**—I want to try out a kind of a proposition on you, given that you obviously have a lot of experience with educating boys.

**Mr Morgan**—I am not sure that we do.

**Mr EMERSON**—Well, let us say that you do. Thirty years ago, a boy leaving school early, who was going into the vocational stream—bricklaying, plastering, maybe plumbing—could look forward to not a bad life; he could earn a fair bit and probably had a pretty steady stream of work throughout his lifetime. That would not be the case anymore. Australia has stopped physically expanding at that sort of rate. You do not have rapid growth in outer urban areas. So boys leaving school early now, or just concentrating on the vocational stream, I think are a lot more vulnerable to unemployment, interspersed with casual employment, but precarious.

In your experience, are the trades of today and tomorrow in the computing area—that is computer programming, help desks and all that sort of thing—and are the skills of the boys who would have had the propensity or the capacity to be the plasterers, plumbers, builders and carpenters of yesterday the same sorts of skills that would be relevant to computing? I know it is difficult question, but I have to ask a few teachers about this, because I have a suspicion that the answer may be yes, that you do not need high levels of literacy to do either of those things. If that is true and we are still stuck with a proportion of boys who just will not get interested in grammar and expression and so on, do we nevertheless have a hope for them by streaming them more into the industries of tomorrow rather than the industries of yesterday?

**Mr Morgan**—If I understand what you are saying, you are really implying, ‘Do the boys actually have the skills to be able to pick up a new set of industries in a new world?’—the suggestion being that it was okay for them to become plasterers and that they may not have needed some of the higher-level skills that are appropriate.

**Mr EMERSON**—Higher literacy and expression and so on, yes.

**Mr Morgan**—There is a lot being said at the moment about the feminising of the curriculum—that the way that we test students and the sorts of assessment procedures that go on have been more inclined to what is perceived as being the way that girls learn, versus the way that boys learn. I am not sure that I believe in that. I would say that we have to provide a variety of different ways in which we assess where boys are at, literacy wise. I think it is possible for them to be able to be highly literate. If you see how some of our boys find their way around a computer, prepare a PowerPoint presentation and are able to talk about those things, they are highly literate. They are more literate than many of their teachers. In a case of only two days

ago, I had a boy in my year 10 class who was more literate than I was. However, under the processes of assessment that I am using at the moment, he is a struggling middle-level boy.

**Mr EMERSON**—That is the point that I am getting at.

**Mr Morgan**—So the answer to you is that I think it is possible for them to do it, and I do not believe in a process that these sunset industries are such that the boys will be left out here with absolutely nothing to do. This really relates to a point that Rod was making about the statistics at the moment talking about how things are declining, and the statistics about boys in terms of areas of literacy are significant. We could also talk about numeracy and we could say that the performance there of the boys is much better and in many cases does outstrip girls at a particular time in their education. And we know about maturation status, we know that boys take longer to develop, and all of those things are fairly well documented. So if I use those two as an example I do not think there is such a thing as 'No, they can't do it so therefore they are destined for a dummy' at all.

One of the things we do have to be careful of, however, is that we do not dumb down the curriculum as a consequence of what we are talking about. Very often we can say, 'Look, they can't do these things. We want to structure an English course which is based around classical novels or even current novels with "welfare" themes.' Just because we have some students who do not connect with that at this particular time of their education does not mean to say that they are illiterate. However, they would not do very well on that aspect of their education literacy wise.

That is a bit of a long-winded answer, but I do not believe that that is the case at all. I do believe that we have to be wary of not dumbing it down. If they cannot do it we say, 'Okay, do something simple.' That is not what we need to do. We need to turn it around and say, 'Where is the interest level? Where can we access the levels of literacy that are appropriate?'

**Ms GILLARD**—Following on from that question, there are two things that have been put to us during the course of this inquiry. You have just answered one, but the other one that has been put to us is that there has been a feminisation of the curriculum that has inadvertently affected boys' performance. The other thing that has been put to us relates to the changing assessment models, particularly that the move over time from 100 per cent examination-based assessment models to more continuous assessment models has disadvantaged boys. So the proposition has been put to us that as a general rule of thumb girls prefer continuous assessment models and boys prefer examination-based models. Do you think there is anything in that? Is that right or wrong?

**Mr Morgan**—I would answer it from a point of view of saying that I do not think that a 100 per cent examination model is appropriate any longer. It is not an appropriate method of assessing where students are going, nor is it an appropriate way of talking about assessment that is going to assist their learning. So I would put that in place fairly quickly.

The second part of it is that it is once again a way in which you do that continuous assessment and what it is and how it is that you actually can bring it on board. We have had a bit of a focus here upon IT and the technology aspect. That is only one aspect of it. But most assessments on a continuous basis are written. It is usually done on the basis of assignment work that has been

given to students, sometimes in advance, and relies upon some research. That is a bit of a generalisation but I reckon that would cover most areas of the curriculum in most secondary schools. If you come back to the research that we were talking about, or that Rod was talking about in South Australia, for instance, that is one of the aspects that the boys we are talking about are feeling alienated from, so I think what we can do is continuous assessment, and we can get boys to take control over that assessment in a way that is pertinent to them. Whether it can be done orally, whether it can be done in association with others or whether it can be done through peer assessment, I think there are all sorts of options that build upon the skills that they can have.

I mentioned earlier on the leadership aspect in our school. We actually think that that is a really strong thing that we are not capitalising on at all. I actually see some sort of role for that peer assessment, too, that can be built in, but they are curriculum issues. Once again, it is a roundabout way of answering it, but I would certainly reject that notion of examination 100 per cent, 'Let us sit down, let us cram,' et cetera, because I do not think it is appropriate any longer. And I think in this different world we are talking about that kids are going into, that is not going to prepare them for that, but let us have a continuous process in which they take control of their learning and control of their assessment, but let us make it pertinent to the way that they can do it.

**Mr Cordwell**—Boys or girls, they must be involved in the assessment of the work that they are doing. It is really important to have them talking to you about how they are going and how they feel they are going, the areas that they feel they are struggling with and the areas that they are interested in. That helps the teachers modify the program and the way they are teaching that program to meet the needs of the students as well. Assessment is not just one way: it is a two-way process.

**Ms GILLARD**—I suppose this is a difficult question, but it has been put to us during this inquiry that the changing nature of male and female roles in our society—the move away from the strong silent unemotional male stereotype and the weak garrulous emotional female stereotype so that those no longer apply—and the confusion generated by changing gender roles is affecting boys in education now, in that they feel more confused now than they might have 20 or 30 years ago about what masculinity is and what it is to be a man. I have my doubts about that and about whether, as adults, we are not just projecting a sort of adult debate onto the kids when they are actually already at the next stage, if you know what I mean, because they are growing up in a different time from the one we grew up in. From your work with the boys in your school, do you think that is playing a role in terms of boys' achievement? Are they finding it more difficult to get a forward vision of what it would be to be an adult male and, because they are finding it more difficult to get that forward vision, are they therefore finding it more difficult to work out how their educational experience fits in?

**Mr Morgan**—I would answer that too in the forward-looking process. That is that the different world they are going to means that it is going to be more complex to be whoever you are. We have left those stereotypes of the past—we are talking about the fifties here—a long way behind. Sometimes too, it can be an excuse for the way we behave or for the way that we are not behaving. One of the things we try to do in our school is to have a range of role models. I am the principal of the school, and I hardly see myself as being macho, male, football-kicking, single-minded and so it goes on. We have a policy of making sure that there is a balance in

gender in the school. We have grade supervisors who are really significant people, they are like mini assistant principals. There are two in each year group, always a male and a female. What we are saying is that it is going to be complex to be whoever you are in the world that you go to. Let us provide those role models. Let us try to encourage them to be who they are and to be confident about being who they are. It is okay to be whoever that is: whether you be somewhat effeminate, whether you be football playing, whether you want to be engaged in whatever the arts may provide, those things are okay. We have to provide a climate in which that is the case. Once again, coming back to it, we have to look forward and make sure that that is okay and make sure that that complexity is worked through and that they can be open about it. Those are things that we would emphasise really strongly within the school. So, coming back to a very simple answer: no, I do not believe any longer that that is an appropriate discussion point.

**Ms GILLARD**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—We were at a school earlier today where I think there were 16 female teachers and two males, and they thought that that was a very good outcome compared to some other schools. How many male teachers do you have in your school?

**Mr Morgan**—Were you at a primary school?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Morgan**—I think there is a difference between primary schools and secondary schools. I cannot tell you instantly off the top of my head, but it would be close to fifty-fifty at the moment. There are certainly more males in substantive positions, and I use the word 'substantive' as opposed to saying 'leadership positions'. By substantive I mean promoted positions, but the grade supervisors I talked about certainly have the value and the power, if you like, and the standing within the school. Of the 11 people in promoted positions in the school, eight of the 11 are males and three are females. When you expand that into the grade supervisor situation again, because of the fifty-fifty nature, that breaks down a bit. However, that is something we always keep in the back of our minds as well. It is significant, even though I think that in this day and age males are being turned off the profession for a number of reasons.

**CHAIR**—Can you name any of those reasons?

**Mr Morgan**—There has been a perception of it being difficult, of morale being low, of there being poor remuneration. There has also been a lot of media coverage of the relationships sometimes between males and children, and those things are all impacting. Why put yourself in those situations? I am sure that affects the primary school a little more than it does the secondary school, but those are issues, and they come up very often.

**CHAIR**—Is there anything else you would like to add to the inquiry? Is there anything else you think might help us in our determinations?

**Mr Morgan**—I do not know whether it will help you, but I would say, despite the last point, that we enjoy what we do, and I think it is pretty valuable and pretty important.

**CHAIR**—Most definitely.

**Mr Morgan**—I made some comment earlier on: I do not believe boys are failing; there are some dilemmas, but those dilemmas are being faced by education generally, in that the future is demanding some pretty big changes. Even though I believe what the kids are being asked to do today is very different from what they were asked to do 10 years ago, I am not sure that it is different enough. What they will need to do in the next 10 years is going to be a gargantuan leap. That is the challenge.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your time here. As soon as the report is brought down with its recommendations, we will make sure we get a copy to you. We appreciate the time you have given us today.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 3.45 p.m.**