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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING

**Reference: Teacher education**

THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2005

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING**  
**Thursday, 26 May 2005**

**Members:** Mr Hartsuyker (*Chair*), Mr Sawford (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Bartlett, Ms Bird, Ms Corcoran, Mr Fawcett, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Henry, Ms Livermore and Mrs Markus

**Members in attendance:** Mr Bartlett, Ms Bird, Ms Corcoran, Mr Fawcett, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Hartsuyker, Mr Henry, Ms Livermore, Mrs Markus and Mr Sawford

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The scope, suitability, organisation, resourcing and delivery of teacher training courses in Australia's public and private universities. To examine the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools.

Specifically, the Inquiry should:

1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.
2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.
4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.
5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.
6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.
7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:
  - (i) teach literacy and numeracy;
  - (ii) teach vocational education courses;
  - (iii) effectively manage classrooms;
  - (iv) successfully use information technology;
  - (v) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;
  - (vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;
  - (vii) achieve accreditation; and
  - (viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.
8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.
9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.
10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.
11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

The Inquiry should make reference to current research, to developments and practices from other countries as well as to the practices of other professions in preparing and training people to enter their profession.

**WITNESSES**

<b>BURMESTER, Mr Bill, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>COOPER, Ms Robyn, Director, Early Childhood and Schools Team (Indigenous Education), Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LAMBERT, Mr Scott, Director, Future Schooling and Teacher Workforce, Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MERCER, Dr Trish, Branch Manager, Quality Schooling Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PANTING, Ms Nicole, Director, Quality Teaching and School Leadership, Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SYKES, Ms Margaret, Branch Manager, Enterprise and Career Development Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>WEDDELL, Ms Di, Branch Manager, Performance and Targeted Programmes Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training .....</b>	<b>1</b>



**Committee met at 9.35 am**

**BURMESTER, Mr Bill, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Science and Training**

**COOPER, Ms Robyn, Director, Early Childhood and Schools Team (Indigenous Education), Department of Education, Science and Training**

**LAMBERT, Mr Scott, Director, Future Schooling and Teacher Workforce, Department of Education, Science and Training**

**MERCER, Dr Trish, Branch Manager, Quality Schooling Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training**

**PANTING, Ms Nicole, Director, Quality Teaching and School Leadership, Department of Education, Science and Training**

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**WEDDELL, Ms Di, Branch Manager, Performance and Targeted Programmes Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training**

**CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)**—The question that is at the core of this inquiry, how well are we preparing our teachers for their complex, demanding and critical role in educating our children, is an important issue and has generated considerable interest across Australia. To date we have received well over 150 submissions, and we are expecting more. Teacher education is a continuum, and we will be examining its various stages. Are we providing the highest quality teacher education or is there room for improvement? Are we adequately supporting teachers joining the profession when they first take on the range of responsibilities in the classroom? Are we providing sufficient encouragement and opportunities for teachers to engage in ongoing professional learning? In opening this, the first of what will be many public hearings of this inquiry, I acknowledge that there have been previous inquiries into this and related issues at state, territory and national level. The issues that we are examining are under the spotlight internationally as well. This is not surprising. To be effective, education and consequently teacher education must continually develop in response to changes in the world around it. The changes impacting on education today are immense. It is important that we continue to examine, reflect on and critique teacher education, and our inquiry is part of that process. Our challenge is to make a positive contribution to the body of knowledge on teacher education, to identify what improvements can be made and to push for changes that will bring these improvements about.

Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. I now call the representatives from the Department of Education, Science and Training to give evidence. I also commend the department on the quality of the submission; I found it very informative as, no doubt, did the other members of the committee. Are there any corrections or amendments you would wish to make to your submission?

**Mr Burmester**—No, there are not.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Burmester**—The department put in a submission to the inquiry earlier this month in which we outlined the key features of the Australian government's work in relation to teacher education, and raised some issues for consideration. We also appeared before the committee in February this year, prior to the announcement of the inquiry, and provided the committee with some initial information relevant to the inquiry's current terms of reference.

I would like to spend some time outlining the developments with a number of DEST initiatives relevant to those terms of reference, particularly those which have been informed by the findings of the Australian government's Review of Teaching and Teacher Education in 2003. DEST initiatives are detailed in our submission which sets out the broad context of teacher education in Australia, recent policy trends and innovations in the area, a description of the government's specific areas of interest, as well as recent Australian and international studies and research findings. There are a number of issues in our submission which I would like to bring to the committee's particular attention today. One issue is context. The student results in international tests suggest that Australian teachers are generally performing to a high standard. However, the current challenges faced by teachers are considerable, amplified by rapid social, economic and technological change. Suffice it to say that demands on teachers are increasing. In part, this is driven by the need to provide flexibility and choice to meet students' changing learning requirements and parents' expectations. The importance of ensuring that the teacher work force is well equipped to deal with emerging student needs would not be lost on anyone here today. Local and international evidence based research indicates that the greatest influence on educational outcomes is the quality of teaching students receive. With the teacher work force being one of the largest professions in Australia, the significance of this group as a powerful economic and social force cannot be ignored. Effective work force management strategies for this group will be vital, including addressing issues around diversity and teacher shortages in key subject areas. Such challenges highlight the need more than ever for attention to be given to the initial and ongoing training of teachers as well as their selection.

This was highlighted in the Australian government's Review of Teaching and Teacher Education. Much of the responsibility for addressing issues related to initial teacher education, professional development and work force management lies with the teacher education providers in partnership with the teacher employers. Teacher education is delivered by the majority of publicly funded universities and four private higher education providers. The Australian Universities Quality Agency, AUQA, monitors and reports on quality assurance in Australian higher education. It operates independently of governments and the higher education sector. The provision of Australian government funding through arrangements specified in the Higher Education Support Act 2003 allows the government to assert some influence in relation to national priorities. The vast majority of professional learning activities for teachers following their initial training are provided by the employer bodies and professional associations. The Australian government does not employ teachers or school principals, or set their conditions of employment. However, the government is able to play a significant role in setting a national policy agenda and supporting quality teaching through the considerable funding it provides to school education.



Since a review of teaching and teacher education was undertaken, the Australian government has continued to exercise its leadership capacity and has taken considerable action in response to those findings. The report of the committee in 2003 has been very significant at the national level. The review's agenda for action recommended over 30 actions relating to attracting and retaining teachers, strengthening teacher education and career-long professional learning. A key message that emerged from that review was that more action was needed to make teaching a career of choice. The Australian government has already funded a number of initiatives that support the agenda for action, many of which are outlined in our submission. These initiatives are too many to mention here. However, I would highlight a couple of the more significant recent steps the Australian government has taken to support the teacher work force. The establishment of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, NIQTSL, fulfils one of the major recommendations of the review and advances the government's commitment to raising the quality, professionalism and status of teaching. Its program of work will progress significant measures, including a national system for advanced standards for teachers, a national system of accreditation for pre-service teacher education programs, a national approach to enhancing professional learning for school leaders and enhancements to the quality of ongoing professional practice through national professional learning strategies.

The government has recently announced the continuation of the flagship Australian government quality teacher program for improving teacher quality. Since 1999, more than 240,000 professional development opportunities have been taken up by teachers. Its recent evaluation highlighted its effectiveness and noted the continuing imperative for a single national program that focuses on teacher and school leadership professional needs. Part of the \$2.6 billion Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future package of higher education reforms includes action specifically to support initial teacher education. The government has prioritised teaching in the allocation of new Commonwealth-supported places.

The DEST submission provides a comprehensive examination of recent research and studies on teacher education, and highlights a number of areas for consideration. The executive summary lists a number of those under the headings: Context, Initial Training, Lifelong Learning, and Workforce Planning. I will bring just a few of those issues to your attention today. First, raising the status and image of the profession: while the institute will have a powerful impact to lift the status of the profession, teacher employers will also need to implement effective strategies to lift the status of the profession, through performance, pay and career incentives. Research suggests such steps would assist in addressing issues around recruitment and gender imbalance in the profession.

Second, using effective strategies for appropriate selection: educational research shows that the characteristics of good teachers go beyond academic results. The knowledge should be reflected in determining the most appropriate processes for selecting suitable candidates for teacher education courses. Selection tools such as interviews, commonly used in selecting students for courses in other professions, may be considered appropriate.

Third, enhancing the quality of the practicum and providing more support for new teachers: an issue pointed out in our submission is the amount and quality of teacher experience and supervision for beginning teachers. The review of teaching and teacher education highlighted the need to explore alternative options for such exposure and support such as internships. Employers

and teacher education providers need to work closely in partnership to support new teachers with, for example, strong mentoring programs.

Fourth, developing a national approach for agreeing on course content and accreditation as well as teacher standards: NIQTSL is in a unique position to considerably strengthen and advance the standing of the teacher profession in Australia; support and advance teaching and school leadership in Australia's schools through professional standards, learning and accreditation of teaching and school leaders; and strengthen quality assurance for teacher education programs.

Fifth, capture more information on professional learning provision: there is little available information on the extent and nature of teacher professional learning provision and how such a provision impacts on student outcomes. The Australian government is taking action to capture more information on this front with the reporting of professional learning expenditure and participation being a condition of Australian government funding under the schools assistance act 2004.

Sixth, developing effective work force planning strategies: there is a need for teacher education providers and employers to effectively match teacher education enrolments with areas of need and to pursue new models of entry to encourage career change entrance.

In conclusion, as outlined in the DEST submission, the Australian government is undertaking a considerable suite of initiatives to support the provision of high-quality teaching in schools for the benefit of all students. In addition to broad, major initiatives such as the institute, the Australian government has many targeted programs to support specific interest areas listed in the inquiry's terms of reference. Initiatives include activities to support effective behaviour management through provision of safe and supportive school environments, update teacher skills in the use of ICT and enhance literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students. As you would be aware, the Australian government has established a national inquiry into teaching of literacy. Our submission points to a number of issues relating to work force management and enhancing the quality of teacher education provision. It highlights a need for close partnership between teacher education providers and employers to address areas of need in supporting continuing improvements.

**CHAIR**—What do you see as the greatest challenges facing providers of teacher education at this time?

**Mr Burmester**—There can be overstatement of some of the issues and concerns facing universities. Our research shows that the number of teaching places available and being filled by higher education providers has actually increased. It is now at its highest level. We have about 85,000 people undertaking teacher education. There has been some concern about the cut-off scores that allow that number of students into teaching education. The average score to get into a teaching course has increased over the last decade. So we believe that, on the whole, the system is working. Attracting good quality students and training goes to the status of the profession. The selection of students may need to be broader than just their academic cut-off.

**Dr Mercer**—Teachers have to be prepared for very complex roles in the school environment. The schools now are probably the most stable element in many children's lives. Teachers and

principals often feel universities have a very crowded curriculum as they have to cover so much. Getting the balance right between the educational theory and the practice is a key issue, and we see that reflected in the tensions around how much time there is for the practicum, how effective the practicum is, and how strong the partnership is between universities and schools and employers.

**Mr Burmester**—The one area which needs to be specifically targeted is the interaction between the providers and the employers, particularly in providing practicums and teaching experience during that course. Whilst there are a range of models across universities that they have developed to suit their purposes, I am not sure that there is consistently good access to teaching practicums. The government provided some assistance by increasing the amount of funds allocated to teaching places so that they could spend extra money on practicums but, having had a quick look at some of the other submissions, it seems to be broadly accepted that there is an interaction regarding the practicum that needs to be looked at thoroughly.

**CHAIR**—Do you think we are doing enough to assess how effective our teacher education courses are? What are your views on accreditation of teachers with regard to accreditation in other professions?

**Mr Burmester**—Teaching is a graduate profession. The people who are entering the profession have gone through a university course. In Australia, the key determinant and responsibility for quality is the universities themselves—they have to have their own quality assurance provision and processes. From my work in the higher education area, there is no question that they have quite rigorous internal processes for course approval and academic board approval of their offerings. They are more focused on quality since AUQA started doing quality audits. There is a solid framework for external reference and auditing of the progress of universities so that we can be assured of quality—that concerns courses and provision, not actual outcomes of teaching professions. Some students who succeed satisfactorily but who have not had adequate practical experience may not actually be suited to teaching. There is some concern about the level of attrition of teaching graduates—that may be a quality issue or it could be part of that mismatching of aspiration and ability. So I think there is a framework there. Following graduation, the government runs quality teacher programs to assist the state systems. To this point, accreditation has been the responsibility of each of the states.

**Dr Mercer**—Perhaps I could draw attention to the role of the new NIQTSL. They are looking very seriously at how they would take a strong role in a national quality assurance system which would match or be complementary to the internal quality assurance processes that, as Bill has described, operate inside the universities. They have requested proposals for a scoping paper to determine what role NIQTSL might usefully play in working with the teacher registration institutes at the state level. The goal is to work towards a national accreditation system focused much more on the content and how to produce teachers that schools will believe are able to effectively start their journey in teaching.

**CHAIR**—Do you believe that the proposed accreditation process will give a result for the teaching profession that is comparable to other professions? Do you believe that is a move in the right direction?

**Dr Mercer**—Part of our minister's passion for establishing NIQTSL was to strengthen the voice of the profession so that employers and providers have a much stronger active voice in saying what their needs are. We are very strongly supportive of that work of NIQTSL and will be looking to do whatever we can to support it with the quality teacher program and other DEST initiatives.

**Ms BIRD**—I have a few questions arising from your submission and comments. It seems to me that there are not many universities looking at mature age entry of people who are trained in other professions. When I did my training, we had a group of science-based guys from BHP retraining as teachers. They were some of the most successful people from my class. There are not particularly amenable training options for more mature people who may do much better in a classroom than someone straight out of school. Do you have any feedback on what the university or training options are for people who may want a career change into teaching?

**Mr Burmester**—As you have said, there are some very good examples of where universities have focused on this, in particular circumstances. A case in Newcastle was an outstanding contribution to the local community—everything we have heard about the outcomes of that program suggests it was a great success. Again, it relies on the individual universities to determine how they can best attract quality candidates for the student places available. Teaching is an area that still is attractive to school leavers and therefore there is not a lot of pressure for universities to experiment on how to attract a broader range of applicants. One of the issues highlighted in our submission is that there needs to be greater diversity in the teaching work force, including people bringing in skills from other areas as well as the gender balance, and more so as VET in Schools contributes a different aspect to school offerings. It is important to get people with a relevant background who can be competent in teaching VET in Schools and bring an outside focus to those teachings. There is no quick fix solution to that. It is important that the teaching work force reflect the diversity of the society it is teaching.

**Ms BIRD**—That is perhaps something we should take up with the universities. Partly what we are addressing in this process is quality of teaching, but the other part is the perceived massive work force shortage that we are heading towards with an ageing teaching population. Previously, with the teacher shortages in the sixties and seventies, a lot of people actually made the decision to go into teaching because there were scholarships available. Is there much development on the scholarship options at the universities? It does not appear to me there is.

**Mr Burmester**—This is one of the areas where it is very important for the committee to make sure they look at the real facts rather than the often headlined facts. There are far more trained teachers in Australia than are working in the profession. There are waiting lists in most states for people to get full-time teaching—

**Ms BIRD**—I am still on one—12 years later!

**Mr Burmester**—MCEETYA undertook a study of this in 2003 when there was concern about the ageing work force and the prospect of a large proportion of the current work force reaching retirement age. They came to the conclusion that there was not a crisis and it was largely in balance—although there were some concerns about particular subject areas such as mathematics and science, and language might be another one that has been added more recently. The drop-out rate or attrition rate shortly after graduation is also of concern. It does not go so much to

attracting people into a course as retaining them and their expertise—the skills they have learnt—in the profession. A nursing review recently revealed that the period of transition from studying to the full-time work force is often problematic in that you lose trained people. It is not always a case of attracting people into paying scholarships; it is retaining them at the other end of the process.

**Ms BIRD**—Tie a certain amount of service to the scholarship.

**Ms Weddell**—That goes to the heart of some of the recruitment practices of employers. There have been very successful examples of recruitment practices where representatives of employers go to universities—they are starting to have some very effective recruitment strategies. Some of those are built on what we see at the heart of very good practice between the universities and the practicum and the employer—namely, very good internships. Through these internships and practicum, the employers and the universities really start to build a good picture of the kind of capacity being taken into the work force. As Mr Burmester was saying, the cut-off point for the end of the degree and then the beginning of the work is a relationship that needs a lot of focus.

**Ms BIRD**—I heartily endorse that because the real test of teaching is not your expertise in your subject area; it is a combination of attitude and personal skills and how they match to engaging young people. The practical aspect of your training is critical. I would be interested to hear about some of those models, because the idea of just taking a week or two out at some point in time and wandering off to a classroom appears to be the least fair way to prepare young people as to whether they are appropriate for the classroom. When I did my training there was a view that those that taught in university were there because they could not teach in classrooms. It was probably an unfair but pretty accurate assessment in terms of pedagogy teaching, not so much subject area teaching. What are your views on how we can best make sure that the pedagogy is reflective of what happens in modern classrooms? Perhaps part of what you are saying about internships and those processes is the answer, but there may be other aspects that have been developed and might be of interest to the committee.

**Ms Weddell**—Some people suggested, through the review of teaching and teacher education and also through the inquiry into the teaching of literacy, that it would be helpful to take a step back from the preparation of teachers and then the practicum and then the work force by looking at all of that as a continuum. What has been raised with us from time to time is that it is one of the very few professions that ask for a graduate to be professionally ready from day one. We do not do it in medicine, we do not do it in many other professional areas and we certainly do not do it in engineering. It comes to mentoring as well. Trying to find the best mix of what is being offered to students in teacher education around the country goes to the heart of quality. People are putting to us that there needs to be a broader view of that preparation as part of, and linking very firmly with, the kinds of employment opportunities that graduates go into.

**Dr Mercer**—It also goes to the core of the relationship between the provider, the employer and the profession. You will see in the models that clearly some universities, such as the University of Canberra, have excellent internship arrangements; they really do know if teachers are going to be job ready. But it is so variable across the country.

**Ms BIRD**—You talked about the potential for alternative modes of recruitment such as interviews. I am a sceptic concerning interviews; they are very limited in their capacity. Have

you seen other models of capacity demonstration as a recruitment tool, beyond straight interviews? By that, I mean competency demonstration—you can do those things pre-training as a recruitment option.

**Ms Weddell**—There are some models overseas that we could possibly learn from here, not necessarily in terms of selection, as you have raised, but in terms of making sure that the person who wants to be selected is someone who really does want to engage with young people. We know of instances and models in the UK where someone tries out being a teacher for a week. It also picks up the other important issue around career change that you raised. It is getting people who are experienced in other ways to decide whether they really want to be a teacher. We know of those kinds of models internationally.

**Ms BIRD**—Support to teachers for developing understanding of their subject areas is massively underprovided, particularly in secondary education. When I taught at TAFE there was actually a separate structure beside management that was about your subject area and that provided you with updates and good materials about what the current thinking was in the field and so forth. Even in schools now when they have staff development days, it tends to be more about behaviour management and all those things. That is important, but there is very little on subject areas once you are in a classroom. Is there any model or development you are aware of in that area?

**Dr Mercer**—This raises the issue of lifelong learning and the continuum. Teachers need very strong professional development support. Some of the subject associations have been very active, such as the maths, the English and history teachers associations. We have supported them through DEST to develop professional standards which incorporate subject learning. The role of NIQTSL is available to absolutely strengthen this area. They are now currently out with a scoping paper on advanced standards and also school leadership standards. The link would go to professional learning, and through the quality teacher program we would be able to provide the underpinning foundation. That is certainly missing at the moment as there is no overall framework.

**Ms Sykes**—As well as having teacher qualifications and a certificate IV in training and assessment, there is a requirement about industry skills and experience. We are currently working with the professional association, the Career Industry Council of Australia, to develop standards for career practitioners that sit alongside. There are moves for that ongoing professional learning around career education, career practitioners and VET in Schools, in particular.

**Ms BIRD**—It is much better supported. My background is history and English teaching in TAFE in New South Wales, so I do not know if it is nationwide. When I moved from secondary to TAFE I suddenly found that the level of subject support and encouragement and opportunities to keep up with your field were so much greater than in secondary schools.

**Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON**—This is slightly on the edge of our terms of reference, but the student intake training to become teachers, and the streams which they follow as students at university, will have a very significant impact on the available work force as well as on the working work force. This has a carry-on impact on teaching at the schools and consequently on future generations of teachers. I have a special interest in mathematics and science, and I

appreciate your comments with regard to science in your submission. What is the role of our higher education providers and what should their role be, particularly with respect to massaging a future work force? Are our universities supply driven or demand driven and consequently how should they approach the future?

**Mr Burmester**—Two approaches have been taken by universities in trying to attract quality student applicants to the teaching profession. One is to provide a teaching course that encompasses the subject knowledge. However, you graduate as a teacher and that is how you are seen and perceived. Newcastle University is a good example. They have identified that they can gain a wider range of students by effectively providing two degrees for one. So you study and graduate in a subject area at the same time as you graduate in teaching.

**Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON**—Say, a three-year degree and a Bachelor of Teaching?

**Mr Burmester**—After four years you end up with a Bachelor of Science plus a Bachelor of Education. That offering has improved the demand for their courses. Students were attracted to the notion that they could leave with a subject degree and a teaching qualification—both of which were of interest to them—completed over the same period. There are opportunities by which universities could attract people to the particular areas of need in the profession. Within the first model, which is a single degree covering the subject areas a person would be expected to teach, it has been raised in a couple of submissions and it has also gained media attention that the quality of teachers' subject knowledge is not adequate. That is hard to call, and I am sure you could find a particular study that would reveal concerns in that area. It falls to the universities that are producing teaching graduates to make sure that they do have the teaching knowledge as well as the teaching competency.

**Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON**—Are universities offering places in subject areas where they think they can get students to apply and take up a place, or are they offering places in subject areas that they know are needed in the work force? The example you have cited from Newcastle University is exactly my situation. When I studied at university, in just over four years I had a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Bachelor of Education but I was the only one in my year group.

**Ms Weddell**—Are you teaching?

**Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON**—No, due to the attractiveness of politics. There may be another science teacher here as well. People in my situation were needed in the work force, but primary teacher training seemed to be oversubscribed and it had a large cohort of students. Unfortunately, most of them never taught because there were not sufficient positions.

**Mr Burmester**—Over recent times, universities have not been subjected to too much pressure to attract students. There was always unmet demand, so there were more applicants than places. The reforms that have come in, effectively starting this year, will change that and add a dynamic to university course offerings that they have not had in the past. Generally, not only in the teaching profession but in other areas such as ICT—which is a very good recent example—students are pretty attuned to future labour market prospects. ICT applications go up and down depending on the headlines that are in the press and the mood as to whether there are too many

IT people in the market. So students do exercise choice between subjects rather than not going to university.

There are going to be 35,000 additional funded places following the government's reforms and the opening up of fee-paying places, probably not in teaching but in other professions where there is a more ready market for fee-payers. That will mean that universities will need to be more active in creating demand and attracting students to their particular offerings. So I think in the future there may be a more immediate reaction from universities to adjust their courses and improve their offerings to attract people to those sorts of courses. The effectiveness of that will be limited if the students are reading the market and seeing that there are too many primary school teachers. The word gets around among students as to what are successful careers. Up until now, there has not been a great deal of pressure on the universities. However, there will be in the future. Going to university has always involved a supply constraint, not a demand constraint. 'Choice between' is a demand driver, depending on the attractiveness of the courses and the future prospects.

**Mr FAWCETT**—Consistently, postgraduates have higher rates of attrition than undergraduates. In the areas of real shortage—for example, veterinary science and nurse education—attrition rates are around 40 to 44 per cent. The areas where, theoretically, there is most demand—and so there should be the most reward, particularly if there are not common pay scales—should be attracting people to go in and stay there. But in fact we are seeing the highest attrition rates in these areas. What work has been undertaken to try and understand why people are leaving, particularly in those areas of critical shortage?

**Mr Burmester**—I am not aware of further research than just the statistics that have come from the higher education statistics system. We could try to look around and see if there is any further research about—

**Mr FAWCETT**—If you could look at whether universities or state and private education systems do exit interviews et cetera to try and find out what is causing people to leave, that would be good. Is it the work conditions; is it the salary; is it the attractiveness of going back into a profession when perhaps they had qualifications in nursing or a trade? These are areas crying out for graduates, but if we do not get the people to train them then that system is really not going to develop.

**Ms BIRD**—Regarding that teacher education and vocational education training, is that a university based teacher training course for VET trainers? As far as I understand it, to teach in VET you just have to complete a train-the-trainer certificate and they pop you in the classroom.

**Ms Sykes**—You do have to have a teaching qualification as well as a certificate IV.

**Ms BIRD**—No, you do not. If you are a carpenter and you want to teach in TAFE in New South Wales—

**Ms Sykes**—I am referring to schools.

**Ms BIRD**—This is VET in Schools.



**Ms Sykes**—Yes.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Thank you everyone for preparing the submission. You have done an excellent job and you have given us a framework for the beginning of the inquiry. We very much appreciate that. In a previous enquiry on boys education, a similar submission was made by your department and it gave us a beginning point, which at the time we probably did not realise. As we struggled through the information and the public hearings for about six months, we all came back to that beginning point from your department. I am struggling for the beginning point in this inquiry at the moment, so maybe I need to reread your submission. It is very important for us to find the beginning point both as individuals and as a committee.

I noted Sharon Bird asking a question about interviews and having doubts about interviews being a selection tool. Selection is a beginning, or it may be the last year of school. In my second year as a principal, I went out and deliberately—it was a naughty thing to do—wanted to get three graduates. So I am 30 and I do not really have a plan; it is just instinct more than anything else. The three I picked are interesting examples: one is now a senior officer in the education department in South Australia, another is a senior principal and unfortunately the other one died. But they all proved to be outstanding. They all had an edge.

Two of them came from the country, one came from a disadvantaged background, one came from an ethnic background, one was so incredibly shy you could hardly get a word out of her and one was so full of herself you could never shut her up. The other guy, the Greek kid, was so inarticulate that he would never have got through an interview system. They all proved to be outstanding teachers. Now I would know what to look for, whereas before it was instinctive. I would be looking for people with an edge. I do not think we use enough people from our regional areas, we do not use enough people from disadvantaged backgrounds and we do not use enough people who have got the edge. I do not mean those who are full of themselves and can write a wonderful submission. ‘Edge’ is not necessarily noise. You can have a fire in your belly and be very quiet. Having a fire in your belly does not mean you have to be a noisy person. Have you seen international or Australian research that has gone into the selection process in a more detailed way than the superficial stuff that I have come across so far?

**Dr Mercer**—I noticed some of the submissions, such as Connell Skilbeck, go to the heart of this issue. There is the UK experience, and I know there is research as to who become the most successful teachers following graduation, so you can attempt to track back. But whether that goes to the heart of your issue about the personal characteristics—

**Mr SAWFORD**—Is there research that combines a whole range of things? I agree with Sharon that, if you rely on an interview, you will make huge mistakes. There has to be a variety and a diversity of approaches. Where do they begin and who do they involve and what do you look for? There is a framework and we have not actually got it. This inquiry ought to find and recommend a framework. It may not be the right one but that is the endgame for us. But to find the endgame, we need a beginning. In the stuff that I have read so far, I have not seen anything that gives us a hint of a beginning.

**Mr Burmester**—The fact that we said ‘such as interviews’ as an example was not an endorsement that that was the only solution. And the fact that we have not provided such research in our submission suggests that it is going to be pretty hard to find. But we will look to

see if there is experience in that regard. We have not identified a single starting point that would solve the problem. It is the work of the committee to tease that out. However, some things suggest there is convergence. If there is concern about attrition or the preparedness of teachers when they enter the classroom as professionals—and NIQTSL has been set up to increase their status—that suggests we are not getting teachers who are trained to move quickly and directly into the work force and stay there.

If that is the illness then the causes can be a range of things, such as the selection which has been spoken about, the training within a university, and the practical preparation in the field. There is a thread there and the range is not too broad. Although we have not helped you directly, the end of our submission contains a whole range of issues that teachers face. That goes to the fact that the preparation of teachers has to be broadly based to address things such as behaviour in the classroom, the subject knowledge and so on. We cannot help you today but hopefully during the course of the inquiry, as we provide answers to any further questions you may have, some of those things will become clearer.

**Mr SAWFORD**—All of those successful teachers were exposed to an outstanding teacher either in their childhood or in their practicum. That does not always happen. Practicums around Australia are usually hit and miss. That is a great weakness in the current system. If you do not expose these young people to outstanding teachers, they do not know what it is—and they do not know what it demands.

**Dr Mercer**—Another emerging challenge is that the BEd has become a form of generic degree. The issue of selection processes will go to that issue because we are investing a great deal in people who may never intend to become teachers. Is that an appropriate avenue?

**Mr SAWFORD**—If you can give us any information on that, it would be greatly appreciated.

**Ms BIRD**—There was some good stuff done on kids' views of what an outstanding teacher was. I think that goes to what Rod is saying. It would be interesting if that could be tracked down.

**Mr HENRY**—Following on from what Rod has been saying, I think the beginning point for me in terms of this inquiry is the issue of attrition, the number of teachers who are not teaching, why is that so, and what sort of analysis and detail we have on that—as to why we have a 25 per cent attrition rate in the first five years. Does it get back to the teaching processes or the learning processes for these people during their training or is it that they are confronted with issues in the workplace that they are not equipped to address? I would be keen to get some feedback from you on that.

**Dr Mercer**—Also a lack of career structure so that after five to eight years you are going to plateau.

**Mr HENRY**—That might be part of it, yes.

**Dr Mercer**—We certainly see that.

**Mr HENRY**—The attrition rate seems to be very high.

**Ms Weddell**—Another part of that that we came across during the review of teaching and teacher education was the attitudes of generation X and Y to lifetime work and seeing teaching as only part of a career. Some people who are doing more of the direct work on recruitment would have some pretty good ideas on whether we are really recruiting people for five to seven years. We see other professions that have a pretty good idea of what generations X and Y are looking for, because they are different. We certainly came across that in our previous review.

**Mr HENRY**—There may be a historical context here in terms of the number of people who are not teaching. For a lot of people who are going into teaching, the issue of reward is not necessarily an important part. It is more about the satisfaction of achievement and making a contribution to the growth of others. It might get back to recruitment if rewards are not being met in the remuneration perspective.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is not always remuneration; sometimes it is job satisfaction and working with strong colleagues. In the old demonstration school example, there was a minor extra bit of money involved but that was not the reason that people went there. They went there to be with the best principals, who were often in the harder schools, and with the best colleagues so you were stirred up by your peer group.

**Mr HENRY**—There is also a fairly high degree of bureaucracy in the education departments and the placements and the whole process. Is that becoming an impediment to people staying?

**Mr SAWFORD**—I see there was a reference to the Adelaide declaration. If ever there was a dumb statement it was that one. That is a statement made by a banal committee. It has not even got coherence between rationale and process and outcomes. That is part of the problem, too, because when it comes to education nobody seems to be able to define what the hell people are on about. That is off-putting to anyone who wants to come in. When you have people who are trying to spread the issue of teaching or trying to encourage people to teach, they have no idea why they are there in the first place. The rationale is not there.

**Ms CORCORAN**—With the issue of the practicum, you referred to a few challenges and issues there. Do you wish to expand on that? Whenever I talk to schools in my electorate, that is the one constant that comes up every time I talk about this inquiry. They will all raise three or four issues but every single one of them raises the practicum. What are the issues that make it difficult?

**Dr Mercer**—The review of teaching highlighted the need to start finding more innovative models for the practicum. It is well known that schools can tell you which universities turn out the teachers that they regard as the most effective. Clearly, the practicum is at the heart of that rather than what is taught in the rest of the degree. We have tried to highlight where there are universities and employers taking innovative approaches. I do not think we have a great map. The review of teaching was very helpful and we have provided to you a major report on an initial mapping of teacher education. It gives at least the starting point across Australia in each university for the conduct of the practicum and other processes, such as selection. The practicum is a very complex area.

There is also an issue around how much time is available if you do a degree for secondary teaching, where the content degree takes three years and there is only one year to attempt to fit in

practicum. You talked about the combined degree offered at Newcastle. Students who undertake a four-year primary degree have much more opportunity to know if this occupation will suit them. We have certainly tried to highlight it. Perhaps we have scattered it a bit too much, but we could certainly see if there is more research we can find on the practicum. The council of deans has highlighted it. There are a lot of views about the funding adequacy and the transparency of the funding in the university sector. There is also the issue of the relationship that is so important—that the schools are signed on and working closely, and that the system is signed on behind the school. The school has to go through all the effort of finding teachers to dedicate to it.

**Ms CORCORAN**—Are schools signed on?

**Dr Mercer**—It is highly variable and increasingly difficult, from what we hear. Schools find it very hard to be able to dedicate the time for teachers to do this and it is highly variable about whether there is remuneration or another form of recognition for the time. Victoria has built it into their system and has recognised that it is a very important role.

**Ms BIRD**—I have a son doing it at the moment. The feedback from students is that they often get attached to the least competent and most uninspiring teacher in the school because the real achievers are busy and less likely to take students on. There is a lot of feedback that students are quite frustrated and feel as though they have been put with the dud in the staff room, which is very off-putting.

**Mr FAWCETT**—There is a dynamic; it depends on the quality of students. A number of people have said, ‘I have been completely put off because of the person I ended up with in the classroom’. My background is in aviation and when we send a junior pilot out to do his practicum, we will not let them do a practicum unless somebody has demonstrated a level of competence and performance. We reward them appropriately with a higher wage because they have a training qualification.

**Ms BIRD**—They do not just want to get themselves out of the classroom for a couple of lessons.

**Mr FAWCETT**—Correct. To back up what Rod was saying, in terms of the importance of that outstanding teacher that students have been exposed to, there is a case that we should standardise procedures across the country so that students are only placed with somebody with demonstrated performance and you will compensate that teacher accordingly for the extra responsibility and qualifications.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The other important thing about the outstanding teachers is they have a point of view and will often discourage people who are not suited to teaching. People forget about that. There are also people who go through the system and who should be talked out of it. They are never talked out of it because everyone is so polite when in actual fact that person is looking forward to a career of misery.

**Ms CORCORAN**—Is there an emerging view about what proportion of time is spent in the classroom? I suppose it is different from university to university, but is there a view, for instance, that there needs to be more rather than less or that it does not matter significantly?

**Ms Weddell**—There is a view that it is critical. There have been debates over the amount of time. There are certainly minimum hours that are required for particular kinds of degrees. Where we see the innovation within universities around the practicum, they tend to spend more hours in practicum. We see innovations around practising those skills in schools, and micro-teaching, whereby we see students practising particular teaching strategies with either individuals or small groups. That is also a good, innovative way to build their expertise before going into a school. It is going to be an area of huge interest during the inquiry as to just how much time is required, because it will bring you back pretty quickly to the crowded curriculum not just in schools but in teacher education. This issue is also being raised in the inquiry into the teaching of literacy.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—From what Rod was talking about, we can assume these days that graduates of a teaching course, or any course, are going to be inculcated with that idea that you have to be committed to lifelong learning and there will always be an expectation that you improve your qualifications and skills. Is the teaching profession keeping up with that? If you have teaching graduates with the expectation that they will be doing masters degrees or extra diplomas along the way, does the profession accommodate these increasingly qualified people? Where do you go once you have got your masters? Is there anything happening in that area?

**Dr Mercer**—Recent Queensland reforms require a provisional and then a continuing registration on the part of the teacher registration institute. This will mean you cannot say, ‘I’ve got my degree, I’ve finished learning.’ They are looking to build that, as I understand it, into a remuneration possibility. The WA government also has a system where teachers can aspire to, and demonstrate, advanced standards and are remunerated for this. They are two that I am aware of. It has to come from the employer to provide those career paths and opportunities for professional learning to be demonstrated.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—Remuneration is one part of it. The next step is that, if you have a higher skill base within your teaching profession across the state, how do you then use that more qualified work force to trial and do new things in education?

**Dr Mercer**—Work in universities, yes.

**Ms Panting**—When we have advanced standards coming in across the nation, in order to be accredited as an advanced standing teacher you will need to demonstrate continued professional learning and there will be some built-in component to ensure that is the case.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—In some of the submissions that I have read, there are schools who are putting forward their induction systems that sound outstanding. Is there any standardisation or benchmark for induction programs or is it like the practicums—just hit and miss?

**Dr Mercer**—There is a national framework agreed at MCEETYA around the entry-level standards. There is nothing beyond that at this stage. NIQTSL is working on advanced standards. What you are getting at is that early period where you need mentoring and support to start moving along that journey. It is very variable.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—Do graduates apply to individual schools or do they apply to the systems?

**Ms BIRD**—They apply to the state department or private school—whoever the employer is.

**Dr Mercer**—Catholic.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—So you go to a school with a great induction process or you just sink or swim.

**Ms CORCORAN**—In some states you apply to the schools and in some states you apply to the department; that is quite variable.

**Ms Weddell**—In Victoria, the initial employment is at the local school level in the government system. In the independent system there are individual schools and there are large employers. This is a mass employment area. In the larger states there are very big systems that have various kinds of induction programs that they could make available to the committee.

**CHAIR**—You mentioned the issue of the crowded curriculum in teacher training. As more and more demands are being placed on teachers it will become progressively more crowded. Are there things in the current curriculum that you believe could be left out in today's age, and if so, what?

**Ms Weddell**—The reason I mentioned it is because we are finding in the inquiry into the teaching of literacy that the universities—as far as we have got—are telling us that one of the constraints is a crowded curriculum. When we look at how many units and how much time is spent acquiring those skills that are fundamental to the teaching of literacy, particularly reading, there is a lot of variation and competition across the degrees and the courses. There are over 400 courses in teacher education. I do not know what might be left off.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The question may not be what is left off, but the expectation that individual people can present a certain amount. That is a ridiculous expectation and maybe we should be looking at more people presenting; the idea of one teacher and 30 kids is a concept that has long lost its day, in my view.

**Ms BIRD**—I want to make sure we do not lose track of the commitment to find out about the 'Be a teacher for a week' program. With respect to the comment you made about generation X and Y moving in and out of professions, even if you were originally a teacher 10 or 15 years ago, you would be at a loss to work out how to get back into teaching these days.

**CHAIR**—There are a number of questions I would like you to take on notice. Could you describe the path that higher education money provided by the Commonwealth takes to the school of education in each university, who decides what proportion goes to each component of the course—for example, the practicum component—and what steps are required to clearly track this? That is one question.

The next question is: your submission states that the Australian government has identified teaching as a higher education national priority area, and that it is providing an increased contribution towards the costs associated with the teaching practicum. Can you describe in detail the policy funding implications of teaching, having been identified as a higher education national priority area? Can you provide us with more details about the government's increased

contribution towards the costs associated with the teaching of practicum? The final question is: can you give us a clear, detailed description of the accountability requirements on universities that are imposed by the Commonwealth and by the state and territory governments?

**Mr Burmester**—On that last question, is that in regard to their general funding or funding for teacher education?

**CHAIR**—Teacher education.

**Mr Burmester**—We will take those on notice and get answers back as quickly as we can.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may call you back in a few months time as the inquiry progresses. We also may contact you if we need further information. Could you provide the answers which we have requested on notice as quickly as possible. The secretariat will send you a proof copy of your evidence as soon as it is available. The transcript will also be available on the committee's web site.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 10.47 am**