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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL
TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

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BATCHELOR

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
Tuesday, 30 August 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, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Hartsuyker, Mr Henry 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

BAINBRIDGE, Ms Valerie Ann, Acting Head of School, School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education..... 1

BAT, Ms Melodie Merle, Lecturer B, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education 1

EVISON, Mr Thomas John, Acting Deputy Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education 1

INGRAM, Mr John G, Interim Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education 1

OBER, Mrs Robyn Ethel, Lecturer B, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education 1

STANNARD, Ms Helen, Senior Lecturer, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education..... 1

Committee met at 11.02 am

BAINBRIDGE, Ms Valerie Ann, Acting Head of School, School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

BAT, Ms Melodie Merle, Lecturer B, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

EVISON, Mr Thomas John, Acting Deputy Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

INGRAM, Mr John G, Interim Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

OBER, Mrs Robyn Ethel, Lecturer B, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

STANNARD, Ms Helen, Senior Lecturer, Teacher Education (Primary), School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training into teacher education. Submissions the committee has received suggest that the Northern Territory is facing some serious challenges at this time in relation to the education of teachers. We welcome the opportunity to learn about your unique organisation and your approach to providing teacher education courses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote, rural and urban locations across Australia. I take this opportunity to thank you for your hospitality in offering to host us today. I remind witnesses that the public hearings are recorded in *Hansard*. 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 the parliament. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Mr Ingram—Not at this stage, no.

CHAIR—If not, I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Ingram—Thanks very much. First of all, I welcome you to this campus of Batchelor institute. This is the headquarters of Batchelor institute but it is only one of several campuses. There is another campus in Alice Springs and there are annexes in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. There are a large number of community study centres, mostly in the communities of the Northern Territory. We are pleased that you have come here today. I think Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education is a very interesting place. It is working in some very difficult areas, as you would appreciate, in the remote areas of the Northern Territory. It also has a significant number of students who come from other states, particularly from northern Queensland, northern Western Australia and South Australia.

Some 40 to 45 different awards are provided by the institute. The work that we do in training teachers, particularly in primary school and early childhood education, was the foundation of the institute in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but since the mid-1980s the program has diversified. The number of students has increased from 100 in 1985 to over 2½ thousand at the moment in a range of different courses.

The people speaking later will explain to you some of the fundamental philosophies and methodologies that drive this place. It is different from other institutions. All of our students in accredited programs are Indigenous people, the majority of whom come from remote communities. These people are mostly part of a traditional ceremonial culture, but there are also many students who come from urban and rural areas and a significant number who come from other states. The first program that operated in this institution was in teacher education but, as I said, it has diversified beyond that. Rather than go on any further about that, I will pass over to Val Bainbridge, who is the acting head of our School of Education, Arts and Social Science, to introduce the teacher education activities.

Ms Bainbridge—We thought we would take you through a very short PowerPoint presentation to illustrate what we see as some of the unique aspects of the work we do at the Batchelor institute in the teacher education area.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Ms Bainbridge—As you can see, we see ourselves as a unique place of knowledge and skills, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can undertake a journey of learning for empowerment and advancement while strengthening their identity. That is the institute's vision for the overall work of the institute that we are nested under in terms of education.

We thought you might like an illustration of some of the students who are currently participating in the education programs. They are obviously a diverse group of people, just as all groups of people have diversity, among a unified group of Indigenous students. Here you can see a number of students taking part in one of our public communications units, which is a core unit across all our higher education courses, so all teacher education students participate in this unit. It is quite a dynamic unit that brings people to the skill of public voice, and learning how to present their views in the public space. A part of that is the banners that you can see outside and also in this photograph. At the end of the two-week sessions they put together a banner and march about the streets and proclaim their views on their particular areas of interest.

Where do the students come from? You can see that the students come from right across the country, but are clustered in the Northern Territory. If you have a look at some of the statistics you can see that, as at July 2005, we have 65 higher education students: 33 are primary, 27 are early childhood and five are in the adult education area. We are progressively teaching out the adult education area, for a variety of reasons which we may have some time to go into later. Three per cent of students come from New South Wales; nine per cent from Western Australia; 26 per cent from Queensland; and 62 per cent from the Northern Territory. In terms of their spread, 47 students are from urban centres and 19 students are from remote communities. In terms of gender we have 50 female students and 50 male students, and there is a growing number of male participants.

If we have a look at a standard map of the Northern Territory, it demonstrates that we have got 35 per cent or 14 students coming from remote communities, including such places as Groote Eylandt, Maningrida, Yirrkala, Batchelor, Nhulunbuy et cetera, as you can see on the map. Sixty-five per cent or 26 of the students come from urban centres, from the Katherine and Darwin regions particularly.

We think about what the unique aspects are of the work we undertake here at Batchelor. We see Batchelor as having a unique Both Ways philosophy and practice. We have referred to that pedagogy in our submission. Robyn Ober will talk some more about that at the end of my short presentation. Robyn originally studied with Batchelor as a student and has now worked with us for 14 years and is obviously a very valued member of staff.

What you can see in the two photographs that are being shown is some of the range of practices and activities that we undertake to illustrate some of the Both Ways practice. The photograph on the left is of students from the teacher education program participating in the local Garma Festival that happens every year out in the Nhulunbuy region. Robyn was there with the students. They were working with children on some local activities. In the photograph on the right the students are in a practicum workshop held here on campus in first semester. So there is a mixture of field study and practice, then onto campus to undertake the theory in practice but also to undertake activities that they can translate into their own practice later. So the program takes a very hands-on approach.

John indicated some of the history of Batchelor. I do not want to take too much time on that, but it is useful to note that Batchelor institute started as a teacher education institution in the mid-sixties, training Aboriginal teacher aide students and assistants from community schools. In 1974 the institute moved to Batchelor, near the present site. It was not quite the current site, but it expanded into this site from 1982. Enrolments increased, but in 1985 enrolment was of about 100 students undertaking one teacher training program. As John mentioned, the institute now caters for over 2,000 students from over 900 locations, studying about 80 higher education vocational training courses, with over a third of the students enrolled in higher education programs.

Batchelor institute currently enrolls more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the higher education level than any other tertiary institution in Australia. The majority of the students are mature aged, from between 30 to 45 years of age, and 63 per cent are women, so it is still predominantly women, but the percentage of men participating is increasing. In 1989 the Commonwealth government through the Higher Education Funding Act recognised Batchelor college as a higher education institute, though one outside the unified national system of higher education, so it sits outside some of those normal systems.

In 1995 the college was granted autonomy from the Northern Territory Department of Education as an agency within the public sector. It became the independent Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education under Northern Territory legislation on 1 July 1999 and the first ever education institution in Australia offering higher education courses to be owned and controlled by Indigenous Australians. You may be familiar with that, but we just thought we should revisit that short history so you can see where we are coming from.

If we look at why students choose to come to the Batchelor institute as against any other teacher education provider, we see our strength is a balance between practical and theory. Our teacher education degrees work to ensure that the practical skills of teaching are well developed and the underlying theory to support these skills is embedded within that teaching. Here on the left we have some pictures of first-year students in their second semester prac unit taking part in a role-play lesson to understand the theories of teaching and learning, and on the right we have students working through curriculum development processes using the Northern Territory curriculum framework materials to analyse outcomes found in the Northern Territory *EsseNTial Learnings* curriculum document. So it is a very applied approach to understanding the theory and the practice.

We see ourselves as having a unique workshop delivery model. We have a successful mixed mode delivery model where students travel to campus for workshops which are supported by individual study at home between workshops through materials and tutorial support within the communities. We believe the strength of this model is that it allows students to develop real and strong relationships with each other and with the lecturers that are not possible through other modes of distance delivery, in particular. It is a fundamental pedagogical principle of Indigenous educators as stated in the *Strong Voices* document—and we have a copy of that to present to you later—which was produced by this institute in 2000, where relationships are noted by Indigenous learners as a fundamental principle of all learning in the Indigenous context.

Again, what are the unique things about Batchelor? We see that we provide a strong support system. Here we have a photograph of the lecturing team from the School of Education and Humanities. That was the former school. We have put this here just to highlight the team approach that is taken in supporting students throughout the stages of their training. When students express a need to enter into a program, obviously they are assessed and counselled, and there are pathways right through from beginning level literacy to higher education degrees. So we can offer a supported pathway right through their learning program. Students need a balanced approach to work and family requirements and to the demands that are placed on mature learners, and we see that the way in which we approach the support mechanisms for students is an important factor in retaining and supporting the students.

We are currently looking at and have documented in other places what are the graduate attributes that we see students having as they leave the training to go off into the teaching world. We see as a priority that they are competent classroom teachers; that they hold specialist knowledge in Indigenous and English oracy, literacy and mathematics; that they hold a deeper understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems; that they have the freedom to operate as professionals whilst still maintaining their own identity; that they take leading education roles in their communities; and that they are active members of their profession on a local and wider community level.

Most of the students who graduate from Batchelor into the Northern Territory hold senior positions. So pathways on from teacher education take people into many areas of both government and non-government organisations. They are significant members of their communities and take on roles way beyond the normal demands that are placed on a teacher moving back into a community. They have the confidence and knowledge to be senior members of their communities and facilitate wider change within their communities. By working through

the Both Ways philosophy to respond to cultural standards and to develop graduates, we see our educators as being teachers and leaders and strong community members.

I have a final word from Renez. We had hoped she would speak with us today but unfortunately she is busy doing what she has been trained to do: she is out there teaching and is not available. There was a crisis at the school and so she is now taking the class. She says: 'My class is going really well and my senior teacher is very happy with my planning. She says everyone should go to Batchelor to do their teacher training.' She is a graduate from 2004, and she is now teaching in Katherine at the mainstream primary school. I think she has written something to present to you later. Thank you for taking the time to listen to that. I am going to hand across now to Robyn, who is going to expand on the Both Ways philosophy.

Mrs Ober—I would just like to explain my background. I am a graduate of Batchelor College, which was a former name of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. I graduated in 1985 and then went on to do my bachelor of arts degree in education through Deakin University, through the DBAT program, which was a joint effort between Batchelor College and Deakin University. So my total involvement with the Batchelor institute has been about 14 or 15 years.

Both Ways education is a recognition and an acknowledgment that Indigenous students come to Batchelor equipped with their own language and their own knowledge, skills, concepts and understandings. Both Ways education is about giving students the opportunity to strengthen their identities while being here by allowing them to draw on their own knowledge systems and then using these as a springboard to bridge onto new Western academic concepts that are imperative for their chosen field or profession—in our case, teacher education. That is what I believe Both Ways education is always about.

The vision statement declares that Batchelor institute is:

A ... place of knowledge and skills, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can undertake journeys of learning for empowerment and advancement while strengthening identity.

Even that statement, that metaphor of learning journeys, is something that Aboriginal people can relate to. They are going on a journey of learning, equipped with those skills and with whatever experiences have prepared them for that journey. Then, as they go on their journey, they are able to gain other important skills related to teacher education. Important skills such as planning and programming, classroom management, developing classroom resources, curriculum development—all of those skills are the things that they will collect along the way on their learning journey. This is the way I like to look at it: as a learning journey. All of those skills are essential in the teaching profession. Teachers nationwide should be of the same quality and standard, and our teachers are no exception.

The final part of the statement says 'while strengthening identity', and I believe this is what makes the Batchelor institute unique. This is why students are attracted to this institution. It is a learning centre where students can be proud of who they are. They do not have to be ashamed. They do not have to pretend they are somebody else. They do not have to conform to the norm. They can have the freedom to be who they are and know that they have the opportunity to draw on their own skills, to draw on their own knowledge. They know that that will be valued here. It

is about following their own ways of thinking, their own processes, to work out problems in a culturally appropriate way. It is about finding their own position as an educator and working from there to further develop their skills as professional teachers in their own right.

CHAIR—As there are no further comments, we will have some questions. Evidence we have received indicates that the best teachers have a strong subject background and strong subject knowledge, teamed with an appropriate practicum. How do you go about balancing the subject expertise in your course?

Ms Bat—We have taken units or areas of subject knowledge and created specialist units around them. Every learning area of the curriculum is dealt with individually. In the third year, as I said, students will undertake specialist teaching units, strengthening their competence in science, maths and English particularly. Having said that, we have also written into the degree a fundamental focus on literacy and numeracy through the entire degree. We have the specialist units to develop subject specific knowledge, but we also have embedded this focus throughout the degree. Because of the Northern Territory context, where literacy and numeracy are a particular focus within the schools, we have embedded that within our teaching degree.

CHAIR—What proportion of time would you spend on pedagogical skills as opposed to the specific subject skills?

Ms Bat—I would have to think about that. It works together in a workshop. In workshops we are balancing the delivery with the experience and the application of the knowledge, which is good teaching practice. So a typical workshop will begin with a delivery mode, ensuring that content is covered, and then it will move to activity based work where students interact with the knowledge and application. That is a typical workshop mode.

CHAIR—I was just interested in whether you spent 20 per cent on the subject matter and 80 per cent on the pedagogy. How do you actually balance that throughout the duration of the course?

Ms Bat—I find it hard to put figures on it because it is embedded in our practice.

CHAIR—In an integrated way?

Mr Evison—I can give an example. The specific units that are concerned with teaching practice form quite a large amount of the course. It is about 21 weeks across, with workshops and teaching practicum. But right through all of that time, although the focus would appear to be just simply on pedagogy, the vehicle for exploring the pedagogy is often a lot of content from the key learning areas. Both of those things are worked all of the way through. When I take maths workshops, as I used to do, we would be doing the content, but a lot of it would be delivered through the vehicle of a planning cycle. We would say, 'Let's plan some short lessons, deliver them and evaluate them,' but at the same time we are looking at it from a content perspective. So it is constant with both of them.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a whole range of questions. Maybe I will ask those questions that we had from Melodie at the end of the session just to get them on the record. The Both Ways philosophy is a very interesting concept. Then there were the comments about creating a

balance. I will ask some questions that are a little bit more specific. How do you define 'knowledge'? People who go to universities normally define knowledge in a whole range of ways. How do you define it? That will impact on your submission. Can you tell us what you mean by 'knowledge'?

Ms Bainbridge—That is a tricky one!

Mrs Ober—Knowledge is what you come with and what you have learned through life experiences or other experiences. Knowledge is your learning—the things that you have learned and gained through life experiences. I think that is what knowledge is.

Mr SAWFORD—This is where I get confused because, from an educational perspective, knowledge is a very lowly intellectual skill. If you went on *Bloom's taxonomy of education objectives*, knowledge is a very lowly skill. I get a little bit confused when that definition of 'knowledge'—which is not knowledge, in my view; it is personal experience—is then sort of locked into knowledge. I do not understand where that is coming from.

Ms Bainbridge—It is a balance. There is content knowledge, which we value and respect. It can be built over time, discussed, debated and then learned in a formal sense. Then there is other knowledge that we learn as part of our life experiences, understandings and cultural experiences, which obviously impact on that as well.

Mr SAWFORD—It is very easy to use the words 'knowledge', 'curriculum' and 'educational program', but they all mean different things to different people. When we go to different universities, they mean different things to those people as well. You use the term Both Ways; that is your philosophy—the balance thing. I get it all up to there but then I get lost, to be quite honest. Are you talking in terms of the detailed stuff? A lot of teacher education programs have a lot to do with presentation but not very much with organisation. They are both valid skills. A lot of programs have synthesis; all the bits and pieces, hopefully, bring together a whole, which I think is what you might do here. But you need programs that are analytical as well. In other words, that is the balance. It is this and that. Other people will say, 'We're about feelings.' That is okay; there is nothing wrong with that, but you also have to have expositions. As well as storytelling you have to have insights and intuition. That is what I mean by the 'knowledge' part. That does not come across in the submission. I still do not understand. You go into a whole approach about problem solving. I would have thought the first part of problem solving is to identify the problem. That is not mentioned here. The philosophy says 'balance', then you go into the detail and sometimes I do not see the balance. Those are the questions I am asking.

Ms Bainbridge—It is very hard to catch that in a brief submission.

Mr SAWFORD—That is why I am trying to ask specific questions.

Ms Bainbridge—I think they are very fair questions to ask. In terms of the balance of your curriculum and your approach, one of the underlying ways in which the students are introduced to the hard edge of curriculum is through looking at a range of curriculum documents that are out there in the public space now and are forming the dialogue around education at this point in time. The Northern Territory Curriculum Framework, for example, is something that the students will look at in close detail, pull apart and determine whether that is working, as well as all the

other curriculum documents that are out there in the national forum at the moment, I understand. In terms of the hard edge of understanding what the business of teaching is about, I would contend that our students are well briefed on that, because they pull it apart through problem solving, through debate and through discussion. They put it back together again and see whether that is working. We have a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy because we recognise that that is an underpinning requirement of students going out into the teaching field now and being explicit and clear about what it is that students require and how they approach their learning.

It is difficult in a brief submission to be able to give you the full layers of detail, but, if you look at our unit offerings, we have a wide span of content knowledge as well as process knowledge so that people can work through those issues and think it through and be expert practitioners. No-one can be an expert at the beginning of their teaching career, but they have a level of expertise that they can then build on.

Mr SAWFORD—I will ask one other question on what you said about explicit teaching. Can you give me a quick rundown on implicit teaching? Perhaps I will come back to Tom with his mathematical background.

Ms Bainbridge—Implicit teaching is embedded in all approaches to teaching, isn't it? Your implicit values, views, cultural orientation and powers of critical analysis all come into how material is presented, how you analyse it and how you go through that.

Mr SAWFORD—So in the language area do you balance explicit and implicit?

Ms Bainbridge—I do not teach in this course; I manage a big school, but I am an educator obviously. I would say that the balance is in the explicit. It is out there that people understand what is happening, how it is happening, and what students need to understand to be able to adapt and work through those things. The balance would be explicit.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you want to make a comment regarding mathematics, Tom?

Mr Evison—I probably could. My own area of academic interest is in the role of culture in the teaching and learning of science. I have worked in various places around the world and been involved in this for some time. As an example, the role of culture in the most explicit science units here is a very important part of the whole notion of Both Ways, because we are working with people from a multiplicity of Indigenous cultures across Australia. Much of the content and many of the basic concepts underlying that in our own key learning areas are very culturally specific. With regard to science, for instance, there is an identifiable Western science and, although there might be some argument, these days there is certainly an identifiable Indigenous science. We begin our science course by looking at the philosophy of science, the major ideas on the nature of evidence and proof and what an empirical discussion is. These things may not be part of the cultures of the people that are doing the study. Coming at it from that direction, people begin to get the idea. Our students understand the notion of culture very well, so they often have that 'Aha!' moment when they say: 'So that is why you fellas think the way you do. Now I see it.' They can then move into the nitty-gritty of the Western science as being taught in the school through the curriculum. Then they have to get onto the hard-edged side of science process as it is expressed in the curriculum.

Mr HENRY—Tom has addressed to some extent the interest that I had in what you have presented here in the Both Ways model of education. I was certainly very interested in how you addressed that in terms of the flexibility of your programs and the cultural diversity that you need in the delivery of those programs in addressing the various cultural issues of Indigenous folk. Perhaps you could give us some more examples of that generally as well as the level of participation—and I see that Robyn is here at the table—that we have from Indigenous people in the management and the direction of the programs that you deliver. Firstly, I am asking for some more practical demonstrations of that flexibility in the Both Ways program.

Mrs Ober—I teach in three higher ed units, but the most recent one was storytelling, which is in one of the photos you saw up there. As an example of Both Ways, we have taken students back to communities and back to where storytelling is active. We have incorporated storytelling with our presentations at the annual Garma Festival. We try to find venues and cultural events in which our students can participate and be up there saying, ‘We are Batchelor teacher ed students and part of our training is coming back to communities, working with elders and with community people.’ Specifically we were looking at storytelling and the arts. We were looking at the importance of storytelling, what they are teaching and why that is important in Indigenous cultures and also looking at how we can incorporate that into our own teaching style back in the classroom. It is never just done in the isolation of the classroom; we are taking students to the community school, working with children on making props and characters, learning about traditional storytelling and about a specific traditional Yolngu story and participating in dance and music. All that brings in Both Ways, because some of our students do not come from traditional communities. A lot of them have been brought up in the cities and in urban centres, so for them it is a rich experience to go back into the community and see that work. They have to come back at the next workshop and go over to the school and present a story, looking at some of the techniques that they learnt while over there and looking at other contemporary ways of presenting stories.

Mr HENRY—I am a lay person in regard to this, but are you then overlaying the curriculum with an Indigenous profile? Would that be a fair way of describing it?

Mrs Ober—Yes. It is getting them to draw on their strengths, gifts, talents and skills and presenting it in a way that is culturally appropriate to them.

Mr HENRY—For people who come from a traditional background, community is very strong. There are obviously challenges in bringing these people out of their communities into this sort of environment. Do you have some methodologies for addressing that, or assisting with that, or is there flexibility in the program to allow for some of those traditional cultural issues?

Mrs Ober—Yes. At the workshops that are based at either Batchelor or Alice Springs, there are other experts who come in and look at other ways of storytelling. They look at the theories and history of Western storytelling and where it came from. They look at fables, folklore, literature and all of that. We have that balance with the Western academia side, I suppose.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a quick question which goes back to what I was saying before. When you do all of that, which is a very valuable exercise, do you do the next bit, the educational bit, with the exposition and explaining of the story?

Mrs Ober—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you do the interpretation of the story?

Mrs Ober—Of course.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you do the story in a different context?

Mrs Ober—Of course.

Mr SAWFORD—You do all of those things?

Mrs Ober—Yes. We look at the purpose of the story and what the message is that we are teaching. All of that has to be unpacked and exposed.

Mr BARTLETT—I am interested in the career profiles of your students—for instance, how many actually graduate; of those that graduate, what percentage end up in the classroom; what percentage teach in remote areas or urban schools; how long do they stay in teaching; and, in those areas, how does that compare with Indigenous graduates from, say, CDU and other universities?

Ms Bainbridge—I do not have the statistical analysis.

Mr BARTLETT—Intuitively, though?

Ms Bainbridge—Intuitively, students do go into the teaching field and start their practice out in schools, but they move into other areas quite rapidly. The principal out at Gunbalanya school is a former graduate of the Batchelor institute. There are a number of Batchelor institute graduates who move quite rapidly into senior positions within schools and are principals. I do not have the figures on that, but a number of remarkable people—certainly within the Territory—are former Batchelor institute graduates. John may have a bit more information on that.

Mr Ingram—Yes, I do. As you know, I have come back after six years away, so my figures are a little bit out of date. I am still catching up on a lot of that. We did a study regularly for a number of years, up until 1999 when I finished up, and across the institute something like 85 per cent of our graduates were in employment together with a number who were on leave or undertaking further studies. In comparison with other institutions, that is a very high percentage.

Mr BARTLETT—Was that employment in education?

Mr Ingram—That was across the range of programs—education was no different. One of the issues that I think is important is that the typical Batchelor student is a mature age person. The average age of our students would be early 30s. They range from 19 through to 50-plus. So their career after they graduate is a relatively short career—15 or 20 years at the most. Before they come here, many of them have worked in schools, or if they are in health, have worked in health centres or whatever, but as either untrained or semitrained people working at a paraprofessional

level. After they graduate and become registered teachers they are already in their late 30s or early 40s.

Mr BARTLETT—So does the drop-out rate from teaching tend to be lower?

Mr Ingram—There are a couple of things that Val and Melodie referred to. It is quite a complex situation. Many of them go into senior positions in their community council, as president perhaps, or in some other area, because they are the best trained and best qualified people in their communities. The other factor to remember is that until we began to diversify our programs, which really only began in the late eighties or early nineties, the only way in which people, particularly from the remote communities, could get a tertiary qualification or upgrade their qualifications beyond primary or early secondary school was to train as a teacher. Many people, particularly through the eighties and early nineties, enrolled for teacher education because that was the only opportunity available to them that did not force them to leave their communities. Our typical way of operating is mixed mode. People are based in their communities for most of the time. They come in for intensive workshops, but they maintain their relationships within the communities. The only way they could gain a better education than primary level was to enrol to train as a teacher. Many people would enrol to teach and teach for a short time, but then they would move on to something else.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you think the retention rates in teaching for graduates from Batchelor are similar to those of graduates from, say, CDU?

Mr Ingram—My guess is that the retention rate is better. Through the course it is certainly better; after they graduate, I do not know. We did have good statistics on that, but we do not have up-to-date statistics at the moment, as far as I am aware.

Mr BARTLETT—It may be useful for the committee to have the older statistics. Would you be able to make those available?

Mr Ingram—I will try to resurrect them, yes. I will have to see whether I can get them while you are. I have only been back for about three months and am still finding my way around.

Mr BARTLETT—What about the general issue of attracting Indigenous young people into teaching? Is that an issue? Do you have difficulty attracting them into Batchelor? Is that the case for other universities?

Mr Ingram—I will just make one comment and then Val can explain further. What Val, Melodie and Robyn have been talking about is the higher education degree. There are a number of other courses in education. In fact, the largest number of students are enrolled in the Indigenous education worker course, which is a paraprofessional course. One of the reasons that many students go into that first is the level of literacy and numeracy. They have to upgrade before they can move into degree training. We are still faced with the significant problem of what I would call the failure of the education system to cater for the needs of juveniles in remote communities and Indigenous communities generally. There are very few communities in the Northern Territory where people can undertake a secondary education—only a handful of communities have any significant level of secondary education. Schools like Kormilda College, St John's College, Marrara Christian School and Yirara in Alice Springs provide secondary

education, but students have to leave their communities for that. We are still faced with the significant problem for us and for the students that very few of them have completed any significant level of secondary education. A lot of upgrading has to be done before they can move into professional levels of training.

Ms Bainbridge—I think John has covered most of it, but the pathway that we have developed to try to support students into the higher education field is through the Indigenous education worker program. We have large numbers of students entering those programs at certificate III level, moving into certificate IV level and then continuing on a pathway into higher education. However, I should also note that many of the students who enter those programs actually see themselves operating within those programs and do not necessarily see themselves as teachers within the school setting. Their preference is to be good teacher assistants within the schools. So there are a number of complexities in how we track that through.

Students entering directly from schools is a very rare scenario within the Territory. If we look at some of the data in the Northern Territory Board of Studies annual report, we will see the results from the most recent multilevel assessment program, MAP, test. If we look at some of the outcomes and performances in the reading test of current year 3 students in the Northern Territory, we see that 44.7 per cent of participating Indigenous students achieved the year 3 reading benchmark—compared to 89 per cent. I do not need to read all of the statistics because they all trend like that—and that is today. There are a whole lot of reasons why those figures are like that, but one of the major reasons is that basic access to education has not been there.

If you look at the Sandover region—I have just done some research in Central Australia—they did not have a primary school until the early eighties. There was no school at all. There are no full-blown secondary education institutions in any community in the Territory. The pool of students that we can draw on is obviously fairly limited. We try to address that through other pathways, and people who have had education elsewhere can come back into the system. Teacher education is not the only pathway now for many students. There are many other things that people want to do and are interested in, and they are supported in these things. It is very timely that we are having this inquiry, because obviously there is a great need to revitalise what we are doing in teacher education and to attract people into teaching, to being a part of the teaching fraternity and being supported in that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Can you help me to understand what seems to be a slight mismatch in your PowerPoint presentation? I think it said that about 66 students were studying education in the education faculty. The Northern Territory government's submission to the committee talks about only around 10 Indigenous teacher graduates being available for recruitment each year, drawn from both Batchelor and Charles Darwin University. Can you explain where the extra numbers are going? Are they going to other professions or are they not quite making it through to graduation? Alternatively, have you had a larger increase in recent years to your program?

Ms Bat—The 66 enrolments that are listed there are across the degree. When we are talking graduates, we are talking about exit points. So there are fewer students in fourth year, but those 66 are across the four years of the degree. That is why it appears like that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—So you may have a much larger number in, say, first and second years, and they will become available in two or three years time.

Ms Bat—Yes.

Mr Ingram—The other thing that is important is to recognise that the typical path for a student here is to do one or two years. They then do other things in the community. They may be teaching full time or they may be looking after children or grandchildren. Then they come back again. So the typical pathway is not beginning this year and finishing in four years time. As well as that, many students will take longer than the minimum time to complete the degree, even allowing for the time they have taken out to do other things. We would not call them drop-outs; they are doing other things that are important to the communities, and they will come back when that is done to continue the course.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—That is a point that you made well before. I do not want to provoke a disagreement in any way, but the institute has been going for some 30 years, at least in preparing teachers, so you would think that, over time, that would smooth out, even if students come and go for what are very good reasons. I am concerned that the Territory government say that there is an opportunity for around 400 teachers every year to come in. I am sure you would agree that we would like as many of those as possible to be Indigenous teachers because of what they can bring to remote communities. I am trying to understand it better and to provoke some sort of recommendation that might help you.

Mr Evison—I can probably shed a bit of light on that. When I joined, the minimum qualification for our students was two years. In 1996 it went to a three-year qualification—an advanced diploma—and more recently it moved to a four-year degree.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Is that for registration requirements?

Mr Evison—Yes. We had a large number of students when it was a two-year qualification—I think it was called an Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools). A lot of people studied it at that time. It was relatively short and it was for community teaching. It was at roughly the same level as our current paraprofessional certificates. Then there was a one-year increase for an advanced diploma. When that came in, I think 33 people enrolled straightaway. In the year or two following that, our graduates numbered in the thirties. The change to a four-year degree was an enormous leap—a staggering leap. We immediately had a nationally accredited university degree, which must have high entry requirements—it has been interpreted as having high entry requirements. Also, four years of tertiary level study is no slouch, especially if you have to reach a particular standard. A number of people have come back to do the fourth year. We have a number going through the fourth year, but the number exiting the fourth year, at this stage, is still very low. The degree came in in 2002, so we are still only three years into the provision of the degree.

Ms Bat—We have six potential graduates this year.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It is encouraging to see an institute like this that is working exclusively with Indigenous people, because it is clearly an area of disadvantage. It is also an area of skills shortage—you would like to see a greater number of Indigenous teachers being

available to mentor people and help lift the living standards of communities all around Australia and especially in this part of Australia. Across all of your various programs you would be looking to help students, at the end of their time here, to go into their chosen community—or even abroad, perhaps even to places like Victoria and Tasmania. You would like to think that, wherever they have come from, they would not only be able to cope but also to do well and thrive. Bringing that back to a teaching context: do you have an emphasis on ensuring that the students who leave here are in a position to do well in a different cultural setting—perhaps a non-Indigenous setting? Do you want students to be able to teach in, say, a Tasmanian school? If that is the case, is it implicit or explicit, and how do you do it?

Ms Bainbridge—We do it through practicum. Do you want to talk about practicum, Melanie?

Ms Bat—Students begin their prac placements at home. If they are in a small community then their first prac must be in the local community school. Then, as they progress through the course, we offer them an opportunity to expand their teaching experience by, for example, coming to Batchelor Area School to do a prac and working within a mainstream environment. So we work with students in that area to expand their teaching repertoire and to ensure that they can teach the students they have. If it is a mainstream school, they are going to have a diverse range of students in their classroom, and it is the same if they are in a remote community.

When a student comes to the third year of their course they do an internship based program, teaching in a school for nine weeks. We work with the Queensland education department to ensure our students gain a rating in their internship. We work with the employers in the Northern Territory to gain placements for our graduates. Out of the three graduates last year, one is directing a child-care centre in New South Wales, one is teaching in a mainstream school in Katherine, and one is teaching in a remote community in Western Australia. However, that teacher is a Perth woman. She is taking her mainstream skills into a remote community. That diversity of practice is something we bring upfront. We plan with the students where they will go to teach, and we develop that flexibility in their practice.

Ms Bainbridge—We have also had some recent conversations with the people in the RMIT teacher education program to look at an exchange program. Some of their students will come to our Yirrkala community, one of the east Arnhem communities, and we would support them, and our students would go into a Melbourne school and they would support them. We are looking at some collaborative practices there. One step further is to develop some units that students can cross-enrol in so that they have the experience of being a student in a mainstream context as well. They are some of the discussions we have had. We are certainly about students being teacher educators wherever they are. It is not a second-rate program that puts people into an Indigenous context only. They are multiskilled people who can work in whichever environment they see themselves in.

Mr Ingram—I would like to emphasize one point. To respond to the general part of your question, we have to have special arrangements for students to come in because of their previous education experience but there is no compromise on the exit level. They have to achieve. If they are getting a degree or diploma here, it has to be at the same standard as they could get in any other institution. There are many ways of ensuring that: through the way in which courses are developed, through moderation of the outcomes and so on. Clearly, if somebody gets a

qualification from here it has to be just as good as they could get from CDU, James Cook, RMIT or any other institution at that level.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I accept what you have both just said about that. Do you think that people who are uninformed about this might have the perception that you do not necessarily offer an equal qualification and, if so, how can that be addressed?

Ms Bainbridge—That is addressed by having students out there performing well in mainstream schools. The feedback we have had from one of the recent placements in Alice Springs is: ‘Can you send me more, please?’ We have a very structured practicum process, as we have emphasised all along, where there is a lot of consultation with the accepting school. There is documentation that has to be completed and there is a strong visitation and collaborative approach to that. I suppose we can only say we are out there trying to showcase it.

Mr HENRY—There might be some positives coming out of the programs that you provide here for a number of schools, particularly where there is a fairly high level of Indigenous students. I was talking earlier to Melodie about hearing impairments and that is a fairly significant issue amongst Aboriginal children. Can you enlarge on that in terms of your practicum? That is an important aspect of the training you deliver here.

Ms Bat—In our degree we have some specialist units that deal specifically with this special need of Indigenous children. There is a large incidence of hearing impairment in the schools. We build into our teaching practicum the skills to teach the child who cannot hear you very well. This is built on throughout our entire practice.

We use role plays to practise these skills before the students go out to a school and we ensure that they are aware who in their class has an impairment. You cannot determine who is going to have a hearing impairment, because it fluctuates from day to day, depending on the child’s health or other issues that might be going on. You teach your entire class as though they cannot hear you very well and those skills are built in with practice and are developmental with the teaching practice. By the time a student graduates, it is harder, with their teaching practice, to cater to the needs of those children in their class.

CHAIR—Can you elaborate on the non-competitive assessment process a little, given we were just talking about standards?

Ms Bainbridge—We are examining that at this very moment. We have introduced graded assessment into the degree and we are working through a whole series of issues around assessment that all of us have to confront in acknowledging the skills everyone brings to the situation and also acknowledging merit and strong outputs. Helen, do you have any comment to make, as you are taking the staff through that?

CHAIR—It is an almost mutually exclusive concept—‘assessment’ and ‘non-competitive’.

Ms Stannard—We have graded assessments, as of semester 1, 2005, in the higher ed course.

Mr Ingram—However, you should explain what is meant by ‘non-competitive assessment’. No, they are not mutually exclusive. You are the experts, not me.

Ms Bat—We have a number of students on internship and they are assessed against criteria. They are working with a panel of people within their school called a ‘roundtable’, and the assessment process is the roundtable. The roundtable is there not just to make a recommendation as to whether they pass or fail; it is also there to support them through their internship. The discussion I had with students was: ‘Yes, you are being assessed against these criteria. The teaching profession demands that you reach this point in your journey as a teacher before you enter. However, some of you might actually come to here. So your assessment is against your own practice and development as a teacher, rather than compared to another teacher’s development.’ That is what we do to open the assessment process, as we do with all of the teaching here. We open it up as much as possible because that is the profession they are going into. The more ownership they can take of their own assessment process, the better it is for their own teaching practice.

Mr Ingram—The significant thing is that there are criteria that they must achieve. There are eternal debates as to whether it should be competitive or non-competitive. What is significant is that the non-competitive thing says that they are not being compared to another student; they are being compared against criteria that must be achieved in order to qualify as a teacher, a journalist, whatever.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—That is fine, provided it does not hold out false hope to the small number of people who are never going to be an effective teacher in thinking, ‘If I’ve come half or three-quarters of the way towards that standard, if I keep pushing, keep trying and re-enrolling, I will make it.’ In a non-competitive atmosphere do you do that? Do you try to be gently honest about people’s natural talents and abilities?

Ms Bainbridge—As we speak, Melodie has to go to a community to do just that.

Ms Bat—Yes. When we talked earlier, we used the expression ‘those extra yards’. As a course coordinator I find that one of the major roles I play is in talking honestly with the students about their aspirations, their literacy levels and their competence in the classroom and about whether or not this is the career for them. We do have some goalposts, or a point that they need to achieve, and if they do not we have that discussion. I prefer to have that discussion early in a student’s pathway, because if someone is not going to make it they want to know very soon. That is a very difficult discussion to have with somebody.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Yes, it is. But you must have it—

Ms Bat—Absolutely.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—if you are having what you have described as a non-competitive atmosphere, because at least in a competition you can see that you are falling behind. Perhaps you have not got the right moves to be a teacher but you have the moves for something else. So that is good to hear.

Mr SAWFORD—There are two questions that we dealt with before but that we would like to get on the record. The first is about Batchelor institute and Batchelor Area School. We understand that Batchelor Area School has just over 200 children, which would limit the

curriculum offerings at that school through sheer lack of numbers. How do you deal with that at the institute?

Ms Bat—The Batchelor Area School runs programs which are combining classes. They have an early childhood classroom with a number of teachers working with a larger group of children so that they can share skills and provide a broader, deeper program. When they get to the secondary program, they make use of the NTOEC resources, the Northern Territory Open Education Centre, to provide a mixed-mode delivery where secondary students can access their learning via a distance ed facility but still have secondary teachers there. So that is how the Batchelor Area School responds to supporting the curriculum needs of the children.

Mr SAWFORD—The other area is an area of contention right across Australia. Teachers and people lecturing in teacher education courses are trying to change the differentials in salaries, conditions and so on. Would you like to make any comments on those difficulties as you experience them here? Do you have some ideas of how you could overcome them?

Ms Bainbridge—We do have some recruitment issues—if that is what you are talking about—in attracting staff to come into the system, if we are only talking about salary rates. There are many reasons why people choose to come here and we do attract dedicated staff who want to do that. But currently if we take a lecturer in we have to offer them lecturer B level in teacher education, not lecturer A, because the salary rates even for a beginning teacher just would not compare at a lecturer A level. The gap between a lecturing salary and a school based salary is becoming quite significant, and so in recruitment we face some difficulties in attracting experienced, qualified staff to come and work with us. That is not the only factor but it is one of the factors—the salary differential.

Mr SAWFORD—Our committee are going to have to deal with this issue. We are probably going to have to consider a recommendation. If you were putting forward the recommendation, what would you be saying? What would you specifically ask us to consider?

Ms Bainbridge—One suggestion could be that there be much more interchange. Historically there used to be interchange between training providers, teacher education programs and the established school systems through NT DEET. You could be looking at some exchange programs. Obviously there would have to be some—

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any secondments of that nature?

Ms Bainbridge—Yes, we do, from time to time.

Mr SAWFORD—Where people keep their own conditions and salaries and work in the other system?

Ms Bainbridge—We do have that, but there are some stresses around that because they have better conditions, and so people are having to take a step backwards and say, ‘I’m doing this for things other than financial rewards.’ It is an issue that we are dealing with.

Mr Ingram—I will add to that. One of the shifts that there has been in Batchelor in the last six or seven years is that it is much harder to recruit staff who are willing to be based out in

communities. And the cost of basing people in communities is very high. The cost of basing a lecturer A—the bottom level of the lecturer scale—out in a community is the same as employing a head of school on campus here. It is probably 50 per cent above the salary.

That is a significant problem for us. We are constrained by the way we are funded. Essentially, in the VET area, the funding is on a fairly standard ASCH basis—there is a slight loading for remoteness, but not enough to cover those costs—and in the higher education area it is essentially based on per EFTSL. It has become much more difficult in recent years, firstly, to get people based in communities and, secondly, to fund the travel. As you well know, the cost of travel has gone up astronomically in the last few years. The way in which we operate through a mixed mode requires staff to travel. Ideally, it requires us to have staff based in communities, but the cost of basing them in communities is very high.

We are experimenting with and we are delivering through e-learning, online learning and so on, but we operate not just in the major communities. We regard 50 communities in the Northern Territory as major communities. They have a population of 500 or more. They generally have optical fibre, and they have relatively good communications. But there are another 650 communities that are much smaller than that, and they do not have good telecommunications. So, if our staff are not travelling and the students are not travelling, they are not being adequately serviced. It is a significant problem.

Added to that is the fact that people who train teachers need to be basically midcareer professionals—they need to be already experienced teachers. They generally have children who are in primary school or secondary school. To base them out in communities is very difficult. Frankly, the differential between the salaries we are paying at the moment and the schools just does not attract people. No matter how committed people are, essentially what they can do with their families relates to the salary they get. So it is a significant problem, and it is a problem that is getting more serious.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the responsibility of the employing authority, the education department?

Ms Bainbridge—That is one of the good things that we are currently exploring. There is another model that we are currently working on, certainly in the IEW—Indigenous education worker—area, and that we want to look to in the higher education work. We have a memorandum of understanding with the Catholic Education Office, where their teachers in schools deliver some of the courses. We support the assessment, and we have visits and workshops out in the community as well. We are in a partnership so that they are delivering some of the course with the teachers on the ground whilst we support through assessment, resource materials and occasional visits. We have a good model out at Galiwinku at the moment, where, with the school, we are jointly funding the position, with the lecturer based out in that community. They have put up half the salary; we have put up the other half. That is a model we think is working very well, and we are extending that.

Mr SAWFORD—But that is probably more an exception than the rule.

Ms Bainbridge—But we are extending that, and we think that is a model we would want to pursue. We are looking at Gunbalanya to see if we can develop that model there. We have it in

four communities with the Catholic Education Office. They have put up the salaries to support that. We have a number of places: out at Wadeye, down at Daly River, and in the centre at Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte).

Ms Stannard—And Bathurst Island.

Ms Bainbridge—And Bathurst Island. So that is a model that we are exploring and that is working well. It is not the total answer, but it is a positive solution because it is professionals working together for a positive outcome. We are very happy with that.

Mr Ingram—Also, we are just beginning to talk with the Northern Territory government on a memorandum of understanding between Batchelor and either the government or the departments of education and health. The present minister for education is very keen to move that along. This is one of the issues that—

Mr SAWFORD—It would seem to me that the Northern Territory government has a role to play in ameliorating this differential, but so does the Commonwealth.

Ms Bainbridge—Absolutely.

Mr SAWFORD—At this time you might not have the form of words, but if you have a form of words or a set of ideas I am sure our committee would be very much interested, in terms of what we ought to be recommending, because it is an obvious problem. It has a much wider context than just Batchelor, as well; it has a national context.

Mr Ingram—The first point is to take account of the costs of operating in remote areas. We have not done a very good job in the past of quantifying those costs. It is not easy to do, I must say, but it does need to be done. If we, both governments and everybody else are serious about providing opportunities in education and training in the remote parts of Australia, then we have to look at what the real costs of doing that are.

Mr SAWFORD—But you can quantify that.

Mr Ingram—You can quantify it, but it is not a simple exercise.

Mr SAWFORD—As someone at Batchelor you can say whatever you like on this. Every tertiary institution in Australia has teacher education. I am beginning to seriously doubt the wisdom of that. You are in a particular situation, but you are professional people in a tertiary area. What is your view on every tertiary institution in this country offering teacher education? They do not offer everything; but why does everyone offer teacher education?

Mr Ingram—We should let the teacher educators answer that, shouldn't we?

Mr SAWFORD—You can do it off the record if you like, but we would prefer it on the record.

Mr Ingram—The attrition of teachers is great, so there is a continuing demand for people to be trained as teachers. It is probably better to be training people close to where they live. It is a

disincentive for people to have to leave home to train. There is still a shortage of teachers nationwide. It goes up and down, of course; a few years ago there was an excess, but there is a shortage now, I believe. I do not have a good answer to that. Val might have a better answer.

Ms Bainbridge—I suppose it depends on where you are coming from in terms of looking at collaborative approaches, which is something that we are certainly exploring to build a strong basis for taking teaching forward. Obviously, I am a committed educator, so I see it as one of the most important areas that we can put resources into. I obviously cannot speak for other institutions as to why they see themselves in that field, but from our point of view it is a critical area to be involved in. If the resources are stretched, then we need to look at doing it better and smarter, perhaps in collaboration with other providers. We have an early MOU with CDU, as I understand it, and teacher education will be one of the priority areas that we will look at to see where—to use that rather hackneyed phrase—the synergies are in what we are doing and what we can contribute, compared to what they have to offer.

It is going to be a growing need. As we are aware, the skill shortage in teacher education is with us now, and it certainly will be over the next five years as we all get greyer. If there is a move to consolidate what we are doing and how we are doing it, I certainly would not have any arguments with that, because it is about being sensible about how you are approaching best quality. What I am concerned about is the best quality. I probably have not answered it well enough, but I can see where the direction needs to go.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information. I ask you to provide the answer to the question posed by Mr Bartlett as quickly as possible.

[12.30 pm]

CHAIR—We now move to the student forum. Good afternoon and thank you very much for taking time out from your studies to join us. The federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Brendan Nelson, has asked us to do this inquiry into the very important elements of teacher training and the ways in which teacher training is going to serve your needs and the ways in which perhaps it can be done better. What we are doing today is in fact a formal proceeding of the parliament, so what we say today will be recorded in the *Hansard* record. Please bear that in mind in any comments you might make. I will start with a general question to all of you and will ask someone to respond: what do you like about the course that you are doing here at Batchelor and what do you think is being done well?

Aaron Talbott—Generally what I am impressed by in this course, or in the whole structure of Batchelor, is the support network. The support is a big thing, but the content—I have been at QUT in Brisbane—is very much up to scratch.

CHAIR—Do you like the amount of practicum you are getting?

Aaron Talbott—Yes. The two pracs per year are very useful because apparently in most universities they do not hit prac in the first year. A lot of them do it in the second year. So we get that start on other universities, and, the more prac you get, the better you are going to become. Theory is all good, but prac is the crunch.

CHAIR—You have a number of workshops in the course that you do. Do you find the workshop sessions good?

Aaron Talbott—Yes. They are very adequate. I am in my first year and I am just starting, so I am just getting warmed up to it, but I am very impressed.

CHAIR—What did you do before you started teacher training?

Aaron Talbott—I was a cab driver in Brisbane. I did a couple of years of justice studies at QUT. I have been floating around a bit in my 20s and I thought it was time to get out there and make a difference for the Indigenous children.

CHAIR—And do you want to work in a remote community?

Aaron Talbott—Definitely, yes. Like I say, I am just starting and I have got a lot to learn. I appreciate that, and I am looking forward to it.

Mr SAWFORD—I might ask the same question but quickly go around and get everybody involved. Please tell us quickly, in a couple of sentences, how you got here.

Bronwyn Dingo—I found out about Batchelor through my family. My mum was a student and she was also studying to be a teacher. I also have other family members who have studied at Batchelor and they all said Batchelor was a good place to come and study because of the good

support that it provides. I find the study is really made easy for the students. The lecturers all work well with the students and the students work well with the lecturers. Originally, my mum was the one who told me about Batchelor. I also have an uncle who told me about it and asked me what I thought about teaching as a career. I thought I was good with children and would make a good teacher. That is why I decided to take on teaching as a career.

Glenn Johnson—I come from Toowoomba in Queensland. I found out about this university from my older sister who is studying health and comes to Batchelor sometimes. I find this university is good in the way that it involves a lot of the Aboriginal communities around the Northern Territory and I can take experiences back down to use in my own community for situations that happen down there. While it is very different, a lot of the feelings of Aboriginal people here are very similar to Aboriginal people down south.

Amanda Pehi—I live in East Arnhem land. I was a journalist and used to work in radio and media.

CHAIR—We will not hold that against you!

Amanda Pehi—I have since had three kids. The schedule in radio does not work for me and my kids, which is why I am doing teaching.

Barry Cedric—I am from Yarrabah, which is a church mission in Queensland, south-east of Cairns. My background is 10 years working in health but I decided to move to education because I saw a need to have more educators for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people. I first enrolled at JCU but it was too big an institution and there were not enough Indigenous students for the proportion of teachers or lecturers. I found that learning was made difficult. It was too big; I did not have time to see lecturers and talk to them. I found out about Batchelor from some other students who are in fourth year now. It is a unique place and learning institution where the needs of the student are taken care of, they have a cultural component and they make learning very interesting and meaningful. In the past I had an instilled fear of failure because of the way institutions were run. It is more relaxed here. Coming from Queensland to here you are detached from everywhere else and this place just makes my journey of learning more empowering and strengthens my identity in becoming the best possible student and teacher so I can go back and offer that to the Aboriginal people who are in most need.

Jan Williams—I come from Hervey Bay in Queensland. I was brought up totally in the mainstream. To go into teaching has been my passion since I had my children. My particular focus is on two-way learning and I was told by many people, friends and family that Batchelor was the ideal place to go to. I just started in July and I have found that everything I was told was true.

I particularly enjoyed the core unit I did on public communications in the last two weeks. It was just marvellous. Integrating and mixing with other Indigenous people from all over Australia was particularly important to me, growing up as I did in a totally urban area and my younger life being totally mainstream. I am ex-air force and an ex-public servant. Coming to Batchelor at my time of life, after having my children and now my grandchildren, I see my goal as to be a teacher, but I want to push myself into curriculum change in Queensland, in particular in my community.

Tania Hill—I am originally from Western Australia but I have lived in Darwin for 14 years. I worked in a school for 10 years, doing homework et cetera, and then I went on to do in-school tutoring. I have worked around kids for the last 10 years, and I have my own children. This year I decided that I wanted to come to Batchelor and further my studies, because I have been working with kids for 10 years.

Mr HENRY—Now that it has been raised, I would be interested to know how you individually feel about Both Ways education and to hear some practical examples of how that helps you in your learning process in the course you are doing.

Greg Hauser—I find that doing Both Ways education brings more value into teaching. I grew up mainstream, and I find that to teach Both Ways gives the students a bit more understanding and much more perspective on life and how they grow up. I think it is about their value and making it more important to them, not just pushing onto them something they do not understand. That is what is keeping me at Batchelor, actually—not to go into the mainstream, because here over the next few years we get to have special experiences and do Both Ways.

Mr HENRY—If I could just add an adjunct to that—would this be of value for urban Indigenous populations in schools as well? In some of the schools in my electorate 30 or 40 per cent of the kids are Aboriginal: would it be helpful for them in the learning process if the teacher had come from Batchelor and learnt about the Both Ways education system?

Ses Zaro—I am from Ayr, Queensland. I am a fourth year student of primary education. Being taught mainstream through their curriculum and all their stuff there is one focus—you have got to be their way and no other way. It was very hard. My self-esteem was down. I could not be who I wanted to be. My identity did not reflect who I was. When I came to this place, I went to the home page and I saw the vision of this place. I will read it here. The Batchelor vision is to be:

A unique place of knowledge and skills, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can undertake journeys of learning for empowerment and advancement while strengthening identity.

Over there, in mainstream teaching, there is not much of a philosophy of letting you stand for who you are and where you come from. This way, Both Ways learning, teaches you both ways, where non-Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge come together. It helps to lift your level of academic achievement. Then we can help each other. So Both Ways learning to me is a success because back in those days we were told we could not be who we were meant to be, that we were nothing. Coming here has showed me that I can be someone, I can achieve something and I can be a mentor to my people through this Both Ways learning.

Mr BARTLETT—A lot of you have made comments about the good things that are happening here and why you want to be teachers and so on, but what can be improved? It does not matter how good any course or any institution is, there are things on which you think, ‘Gee, we ought to be doing this,’ or ‘We should be doing something better.’ How can we improve teacher training through a place like Batchelor?

Donna Needham—I am from Condong on the far north coast of New South Wales. This being an Indigenous institution, when I first arrived I expected to see a lot more Indigenous

lecturers. The lecturers we have are great, but I think it would be nice to see a lot more Indigenous educators.

Mr BARTLETT—So everything else is perfect?

Donna Needham—Yes.

Bronwyn Dingo—I want to add to what Donna said about becoming role models for the younger generation. With such low Indigenous participation in education, a lot of Indigenous students feel a bit left out. That is where Both Ways learning comes into it. If they feel that they are involved, and if a bit of Indigenous education is brought into it, they will want to learn. When they see those role models they will want to be a teacher or lecturer. That is what we hope for one day. A lot of students who are studying to be teachers want to be role models for the younger generation.

Barry Cedric—I want to highlight some of the areas that might need improvement. I have done my first prac in this institution since I had a break from Queensland. I failed my first prac on a technicality. I think we should restructure some of our prac requirements so that we do not instil a fear of failure in students. I have been on a learning curve and have probably failed as many pracs as you guys. I need more support in that area. Alternative prac arrangements could be made by the governing body of this institution so that students do not fear failure but feel that they are learning and being given a chance. That is certainly an area that needs improvement.

Mr BARTLETT—Do other people feel that? Do you get enough support in pracs? Do you see enough in demonstration lessons of the sorts of things you should be doing if we get into prac?

Barry Cedric—There should be some small changes like video conferencing, videotaping lessons, having different schools come in and having a variety of classroom contacts before you go out. That would make it more fun and we would be better equipped when we went out on prac. I just did my first prac in three years. I have myself to blame too, but I thought there would be a bit more help and understanding from my prac school and support from the prac people here at Batchelor. But I am learning.

Marla Lewin—I come from the Torres Strait islands and I have lived in the Northern Territory for 14 years. I would like schools in the Northern Territory to be more welcoming to Indigenous teachers. It is really important for schools to make us feel welcome, because we are here specifically for Indigenous children. I have been a student at Batchelor since 1992. I came here as a trainee radio broadcaster. I have recently graduated with a graduate diploma in management. I believe that the schools should make Indigenous trainee teachers feel more welcome.

CHAIR—So you have a graduate diploma in management and you are a first-year teacher this year?

Marla Lewin—Yes.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—To follow up on what you have just said, does that mean that you have had some experiences that have disappointed you in your practicum?

Marla Lewin—No, the practicums are fine. It is just the lack of involvement for Indigenous teachers in the schools in relation to their contribution towards education.

Mr SAWFORD—In the mainstream schools?

Marla Lewin—In the mainstream schools, yes.

Mr BARTLETT—I think all students probably feel like that, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous. That is a fairly common comment that we get—that when students go into schools they often do not feel like they are welcomed as much as they ought to be. It varies a lot, obviously, from school to school too.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—A comment has been made and a number of people have used the terms ‘mainstream’ and ‘Indigenous’ schools or communities. How many of you, as students who intend to become teachers, have made a decision about whether you would like to work in your career in an Indigenous community or in a mainstream community? I ask for a show of hands of how many would be looking to be work within a mainstream system. You have not been making that distinction? You would mostly be saying both, would you? That is very interesting. Do you feel—and this was a question that I asked of the institute earlier today—that after this preparation time while you are training to become teachers that you will be able to do that—to teach in one of those two types of schools? Obviously you have been wanting to be teachers for a long time. Great.

CHAIR—In the course break-up between the academic subjects and pedagogy itself, how do you find the maths, science and language, or academic, side? Do you find that difficult or relatively easy? Do you find the academic side harder than the pedagogy? How do you find the course here? No takers? Aaron, how do you find it?

Aaron Talbott—Could you repeat the question?

CHAIR—If we break the course up into two halves, one being the theory of maths, science and language and the other being the theory of pedagogy and practical teaching, do you find the maths, science and language side or the pedagogy elements the more difficult part of the course?

Aaron Talbott—As a first-year student, we have not really looked into the science and all of that to the moment. Basically, it has been oral language development to this stage, so my comparison would not be accurate. But it is challenging. The content of the work is challenging. There is much to be gained from it. It is just up to the individual to pursue that.

Ses Zaro—As I am in the fourth year I have done the maths, science and all of that. I find that easier than the pedagogy, or, the teaching. Maths and science are more or less just strictly set out, but the pedagogy—

CHAIR—That is the most challenging part for you?

Ses Zaro—Yes. That is the most challenging part for me as a teacher.

Barry Cedric—I have found that the theory or academic part has been made more user friendly for the students here than it was in previous experiences. There are more resources available, more time and more hands-on stuff, which bridges that gap in the style of teaching in areas of maths and science. I find it a little more user friendly than at other places. Certainly, I have got a lot of help in that area. The resources, teachers and lecturers are more approachable and more time can be spent. Time is not the essence. In other situations they have other things to do. We try to match the theory or academic side with the lecturers expectations so we aware where the content of the course is going. We can make that conceptual link with learning.

Greg Hauser—The pedagogy is more like trying to make yourself a better role model for the children. Pointing them in the right direction is more of a challenge than setting out work to do. It is important to find out what level they are at on the curriculum. Setting them on the right path is probably a bit harder to do. We try to be more involved with the children in the classroom instead of just teaching them and letting them go out to play.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the actual thing in the practicum that is difficult? Is it the confidence to be able to do it? Is it the logic of how you present the information or activity? What actually is it that makes you go back a bit? What is it in the practicum that does that?

Barry Cedric—I think it is how much time you spend on the lesson plan. What is the content knowledge? What do I need to know? When you go on your first day you have not got the confidence because it can be a reflection of how much time has been spent in preparation. Sometimes you can stand dumbfounded: what am I going to do? What am I going to say? But if you have done the hard yards, preparation, learning as a group, mock teaching exercises and feedback you will be ready for the prac. It is the preparation and how much you do. The lecturers want the students to be well prepared.

Aaron Talbott—It is a confidence thing. I actually passed my first prac but I was very nervous and I was probably not confident with the structure of teaching. The lesson plans really helped in the preparation. The preparation was there but you have to be thrown in the deep end some time. You have to start somewhere. You can only improve on you first experience. By year 4 I should be qualified and confident.

Mr SAWFORD—You will be teaching the lecturers.

Aaron Talbott—Yes, that too.

Amanda Pehi—We are all educators. No-one needs a piece of paper to teach in life. I found doing my prac easy but there is a lot of paperwork. That is what I found daunting—trying to keep on top of the paperwork. I know there is more to come—it does not get easier.

CHAIR—Who found it really easy to stand out in front of the class for the first time? Who found it hard? It looks like there is a bit of a mixture.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—You have a very sympathetic audience. There are three teachers here who have made it into parliament.

Mr SAWFORD—There is hope for all of you. Or, to look at it another way, there is no hope for you. I think it is wonderful that you have taken on teaching and that many of you have a whole range of life experiences as parents and have worked in other fields such as taxi driver or health worker. Teaching is a challenging position and it has become more and more challenging. I think all of us here are very much impressed with what you have said to us this morning and we wish you every success in the future. All the very best to you.

Amanda Pehi—On what you said earlier about mainstream and community, when I finish my teaching I want to work on a community, I want to work with Indigenous kids. I feel Indigenous kids respond better to Indigenous teachers. I work at Gapuwiyak now and I have worked at Yarrabah too, and you can clearly see that some kids do not respond to white teachers but if they see an Indigenous person they will open up to them. That is why I am doing teaching.

Barry Cedric—Just to revisit the last point, I would like to see a better relationship and strengthening for prac purposes from the Batchelor Institute to the particular school, because the school I went to for my first prac I actually work in that school. It was pretty hard for me to go back there. The more rapport and the more communication for all prac students should be enhanced by strengthening the bond between the institute and all those schools that student teachers are going to be at so that we can feel that we are not going to fail in any way and we can have confidence that we are going to enjoy the learning.

Ms Bainbridge—I have two statements from graduate students who are meant to be on the telephone but the requirements of the school meant that they could not be. Can I submit those to the committee?

CHAIR—Certainly. Is it the wish of the committee that the statements be incorporated into the evidence for today? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

My name is Renez Lammon and I am from a rural town in Queensland called Ayr. I studied with Batchelor Institute in the Northern Territory for four years and completed my Bachelor of Education. I am now a classroom teacher at a school in the Northern Territory. People often ask me why I chose to study at Batchelor Institute and my reply is usually something along these lines.

My goal has always been to teach my own people and the factor that attracted me to the course was that the education courses at Batchelor Institute have incorporated teaching Aboriginal and Islander students into their courses with a focus on ‘real life teaching’. We learn about mainstream ways of teaching but focus on and look at how we can incorporate different strategies to adapt these ways of teaching to the students in our own contexts. Also it was comforting to know that I could study a ‘Higher Education’ course and be confident in knowing that my cultural practices, ideas, values and beliefs would always be valued, appreciated and respected.

Batchelor Institute also encourages a positive learning environment with support from lecturers and peers. Our lecturers and peers are great resources and at Batchelor Institute we were always given the opportunity to converse and conference with all the lecturers and our fellow peers. We received positive and critical feedback and we worked together as a ‘close knit unit’. In some other higher education facilities there is a focus on competing and trying to better your peers. At Batchelor, I have found that the students in my class worked towards common goals and we would all help and support each other on that journey.

The education course at Batchelor Institute has prepared me for real life teaching especially in areas such as Planning and Programming (using the Queensland Curriculum and the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework) Science, ICT, and The Arts. I am now a class teacher at a school in the Northern Territory and I am using the knowledge, skills and practices that I learnt throughout my studies, and am applying them to my teaching practice.

Renez Lammon

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Carol Bennell

My view on the following questions

What was good about studying through BIITE?

For me I found Batchelor Institute to be a caring environment to study in. All Education Staff was welcoming and were always there for me when I needed those, times when they needed to be they were fair and flexible in their teaching. The physical environment of the Institute is excellent. It was comfortable for me to be learning in an environment with just Aboriginal students, sharing ideas and assisting fellow students. Making long term friendships with fellow students from other parts of Australia was important. As these were the people we were living with and studying with throughout our time at Batchelor, so we built a friendship that will last forever...(I Hope) As I am from Western Australia I had enrolled in colleges in Perth to start my Teaching Degree, this was a very scary experience for me, it was too big and too many people, I couldn't understand the written work so I pulled out and put my course on hold until I found a place where I did feel it was the right place, and I found this at Batchelor Institute. The Teaching course was specifically written for Aboriginal people from many different communities from all over Australia. No matter what part of the country we came from everyone I studied with seemed to coping with the course. The teaching course provides us with both ways teaching, we visited schools in mainstream as well as Indigenous community Schools with the population of Students was sometimes 100%. I am proud to be a past student of BIITE!

Could there be any changes in the delivery of the Teaching Course?

I believe that the delivery of the course during my time was excellent. I had no problems. It was hard sometimes to be away from home for at times up to 3 weeks, but this was the challenge I was up for when I enrolled at BIITE.

How has it prepared me for the "Real" Teaching?

As a teacher now in an Aboriginal Remote Community School in the Kimberley (WA) I felt comfortable coming to teach the students. Even though I am an Aboriginal person I felt that BIITE has given me the insight into education. I want to be apart of bettering education for my people. The school I am currently at is a pilot school to be implementing a program called "Aboriginal Literacy Strategy". This program came about because the literacy level of our kids are very low, and lower than mainstream schools. So to be a part of implementing the different components to better my students' literacy levels is very exciting. And I can see the difference in my students from the beginning of the year to now. Using the planning and programming pro-formas from BIITE are very effective for me and I feel comfortable in using them. I use them when planning my units of works. All that I learn while studying I am applying into my teaching.

One thing I would suggest would be as a student, focus on your state's curriculum frameworks, and set your planning and assessments to your state. That was the mistake I made as a student, I concentrated on the NTCF, and not the WA Frameworks. Once I started teaching I had to get used to using the WA CF. But this was a personally choice I made when I was studying.

Comments on Workshop delivery/lecturing Staff

Staffs are sensitive to Aboriginal issues

Supportive - they would ring to find out how I was going with my assessment tasks once I was back in my home town.

Always encouraging

Carol Bennell

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CHAIR—Thank you to everyone for taking the time to join us at this student forum. We really value your input and we will take your comments into consideration in drafting our recommendations that the committee will bring down. We are impressed by your enthusiasm and devotion to what is a very important profession. We will be sending you a copy of the transcript of your evidence for you to proof and it will appear ultimately on the web site for everyone to view so that you can actually go to the web site and be able to show your friends your comments to the committee. Thank you again.

Ms Bainbridge—I would like to pass on to the committee some of our publications.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. We will receive those as exhibits.

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 1.04 pm