COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

WEDNESDAY, 31 AUGUST 2005

DARWIN

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Wednesday, 31 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 Henry, Mr Hartsuyker 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

BAT, Ms Melodie Merle, Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory.................... 19

DAVIES, Mr Kenneth Lindsay, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Employment, Education and Training.. 1

DEVLIN, Dr Brian Clive, President, Australian College of Educators (NT).. 29

DWYER, Mr Richard John, Student, Charles Darwin University.. 70

FORD, Ms Margot, Lecturer in Education, School of Education, Charles Darwin University................ 43

GRENFELL, Dr Wilfred Michael, Executive Member, Australian College of Educators (NT).............. 29

GRENFELL, Dr Wilfred Michael, Private capacity.. 57

GRIFFITHS, Dr William Robert, Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory.. 19

HARVEY, Ms Marcia Lee, Executive Member, Australian College of Educators (NT)........................... 29

JOHNS, Mr Sam, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

JONES, Mr Roger, Student, Charles Darwin University.. 70

JORDAN, Miss Helen, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

McAULAY, Mr Matthew Frederick, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

McCASKER, Mr Benjamin Walter, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

MORGAN, Miss Cherie, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

MURPHY, Ms Susan, General Manager, People and Learning Division, Department of Employment, Education and Training... 1

NEWLEY, Miss Martha Cusick, Student, Charles Darwin University... 70

PARRY, Dr Suzanne, Director, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory......................... 19

RENNIE, Dr Jennifer Ann, Acting Head of School, School of Education, Charles Darwin University.. 43

RORRISON, Ms Doreen Dawne, Private capacity... 57

SAREV, Mr John, Board Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory................... 19

SPIERS, Ms Helen Gilmore, Private capacity... 57

WEATE, Miss Catherine Louise, Student, Charles Darwin University.. 70

Committee met at 9.00 am

DAVIES, Mr Kenneth Lindsay, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Employment, Education and Training

MURPHY, Ms Susan, General Manager, People and Learning Division, Department of Employment, Education and Training

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into teacher education by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training. I now call representatives from the Northern Territory government. May I remind you that public hearings are recorded by *Hansard* and this record is made available through the parliamentary web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I 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?

Ms Murphy—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make some opening remarks.

Ms Murphy—The supplementary submission that we gave you this morning is to provide some additional information about the Department of Employment, Education and Training and the services we provide throughout the Northern Territory. I am aware that the members of the committee have only just received it. Is it appropriate to quickly run through the advice?

CHAIR—Yes, please.

Ms Murphy—Thirty-one per cent of our population speak a language other than English, which is a significant challenge for teachers in our schools and more particularly for teachers in our more remote communities who are working with parents and members of our school communities. Of our population 29 per cent is Indigenous—mainly located in the rural and remote parts of the Northern Territory, although increasingly there is a move from rural areas into the urban areas, with students from more traditional backgrounds coming to schools in our urban areas. Those students have very different needs in terms of the teachers in our classrooms and they provide significant challenges for our teachers. By the Australian Bureau of Statistics' definition, the Northern Territory has 53 per cent of population in outer regional areas, which are our major centres, 22 per cent of its population in remote areas and 25 per cent of its population in very remote areas. This poses significant challenges for teachers who are going out to work in those communities.

We have a very young population in the Northern Territory, with 25 per cent of our population being under 15 years of age. Compared with the average in the rest of Australia, which is 20 per cent—and in some states it as low as 18 per cent—we are a young group of people. There are 150 government schools in the Northern Territory; 106 of those are primary or small schools. We have one-teacher schools, two-teacher schools and three-teacher schools. They comprise our small schools component. We have 11 secondary schools, 20 community schools—they are

schools in large Indigenous communities that have a stand-alone principal and a stand-alone staff, so they are not our very small schools but they are our recognised community schools. We have five special schools which provide programs for students with particular learning needs, and three area schools which are located in Jabiru, Alyangula and Batchelor. I think you were at Batchelor recently?

CHAIR—Yes, yesterday.

Ms Murphy—That is one of our area schools. They are transition to junior secondary schools on the one campus. Also, we have three open-learning schools: the Katherine School of the Air, the Alice Springs School of the Air and the Northern Territory Open Education Centre. They provide education for students who do not access a regular or traditional school on a daily basis, so education is via distance learning. Currently in DEET we have 4,482 staff. Of those, 2,092 are teaching and 649 are people in promotion positions in our schools, so 62 per cent of the DEET work force is located in our schools.

Our programs are designed to provide high-quality courses that lead to employment, training and further education. Some of the targeted programs which we are currently running include an alternative education program to try and assist students who are struggling with dealing with mainstream schooling, and an accelerated literacy program. Ken will talk in a minute about our benchmark results in our multiassessment program tests. Our results are not as good as they need to be for our young people to get jobs and to access employment and training, so we have an accelerated literacy program which is designed to support those students. We run many bilingual education programs. We are targeting early childhood to get students into really good habits from the start, from a very young age. We have a three-year age-of-entry trial happening, which has been very successful at taking three-year-olds into our preschools. We run ‘lighthouse’ schools, which focus on using ICT. Although those schools are located in our urban centres, there are partnerships with our rural schools as well to make sure that our best quality teaching is happening throughout the Territory. We also have a wellbeing project.

Mr Davies—I am happy to pick up on this bit, if you like, Susan—you have done well! Our MAP reading results and numeracy results are on the second page of this submission. Just to give you a context: in the Northern Territory, when our results come through for our total student cohort, once the Indigenous student results are disaggregated out of that cohort, the results of our schools comparatively—and I am talking about mainstream schools—are pretty much on a par with the national average. In terms of the 29 per cent cohort for the Indigenous population in the Northern Territory, just to give you some idea: 29 per cent of the population cohort in the Northern Territory translates into 40 per cent of students in our schools being Indigenous. So it is a big challenge, and it is rising.

Sue alluded to the bush-to-urban drift, but in places like Alice Springs, Katherine and certainly Tennant Creek there has been a huge movement and a huge transition. In some of the schools where there used to be a kind of European mixed cohort there has been a significant change, to the extent that a place like Gillen Primary School in Alice Springs has gone from 20 per cent Indigenous kids to 60 per cent Indigenous kids in the last few years. So the transition has been very quick.

To give you a bit of an idea: in terms of our MAP results and our outcomes in the Northern Territory, the outer region Australia cohort, as I was saying, is on a par, and certainly in remote Australia—and Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs fall into that remote cohort—our results are not too bad. In relation to 'very remote'—and this is comparing apples with apples—if we go to Queensland and Western Australia and compare their very remote cohort with our very remote cohort, the issues that we face are substantial. The next nearest state that is close to us is WA, but the gap between our 'very remote' outcomes and their 'very remote' outcomes is such that there is still a long way to go to close the cohort. We know, for example, that in Arnhem Land the average attendance is around 50 to 60 per cent, so on any given day, in hard number terms, for every 10 students that are out there, between five and six students are attending.

That just gives you an idea of the kinds of challenges that we are facing. I will talk a little bit more about our year 11 and 12 results and our secondary results later on. We have big challenges. Servicing the remote cohort has put significant cost imposts on the system and creates significant challenges in the way we have to support our teachers. Getting experienced, committed teachers to go out there and stay there is an ongoing challenge for us.

Ms Murphy—Page 3 takes us through to the other end of schooling, where we also collect benchmark information. Years 3, 5 and 7 are basically in our primary schools. In the southern part of the Northern Territory our year 7s are in the high schools, but in the Top End they are not. The other place we collect data about results is at year 12. I have included some trend information for you about our tertiary entrance rank scores. The Northern Territory is combined with South Australia for the purpose of year 12 results, to get a big enough cohort to get some meaningful results. I have shown data from 2000 to 2004, with the average TER, or tertiary entrance ranking, score, which is a student's passport into university. Although we are studying the same subjects and our teachers are qualified teachers, our results are significantly lower on average at the year 12 exit point. In 2000 in South Australia the average TER was 69.9 and ours was 64—and that gap stays through the whole lot. Although the gap has widened in 2004, the Northern Territory TER average was 63.7 and in South Australia it was 70.6. So there is a significant difference at year 12 with how our students score and then go on to enter tertiary institutions.

In the Northern Territory they have the Northern Territory Certificate of Education; in South Australia there is the South Australian Certificate of Education. Although our students study the same courses and do the same exams and their TERs are calculated with the South Australian cohort, it is a Northern Territory certificate and there are some slight differences. We have provided some information about completions as a percentage of year 8 commencements. We are trying to get some sort of retention data. The first graph on that page shows the total cohort and the second graph shows our Indigenous cohort. Ken mentioned that we are working hard to improve our Indigenous results at years 3, 5 and 7 levels. You can see that we have a lot of work to do to improve that retention through to year 12 also. The problem with TER scores is that that is not the only measure of success for year 12 students. There is also the successful entry into a vocational training program and successful entry into employment. But it is much more difficult, as I am sure you are aware, to capture that data, and TER is one of the benchmarking ways of collecting data. We do have some significant work to keep going at, and it is a very high priority for DEET that we address those issues and try and make a significant improvement in them.

Over the page I have included some VET and schools participation data. In the Northern Territory, individual schools are registered training providers, or RTOs. I know in other states the department of education has become the RTO and that individual schools then run VET programs. In the Northern Territory it is individual schools that become RTOs. Some of our secondary schools have not done that, but we have cluster arrangements where there may be a very cooperative arrangement with other providers or with other schools who are providers. The take-up rate into vocational education and training has increased significantly from our early days. In 1977 there were 400-odd students. We are now approaching 2,000 enrolments into vocational education and training programs. There is some success with school based new apprenticeships as well. If you have a chance to watch TV whilst you are in the Territory, last week we launched the second stage of our ‘Get VET’ program, which is badged *Look at me know*. There are six fantastic ads of young people entering school based new apprenticeships and training programs. It is a real focus for us and, with this being Education Week, we are really hammering the public with those ads at the moment.

What are we doing in terms of our work force to try and deal with the fact that we have these significant challenges in the NT? We are all aware of them; we do not try to hide them, but we do try to deal with them head-on. We absolutely and formally support employees upgrading their qualifications and retraining in new areas. As our work force is getting older, some of the behaviour management issues are becoming more and more challenging as our young people come into schools with their own sets of attitudes, values and standards. We support a whole range of training opportunities and learning opportunities for our existing work force. We also provide opportunities for our non-teaching DEET work force to gain access to the teaching stream. For example, in our classes that have students with high support needs, we have admin staff. Many of those staff then choose to go on and do teacher education to become special education teachers. We actively encourage those people and we support people to do it. Approved student status is one of the ways we do that—assisting with HECS fees and providing opportunities for people to undergo the training.

Our work force is ageing. Sixty-two per cent of our principals are aged over 50. Some people might say that this is an opportunity for watershed change. Our school leaders are in that ageing group of Australians. Twenty-five per cent of our classroom teachers are over 50, but the majority of our work force—52 per cent—is over 40 years of age. I am pretty sure that that is about the national average, but it is very worrying. How we go about attracting young people to a teaching career is a priority for us.

We have many strategies to encourage the employment of Indigenous staff. Our firm belief is that, if we can provide positive Indigenous role models to our Indigenous students, we will achieve better results. So we have a whole range of programs that are in place to support young Indigenous people to become teachers, either through cadetships and traineeships to get young people’s education levels to a stage where they can access more formal tertiary programs or through getting young people into our schools in a whole range of ways. That is a very high priority for us.

We have recruitment and retention issues. I have included some data in the submission. We have a high turnover in our work force. Our current marketing campaign recognises that people might make a lifestyle choice to come to the Territory for a few years and teach. We are encouraging experienced teachers from interstate to have a bit of a sea change, come up here and

work with us for a couple of years, bringing their skills, knowledge and experience with them and helping influence what happens in our classrooms. In any year, 20 per cent of our work force leaves and we have to recruit. That is a big percentage for us.

Employing local recruits is a priority for us. Charles Darwin University and Batchelor—BIITE—provide recruits, although there are some challenges with the recruits. We have talked a little bit about that in our more formal submission. Last year 92 graduates in the education and teaching field—I am sorry I did not number the pages, but I guess it is on page 5—were available from Charles Darwin University, but only six chose to go to remote localities in DEET. We did pick up more people working in our urban centres, but getting qualified and experienced teachers to go to our remote communities is very difficult. Much of that is because the profile of people entering the Graduate Diploma in Education tends to be older people with life experience, but they also have lives here in Darwin—family commitments, children, whatever. We are having real trouble attracting those people who we would want to go and work in our bush schools.

Mr Davies—The other issue, particularly for the younger trainees, seems to be that they have part-time jobs. For them to go and do a remote internship really inhibits their capacity to earn the dollars that they need to support themselves at the university locally. That is a real issue for us. We cannot get people going out and doing practicums in remote areas in large numbers from Charles Darwin University. One of the other issues is that, where we have partnerships—there has been a recent group from Deakin University that has come up into the Territory—our support of universities that bring students in to have a remote school experience is not translating into graduates coming back to us at the moment.

Ms Murphy—Our thinking around some of those intern programs was that, if we could get people in the second or third year of their four-year program, we might instil in them that you do not necessarily buy your house straightaway. You come to the Territory and work for a few years, then buy your house and relocate back to where you were from, but that does not seem to be translating into what we were hoping for.

Mr Davies—The other issue for us as a system is that, with 40 per cent of our student cohort being Indigenous, we are trying to look towards at some point having a cohort of teachers that represents that statistic in terms of Indigenous teachers. If you have a look at the statistics coming out of BIITE, there have been very low numbers of graduates coming out of there in recent years with sufficient qualifications to take a role in DEET. That is another real challenge for us. We are engaging in some partnership discussions with CDU and with BIITE at the moment around ramping up that area. We see BIITE as taking a significant role in the up-skilling of our Indigenous assistant teacher cohort, of which there are large numbers in our remote areas, to put them on a pathway towards teaching.

Ms Murphy—That new work around our education workers in Indigenous communities is very exciting. There is training available at every step, which does articulate into a teaching qualification. That will be a wonderful success if we can manage to negotiate it. Along the way there are a whole lot of questions about how their training is provided—whether it is on-site at Batchelor, which means relocating families, or whether technology is used to provide it in communities. A whole range of that is still to be discussed. Mentoring is a very strong part of the program we provide for graduates coming to the Territory. It helps them to cope with the change

and to get on top. We believe that mentoring is a really important support structure to assist our teachers to stay, so it is certainly something we are focusing on.

Regarding areas of shortage, I am sure that, as the committee is travelling around, many of these subject areas are the same across Australia. We do face some challenges. One of our challenges, for example, is the provision of relief teachers—or emergency teachers; they are described in a whole range of different ways. There is an issue about schools having access to those people so that our staff can have non-contact time or programming time and attend to their own professional learning and development. It is very difficult for our more remote teachers—but also for Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs—when there are no relief teachers around, so it seems really strange that that is a shortage area, but it is just a matter of having quality people who are able to step into our classrooms and assist. Also, some of the subject areas—music, ICT, maths, the arts and science, for instance—are a challenge for us to recruit to.

The last thing I will mention is that, because the majority of our recruits come from interstate, we need to be very careful in supporting our recruits so that they understand the nuances of living and working in the Territory, who our population is and how we effectively work with our community. DEET is very committed to its orientation program to introduce people to our curriculum, which is an outcomes based curriculum. We also devote a whole day to cross-cultural experiences. That is run by local Indigenous people and it is just to try and break down some of the stereotypes that people may have arrived with, to create an understanding that we all need to work with our local communities and get to know those people.

Mr Davies—Our minister up here has just released a ministerial statement on Indigenous education. In that he has asked us to focus on some of our bigger community education centres in our remote areas to get them up to where we would like to see them, which is at an equivalent mainstream standard in terms of their course offerings and facilities presentation. To do that he is talking about community charters or community partnership agreements—MOUs—around what DEET's commitment will be to that community and what the community's commitment will be to support the school and attendance at the school. As part of that, he has asked us to start to explore the possibility of a longer school day. We have a traditional Northern Hemisphere model of schooling up here. To give you an example, at Maningrida CEC—and there are 13 outstations around Maningrida CEC—during the Christmas holidays when the wet is on, all of the people gravitate back into the main town. We actually shut down the biggest airconditioned facility for six weeks over the Christmas holidays while the entire local population is aggregated back into that centre. So there is a question around provision in our remote areas that we are now starting to really have a good, hard look at.

In dealing with these challenges—and it is the same with all systems—our teacher allocation is formula driven and based on numbers of students, enrolments and attendance. We ask if the answer is for us to continue to throw out more and more qualified people or whether, as well as the qualified people, we need people with different skills sets in terms of training advisers and coordinators—rather than just saying, 'Here's another teacher to throw at the issue.' So we are starting to explore those challenges within our resourcing formula to see if it is possible to generate other forms of support for principals and schools out there rather than just straight qualified teachers.

Ms Murphy—Regarding the committee's work in looking into the training and preparation of teachers, we offer a very diverse environment and an opportunity for people to come and bring their flexibility and open-mindedness—and a real commitment to working in our local context, which is sometimes very different from the institutions they have trained in or the local community they have grown up in. That is part of the challenge that we hope to work with tertiary providers on.

Mr Davies—The other thing that is fair to say is, given the sets of experiences that teachers can have and the diversity of the work experiences that are available to them, if they can come up here, succeed and do well, particularly in our remotes, they have significantly increased chances of employability—and a lot of our teachers leave to head overseas, particularly in the ESL area, to teach.

CHAIR—Thank you for your presentation this morning. We might go to questions now. I noted in the submission that we are getting 10 Indigenous graduates a year coming into the system when we have a very large Indigenous cohort in the schools. I want to run an idea past you: rather than the current system of casting a fairly wide net and having a very high attrition rate with very few people coming out the bottom as qualified Indigenous teachers, why not turn things around a little and have a very intensive assessment at recruitment stage and much stronger support whilst those students are training, both financial and academic, with a view to getting fewer people going in but a far greater proportion graduating at the end of the day? What is your view on that strategy?

Ms Murphy—Very positive. It is a matter of being able to set up the appropriate relationships and structures with both CDU and BIITE because both have the capability of producing Indigenous graduates depending on where the entry points are. But, certainly, that very targeted and very supported approach would have a greater success rate, we believe.

Mr SAWFORD—I was not going to ask this question but perhaps I will follow on from what Luke was saying. It appears to me—this happens in other states as well in particular areas, particularly country areas—that the focus seems to be too late. It is in year 11 or year 12. A lot of kids are interested. A lot of primary kids will show an interest in wanting to be a teacher. In Indigenous and remote communities I do not see any evidence of a lot of work being done at the primary level—in other words, there is a lot of talk about mentoring and whatever but when it comes to the crunch often it is a lot of lip-service and not reality. Following up on Luke's question, do you think there ought to be far greater attention at a younger level as well? I agree with what he is saying about quantifying the entry, but maybe you need to go back a bit further. I reckon there would be a lot of kids interested up here if they were given the right mentoring, the right encouragement and support at a much younger level. It may in fact be a very positive move too.

Ms Murphy—Certainly, primary education is our focus and the assessment results show that we have put a lot of effort into improving the outcomes for students so that we can keep them engaged. The attrition rate of students from primary to secondary school, particularly for our Indigenous students, is appallingly high and not acceptable. So we absolutely support what you are saying, which is get into primary schools, make sure that kids are engaged and able to stay on to access the education level they need to do tertiary courses. It is also about working with institutions like BIITE so that students can access these courses without having to relocate from

their community. Young traditional Aboriginal people at 16, 17 and 18 are not able to do that, so we are actively working with BIITE to look at some models we used in the eighties that were successful in providing training on site. So yes, we are absolutely going down that pathway.

Mr SAWFORD—You raised a point in your introduction about Batchelor and what you said was correct: there seemed to be a fairly large proportion of people who had lots of life experiences and other jobs—mothers, grandmothers—and of course they are limited. They are not going to go to remote areas because they are all based here with their families. The problem also seems to be that there are not many young people there. That is also a trend with other Australians. Teachers are becoming much older, and a lot more are swapping from other careers.

Part of the problem seems to be with the financial support. You have the human support you need but the financial support for people just does not seem to be there. It is incredibly difficult. You made the point, Ken, about some of these young people having jobs. Universities around Australia are structuring their whole academic week around young people's work commitments. Do you think we should be doing a lot more about scholarships and bonding? There has to be a different organisation in the way we deal with teacher education.

Ms Murphy—The Northern Territory department of education offers 10 bursaries a year, which are valued at $12,000. They are actively sought after but they are not bonded to teaching at the other end.

Mr SAWFORD—Why not?

Mr Davies—That is a good question. We understand and our legal advice is that bonding and putting a contractual requirement on people to work for us at the completion of the course is not sustainable. That has been our advice.

Ms Murphy—My understanding is that only New South Wales have a bonding arrangement. I do not know how it works but I think it has something to do with the fact that a lot of people want to work in New South Wales and if they do not abide by the rules then they will not get a job; somebody else will get their job.

Mr SAWFORD—I would have thought you would take notice of what an educator thought not what a lawyer thought!

Ms Murphy—In this litigious society.

Mr Davies—To answer your initial question Mary Ann Bin-Sallik, who is an Indigenous professor at CDU, last year tracked all of the Indigenous students across Darwin and pulled them back into the university and did a couple of days work with them on what the next steps would be in their tertiary orientation. We have a very good tracking mechanism that tells us where the Indigenous kids are in Darwin—we actually know. We give them those details and they are now running a course for year 10 because getting in at years 11 and 12 is too late. They are starting to find that if they are going to talk to Indigenous students in particular about their career pathways and create some offerings for them at CDU they need to go down to year 10 level. So the idea is to target and get in earlier. You can go out to Indigenous remote communities. I was at Ramingining yesterday. The accelerated literacy program is there. The school council chairman,

a traditional owner out there, described the program as putting the accelerator down on English literacy and English language, which I thought was a great metaphor. The Indigenous staff there were absolutely engaged with that program. One of the unintended but terrific consequences of it is that the literacy and numeracy levels of the Indigenous teachers who are involved are going through the roof as well, because it is a very structured program.

Your point was about our getting in earlier and identifying students—Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education is the key provider out there, as well as CDU to a lesser degree—who can be put through a proper training program which gives them a qualification to teach. That is one of the things we have to ramp up our whole focus on. Bear in mind that our literacy and numeracy results send a very strong message that in terms of a graduate degree we have some significant challenges in just getting students there.

Mr SAWFORD—How would you describe, in one or two sentences, the philosophy of the Northern Territory education department?

Mr Davies—An absolute commitment to deal with the issues that the Territory faces and an absolute commitment to close the gap on Indigenous student outcomes in employment, education and training. That is what we have to do. We have to have a relentless focus. I think the Chair referred to the spreading of initiatives so wide that you lose focus. We are getting some very firm directions from the government now about trying to focus resources to maximise impact in those areas.

Ms Murphy—I would like to push employment, education and training. It really is a tripod of commitments. When we were the department of education—we changed four or five years ago.

Mr Davies—We used to live in a silo; we no longer live in a silo.

Ms Murphy—All of our work now is about outcomes for students in further education, training or employment.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not want to be unfair, and if I have made a wrong conclusion please correct me. When I read through the submission, I felt as if not you personally but the department was grappling between managing education, on one hand, and doing it, on the other. It seems to come out all the way through the submission. Is that a fair conclusion?

Mr Davies—Given the complexities of the issues that we are facing, absolutely. In saying ‘absolutely’, I am saying that clearly the government has set this agency a very strong agenda that we have to manage and implement. In terms of getting the focus, we are well on the way.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the focus? Is the focus management or education?

Mr Davies—It is education—to give students a pathway into employment and training; absolutely. To do that particularly in Indigenous communities, it is going to require some quite substantial negotiation with each of those communities, because it requires their support and it requires the provision of real pathways for students. I will go back to Maningrida again, where there are substantial numbers of non-Indigenous people occupying positions. If an appropriate education provision were be put in place there and if targeted opportunities were given to mentor

students in these positions, we think there is a great potential for a large number of those positions to be taken up by Indigenous local employees.

Mr SAWFORD—Gregor Ramsey is very respected. In fact, he has made a contribution to this committee and we will probably, after we have seen all the states and some regional areas, get him back again. I notice that he is responsible for an extensive public consultation that happened last year, 'investing an extra $42 million during the next four years to improve secondary education and build better schools'. That is what is written here. I then looked at the framework, but it appears to be a bit of an ad hoc framework. It does not appear to be very analytical or 'managing'. I do not understand the link.

From the problems that you have been outlining this morning—and we have been agreeing on them—I would have thought that you would not abandon secondary schools but focus back on primary schools. Susan, you mentioned, for example, the terrible problem of getting relief teachers here. There is only one way in remote areas to deal with relief teachers: you have to give them a different staffing formula. That costs money and governments have to respond to that. Otherwise, you cannot do it; it is impossible. So you have to give people more staff to give them the flexibility not only to make curriculum offerings but also to cover the inevitable absences. To do anything else is just a nonsense. Would you like to comment on that?

Ms Murphy—We are currently reviewing our staffing formula and looking at a very different model. Currently our staffing formula basically provides staff to school by school type. You are either a secondary school, a primary school, a community school or something like that. We are looking at an allocation model that says: 'This is the individual who is needing to be educated. Does this person have a disability or a hearing impairment? Are they an ESL speaker? Do they live in a remote community?' So we are looking at a whole range of factors that might influence how we need to go about resourcing the education of that child. That is a very different approach for us, and it is work that is currently in progress. One of the things it will do is look at how we support teachers to teach that child, so that idea of providing relief teachers in the allocation model is certainly a part of the consideration of that.

Mr SAWFORD—If literacy and numeracy is a huge problem, secondary school is too late. I mean it is not too late, but it is much cheaper and much more effective to do it at a much earlier age, notwithstanding the enrolment and attendance problems and whatever.

Mr Davies—I would not want to give the impression that the total focus is on the secondary end. The accelerated literacy program—which is a joint commitment by this government of $8 million over four years and using Australian government funds as well, which is another $8 million—is totally targeted at getting the literacy and numeracy skills of primary schoolchildren, particularly Indigenous primary school students, to benchmark.

We are running on a couple of agendas. The early childhood area, in particular, is a focus. We have mobile preschools being rolled out into remote areas where we have not previously had preschool provision. Students out in remote areas can access that provision at three years of age. Currently, in the urban context, it is at four years of age that they access it. So we are expanding our programs. In particular, in our group schools—we have large numbers of small schools in remote areas grouped together—there is a total focus on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes and on improving the support to those schools.

It is definitely a holistic approach, recognising that in our remotes until recently we had very little of what we would call real secondary provision in our remote schools. We now have five remote schools that are providing a full secondary program and we are expanding on that through the Building Better Schools program. That will involve, as part of the Building Better Schools initiative, 20 additional teachers to be located regionally. They will be specialist teachers to provide secondary support to each of our small schools.

I would not want you to go away thinking that we are just doing it in bits. There is a definitely a continuum. We are getting more skilled at focusing our resources to maximise impact, but we are grappling with some significant challenges in the Northern Territory. They are very complex challenges in terms of getting community engagement and dealing with the hard issues around attendance. Learning requires some discipline and it does require continuous attendance. They are real challenges for us—there is no doubt about that.

Mr HENRY—You mentioned in your opening remarks a change in the cohort at an Alice Springs primary school from 20 per cent Indigenous to 50 per cent? Were there any reasons for that?

Mr Davies—Yes. One of the reasons was that at that particular school there used to be large numbers of students who were American kids from the joint defence facility there. There is not as big a cohort down there now. A lot of them were children of contractors. In the eighties there used to be a lot of military-type personnel there. But there is no doubt that in the town camps around Alice Springs it is much more transient and there are larger numbers of Indigenous people coming out of communities, being in situ in those camps and trying to access the services that we offer.

Gillen School has set out to accommodate those students. They run the accelerated literacy program. They have a couple of transitioning programs with Indigenous units in them. They have employed additional Indigenous male staff—not teaching staff but Indigenous male support. That particular school has become a bit of a lighthouse in the way that they are dealing with their Indigenous cohort. But it is definitely due to community people moving into town to access the services that the town provides.

Ms Murphy—Can I give you a snapshot of the Barkly, which is major pastoral land. Many of those pastoral leases have been bought up and are operated very differently. There are not people living there permanently. It is a ‘fly in, fly out’ work force. Helimustering is used, as opposed to a work force that musters. The homestead used to provide fuel, food and a shop, and there was power and water. With the way the pastoral industry is changing, a lot of that infrastructure has disappeared. People who were living on those lands are moving because it is not possible to live in the same way anymore. You cannot buy fuel and there is no food available. So those people are also moving into town. That is a trend that we are seeing across the Barkly and into Tennant Creek. We are looking at having to close some of our schools because the community is not there anymore.

Mr HENRY—Looking at the Alice Springs example, is that an indication, though, that there is a greater interest in education by Indigenous communities?

Mr Davies—There is no doubt that, as a department, we are getting much harder questions and demands from communities than we were 10 years ago. There is absolutely no doubt about that. Kalkaringi is a classic example of where we have had a very successful program rolled out and very high expectations of departmental support from that community.

Mr HENRY—You also mentioned the minister making an announcement just recently about moving education out to communities more. How does the department feel about that?

Mr Davies—We have to get those bigger community education centres, the hubs, working properly so that students are going to them and there are proper education, employment and training pathways in them. If we have 15 or 16 really high-functioning hub schools out there that are picking up some of the smaller community schools and smaller outstations around them, we absolutely think that is the way to go. They become a service centre for that area.

Mr HENRY—Does that include changing the programs and the way the school works to meet the needs of those communities?

Mr Davies—It does, absolutely, and on a negotiated basis with the community. We talked about school terms and a different orientation there. We talked about maybe opening up the school day, so that at three or four o'clock in the afternoon you do not shut one of the biggest facilities in the town—you might open up the library, or give access to training groups or to people who are wanting to use computers, those sorts of things. It is about expanding the provision of services.

Mr HENRY—I think that an important part of addressing Indigenous educational needs is to take the programs out to communities, and you have talked about that. Have you any other strategies to assist in that process, taking education out to the remote communities, rather than having them come in?

Mr Davies—I mentioned the issue of the mobile preschool. We are ramping up our provision of services in the early childhood area; where preschool was not previously available, it is now being made available. There has been a review of distance education and how that is provided in the Northern Territory through the Northern Territory Open Education Centre and we think that that is going to lead to substantial support that will go out from what is the big central hub at the moment. We are also talking about shifting staff into regions to support the schools and to provision the open education courses.

Bear in mind that we do not have the capacity in the Territory to build a stand-alone high school in every remote location. We have big infrastructure issues. We have been saying to the Australian government that we do need support on the ground to get these facilities built. One example that we are involved in at the moment is the COAG trial at Wadeye. Government has provided $2.5 million to provide some additional education facilities there. We are now in negotiations with the community about the building of a secondary school. Wadeye is the sixth biggest town in the Northern Territory. It has a community education centre at the moment, but the community is very, very clear that they want a stand-alone high school and they want it to be of an equivalent standard to that of a mainstream high school. They are very clear about that. So it has upped the ante all around. But I just want to make this point: to actually build that, we will need a hand to do it. The Northern Territory government is building five additional houses there

at the moment, but to put these facilities on the ground we are going to the Australian government and saying, ‘We need a hand to do this,’ just to get sites serviced and that sort of thing. There are big facilities gaps.

Mr HENRY—The chairman spoke about perhaps targeting recruitment for Indigenous teachers a little bit more sharply. Are there any other strategies that you are looking at to bring more Indigenous people into the teaching profession?

Ms Murphy—We currently have a range of employment positions which provide services to Indigenous students and they are targeted for Indigenous people. They include positions like Aboriginal and Islander education workers. These are located in our major schools and I think there are about 40 of those across our system. Their job is to work particularly with families and the community to assist with whatever issues a family may be having, in order to assist a student to come to school. We have Aboriginal staff employed in our community schools as assistant teachers. We are reworking that classification to be an education worker classification. Ken and I mentioned before that we are building and training at each step along the way, so that that classification articulates into a formal teaching qualification. So there are a whole range of strategies which we are using in our currently existing structure, in addition to a range of training programs that are funded to help young people come into the education sector. We are looking across all fronts.

Mr HENRY—Finally, the deputy chair made an observation about the maturity and the experience of the people undertaking the program out at Batchelor, and their perhaps having a focus more urban than remote. It is obviously equally important, though, to ensure that we have Indigenous people in an urban environment to address Indigenous needs in that sector.

Ms Murphy—We seem to be meeting that need, but there is another whole need that we are not meeting.

Mr HENRY—Yes, I appreciate that.

Mr BARTLETT—Is there any noticeable difference between Batchelor and CDU in retention rates or willingness of those graduates to teach in remote areas?

Mr Davies—We have large numbers of Indigenous graduate teachers in our remote schools from course graduations in the early eighties and early nineties. It would be fair to say that more recently we have not had those numbers coming through the courses.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you referring to both institutions?

Mr Davies—No, this is at BIITE.

Mr BARTLETT—Why has that changed?

Mr Davies—You would need to ask BIITE about the particular circumstances around that. Our view is that BIITE used to have the capacity to do a lot of training on site and had a much larger presence in its remote communities than it currently has. It went to a model where it was servicing well outside the Territory—students right across the nation. It also required much more

in-school—so, bringing the people enrolled in courses into Batchelor and getting them in residence there. There were issues around the take-up, particularly with people leaving their communities. That has meant that the take-up has not been as consistent as it used to be.

Mr BARTLETT—Is it your view, then, that they ought to be restricting the intake area to the Territory?

Mr Davies—It is our view that they need to be targeting Indigenous remote areas as part of their core business, absolutely. That is not a view that is inconsistent with the current board from the discussions I have had with the director down there. That is absolutely the reoriented focus that the board is wanting to take. We do have to bear in mind that there are costs around doing that. If we are going to put lecturers out into remote areas we do have to look at how we are going to support that institution to actually do the sorts of training courses that are required. That is going to be a challenge for us as a department as well.

Mr BARTLETT—So in general terms, if you could measure effectiveness in terms of teachers in schools, particularly in remote areas, in your view is CDU more effective in getting and retaining placements than Batchelor?

Mr Davies—The current statistics and our current recruitment processes would say that at the moment we are getting substantially more graduates from CDU than we are from BIITE. Certainly, the Indigenous graduates coming out of CDU whom I have seen working are outstanding operators—those who have gone both bush and urban. As its core business BIITE has traditionally had a particular focus around remote areas. We would like to see that focus revamped and accelerated.

Mr BARTLETT—Going to a slightly different area, roughly what percentage of students in the Territory are educated in non-government schools—be they Lutheran schools, mission schools et cetera?

Mr Davies—About 22 per cent.

Mr BARTLETT—Is that fairly average in urban areas as well as remote areas?

Mr Davies—There is substantially more non-government school sector provision in urban areas than there is in remote areas at the moment. Nyangatajarra College is based in Yulara in the Northern Territory. We have five Indigenous Catholic remote schools: two at the Tiwi Islands; one at Daly River; one at Santa Teresa, down in Alice Springs; and at Wadeye, which is the community that we are supporting as part of the—

Mr BARTLETT—Do they seem to have the same problems in attracting teachers to remote areas and retaining them?

Mr Davies—Absolutely. There are very similar issues.

Mr BARTLETT—On a totally different area: I notice in your submission there is a real emphasis on literacy, for obvious reasons, and ESL, at secondary as well as tertiary level. There has been a lot of debate in the national media, or in the Sydney media anyway, about different

approaches to teaching literacy—phonics versus whole of language and so on. Has there been much work done on which approach is better for Indigenous students or is the situation no different to what applies for the whole cohort of young people?

Mr Davies—The Accelerated Literacy Program is a very disciplined, lock-step approach to teaching literacy. It has demonstrated some brilliant early outcomes. We were talking to the community members who are engaged in the school, who are teaching and are assistant teachers in the school at Ramingining, and they said there is one thing they think is fantastic about this program. Basically at Ramingining the only English that is spoken in that community is inside the school gate, but the school council chair said yesterday that he was hearing kids speaking English in the community for the first time. The parents were tremendously proud of that. This is not disavowing their own culture and language at all, but they were very proud of that. When we were talking to the Indigenous teachers yesterday, they said that, because it is so lock-step and there is a very structured methodology around it, when the teacher left the room or when the teacher said to them, 'It's your opportunity to take over,' they could slip in. Because of the structure, all of the students in the school, right through secondary, know how each of those literacy lessons functions and the Indigenous teachers could fit in and pick it up and do it really well. That was one of the things that they strongly said they valued.

In terms of what methodology works: we have got an 'evaluation of literacy approaches' research project going. The intellectual support, the intellectual grunt, behind the Accelerated Literacy Program is being done by CDU. It is being run with a very strong evaluation because we want to have an evidence base to its roll-out and we want to be able to demonstrate that the dollars going in are being matched with outcomes. That is part of that. But also internally within the department we are looking at the Accelerated Literacy Program, First Steps and another program, which is called Walking Talking Text. With schools that use a chosen whole-of-language project, we are targeting 20 schools to start to do the analysis around where we get the best impact for the dollars going in. We think we are one of the first jurisdictions to test that. We are only a small one and it is stretching us around our resources, particularly around having research that is valid and stands up to intellectual, professional and academic scrutiny. It is also driving our database development around having a very concise profile of where each student is on an academic continuum that includes their attendance, their courses and their performance against literacy and numeracy benchmarks. It gives us a very strong profile to put under the arms of our General Managers Schools when they go into schools to ask the hard questions. It also gives us a strong profile to talk to parents about, particularly Indigenous parents. On the attendance issue: just from looking at the data yesterday, we could see that attendance is directly proportional to outcomes. There is a direct correlation.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—In your submission you say the number of graduates available for recruitment last year was 92 from CDU and three from the institute. That is a pretty big difference between the two. Obviously both facilities would have different target groups and a different opportunity to attract students in the first place, but, given the very low number of graduates available from the institute, why would you be advocating a narrowing of their client group, if you like?

Mr Davies—We are trying to look at this as a continuum, so we want BIITE engaged to work with our 250 to 280 assistant teachers in our remotes to give them a skill set up to diploma level and, if it can be provided, a graduate course. But we see them as an important part in terms of

skilling up around literacy and numeracy and in terms of course development through to an articulated pathway into a degree course.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—So would you like to see the institute not doing teacher training but taking a catchment of students and preparing them to go to CDU?

Mr Davies—No. They have an Indigenous and a remote connection that a big stand alone institution is going to find very difficult to create. What we want to see is BIITE courses articulating very closely with CDU in a partnership way so that once the BIITE provision cuts out—if that is what occurs—there is a clear and supported pathway, which may involve some negotiated support from both BIITE and CDU, around getting the Indigenous teachers we need in remote areas. We do not see them as being exclusive at all. Traditionally, they have operated as two quite separate institutions, often competing in the same locations for students.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I know that you are aware that we were at BIITE yesterday. This is not a criticism on my part, but are you aware that the institute is taking students from Indigenous communities and accepting them as students in the teacher education course when there is not necessarily a realistic expectation that they will become teachers? A variety of reasons were given for that, including the notion that it is one of the better courses that can be used for people wanting to do one or two years and then go back to their communities and become community leaders, or more effective community leaders. Firstly, are you aware of that sort of notion, which is perhaps contributing to a low retention through to graduation? What are your views on that?

Ms Murphy—We have certainly seen in Alice Springs that people in our remote communities are being encouraged to go and do courses that probably their supervisors or the principals in their schools would not have thought were the most appropriate courses for them to do. We have an officer in the Alice Springs office who has been trying to work very closely with BIITE about enrolling people in courses that realistically they can expect to achieve success in and which will take them on a pathway to a longer term goal.

We are aware that that is happening. The institute has its reasons for chasing enrolments and doing what it does. But our concern is that success for our adult staff is very important and putting people on a pathway that is going to take them away from being successful is not something that we support. That is why we have an officer based in Alice Springs who tries to work with our staff in Central Australia. We also have a unit here in Darwin. Fred works very closely with our staff in Central Australia to try and ensure that the programs and formal learning that they access are going to meet their needs, as well as providing supports so that they are successful.

CHAIR—I will conclude with one last question in relation to the effectiveness of the financial resources that are being placed in BIITE. We observed the wide spread of students from around the country who are being taught through BIITE. We have spoken about that this morning, and about your specific need for teachers for remote areas. What is your comment on how those resources are being used, from an effectiveness point of view, to deliver the sorts of teachers that you need here in the Northern Territory?

Mr Davies—As you would be aware, BIITE has gone through a significant change process recently. We want to see BIITE servicing those communities in a supported way and in a way that is done in partnership and negotiation with Charles Darwin University so there is not this competition for numbers. It is our view that we need to have some quite substantial discussions with BIITE around how we might support them to do that. In fact, the director of BIITE approached me late last week. They have not gone around and done a community by community consultation on BIITE's performance since about 1998. He is now back and wants to make sure that happens and he has asked if DEET could come with them for that consultation, to hear the issues that surface at each community. I said to him that we would definitely want to be there. We want to get in and support them. We certainly think that they have a really important role to play—there is no doubt about that. But we want to make sure, as we do for the accelerated literacy program, that the dollars going in are producing the outcomes we need.

Mr SAWFORD—Ken, I have a question on that last comment you made. In the sixties, we used to have very explicit and structured numeracy and literacy programs. They may not have been the be-all and end-all in the world, but they worked. Isn't it amazing that here we are in 2005 rediscovering explicit and structured programs in literacy and numeracy and that they are being introduced on a small basis when they should be holus-bolus? Teaching literacy and numeracy is not rocket science, yet in the last 25 years you might have thought that it was. Why has that occurred?

Mr Davies—Let me comment on the current issue.

Mr SAWFORD—I ask because it has a huge impact on teacher education up here.

Mr Davies—I want to put this in context. We have the National Accelerated Literacy Program. We have the WA Aboriginal independent schools involved and Shalom College from Queensland. We are networking with South Australia on their provision into the Pit lands. We have this really important partnership with CDU around doing the research and the evidence base to it, as well as providing the intellectual grunt behind it. I think the evidence base around the use of particular methodologies has always been a bit anecdotal. Parents and teachers will talk to you about what is working. The whole notion of using evidence as a base to determine what you are actually going to do and what you are going to commit your resources to is a new phenomena for education. It is clearly something that the health sector does a whole lot better and has a strong history of doing.

We are just getting to the point now where we are asking hard questions, but even the simplest approach is complex when you start to have a look at the way individual students react and work within that approach. I would not want to oversimplify the teaching of literacy and numeracy. I think it is a very complex issue, but there is no doubt that a very disciplined and consistent approach applied across a school is much better than trying to aggregate a piecemeal grab bag of a whole lot of different methodologies into a program that leads to a good outcome. Consistency is the key, with strong leadership and strong support for teaching staff.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today.

Mr Davies—Picking up on some of the issues with the initial submission, will you allow us to go back through that submission, given the discussion we have had today, and to resubmit it with some finetuning?

CHAIR—Please do. We welcome that.

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

That, the supplementary submission from the Northern Territory government, together with attachments not previously published be accepted as evidence and authorised for publication.

[10.11 am]

BAT, Ms Melodie Merle, Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory

GRIFFITHS, Dr William Robert, Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory

PARRY, Dr Suzanne, Director, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory

SAREV, Mr John, Board Member, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these are public hearings, recorded in the *Hansard*. The record will be made available to the public through the parliament's web site. 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 contempt of the parliament. Are there any corrections or amendments you would like to make to your submission?

Dr Parry—No, we did not make a submission independently. We participated in the DEET submission.

CHAIR—I am sorry. Would you like to make some opening remarks?

Dr Parry—I will just outline where the Teacher Registration Board is currently. It is a new organisation. The act was approved in September last year and the board was assembled for the first time in October 2004. Prior to that, the Northern Territory had no teacher registration capacity. The board has been charged through legislation with registering all teachers who are teaching in the Northern Territory, with writing professional standards for teaching in the Northern Territory, with providing a code of ethics for teachers and with working with the two institutions, BIITE and CDU, on preservice teacher education. It also has the functions of inquiring into registered teachers if there is misconduct and responding to complaints against registered teachers.

In the time that we have been in operation we have registered 4,000 teachers and we are just now coming up to our first phase of renewals of teacher registration. Our applications are ongoing and, because it is a volatile employment scene, with a section of the teaching population moving in and out fairly rapidly, the applications for registration continue to be steady throughout the year. That is really all I need to say to give you a sense of the registration board's current work.

CHAIR—I will ask a question which I asked of the Northern Territory government. We have a situation where there is a relatively high intake with a very high attrition rate, leading to very few Indigenous teachers in particular actually graduating at the end of that process. What are the thoughts of the board on perhaps having tighter targeting of potential graduates at the recruitment or assessment stage—at the front end—and far greater support, both financial and

educational, through the time of the degree, aiming to get a higher output at the other end with the same number of resources? What are your thoughts on retailing the approach, if you like?

Dr Parry—One of the members of the board may wish to respond to that. Perhaps I can respond initially. I think any of those programs that will enable a greater number of Indigenous teachers to come through as registered teachers would be supported. The ways in which that might happen would vary from CDU and BIITE. While the registration board might support those sorts of things, initially because people come to us when they have completed their qualifications, the extent to which the board might be able to influence that sort of progress may be limited. We have now received a number of applications from employers not for registration but for an authority to employ Indigenous people with qualifications that do not meet the requirements for registration so that they can be employed where an employer is willing to offer a high level of support and mentoring. Certainly the board has responded positively to providing the ways for those people. Often it is people with BIITE qualifications who have not taught for some years whose qualifications do not now meet the requirements for registration but the board has responded positively by granting authorisation for those people to be employed under a particular set of support areas. They are mentored back into the profession and, if that goes well, their employers upgrade their qualifications.

CHAIR—What do you see with regard to that small number of Indigenous graduates coming through? Does the board have any views on ways that we could better target training or the ways in which teacher training courses could be modified to increase the number of Indigenous graduates, given the needs of the Northern Territory?

Mr Griffiths—We do not have a view as a board.

CHAIR—Perhaps individually?

Mr Griffiths—In our experience as practitioners, you would have to differentiate between where Indigenous people came from. There is a certain approach that works in remote communities, as some of the previous evidence was saying, as opposed to what might be appropriate in settled areas, the bigger towns of the Territory. After some years in the Territory in education, my observation is that skilled and able Indigenous people have many more attractive employment opportunities than teaching. Talented Indigenous people with good school leaver outcomes are not necessarily attracted to classroom teaching. Again I see that not necessarily as an Indigenous problem; it might be a general problem in the community with regard to the recruitment of men into the profession and the recruitment of able people generally. With regard to Indigenous people from remote communities, the job itself may no longer be as attractive as it might have been, just in terms of the sheer difficulty of the teaching work. In my experience, Indigenous people who choose to work in their own communities often find, because of the inherent leadership responsibilities that flow from that, that they have great difficulty balancing their professional responsibility and the additional pressure they are under as they take leadership positions that are not necessarily widely supported. An example you could look at is the attendance debate. So it is very complex.

In previous eras, Indigenous people—say through Batchelor—may have enrolled in teacher education because there was a limited range of courses available at Batchelor. There is now a much wider range of courses. That is to be applauded, I would say. But at the heart of it my

personal view would be that the recruitment of the teaching profession is essentially not our business, as Suzanne says. There is a difficulty that we face across the community generally, of which Indigenous recruitment is a precise and clearly articulated example.

Mr BARTLETT—Dr Parry, you spoke about the role of authorising the employment of non-registered teachers. Does that apply also to non-government schools? Are their employment processes required to be authorised by the department or the registration board or does that apply only to public school teachers?

Dr Parry—No. The registration board is charged with ensuring good quality teachers in all sectors. Any employment of a teacher, either through registration or through the granting of an authorisation to an employer, is through all sectors.

Mr BARTLETT—Does that apply, for instance, to a church based school in a remote area?

Dr Parry—It does indeed, yes.

Mr BARTLETT—In your submission you stated that one of your roles is supporting the development of appropriate teacher education courses. Could you elaborate for us on how you do that? First of all, is it your view that courses are of an adequately high standard in the Territory anyway, through CDU and Batchelor? How do you support the development of those courses?

Dr Parry—Certainly the courses at CDU are of a very high quality. A lot of work goes on with various members of the staff at CDU to ensure that there is comparability of both standards and the content of courses nationally. So they are well aligned nationally and have in some cases been at the forefront of introducing practicum practices, for instance, that have led nationally. The courses are particularly well suited to the white student population. There are a number of Indigenous students at CDU. It is always a little difficult to retain them at the same rate as other students, but CDU have a program in place to work with Indigenous students, to work towards a higher retention rate. For instance, at the beginning of last year they had four Indigenous lecturers in the course, all of whom worked very specifically and in targeted ways with the Indigenous teacher education students there, with the aim of increasing retention.

From the paperwork that is being submitted by BIITE to the registration board for registration—which is probably the most telling basis on which I can speak, given that I have not worked with the Indigenous students at BITTE—the approach that BIITE is taking is a very progressive lead, with steps through a program. For instance, students do not initially enrol in a four-year degree with the end goal a long way in the distance. It is broken down into the advanced diploma and so on so that there are steps that can be achieved along the way. Certainly, as far as the registration board is concerned, the way in which it has operated so far has meant that it is able to respond to that to provide employment opportunities through authorisation for those graduates.

CHAIR—In its assessment of the courses that it would be approving, does the registration board take into account the very specific educational needs of many of the remote schools in the Northern Territory and the environment in which it operates?

Dr Parry—It will be doing so. We have not so far because the registration board is very new. CDU were the first to notify us that they were introducing new courses, and the registration board will be taking a very close look at those courses, keeping the needs of the student population, particularly the Indigenous students, in mind. Also, it will now be able to use the professional standards that are currently in draft form, which have been written with a view to meeting the needs of all the learners in the Territory, including Indigenous learners. So it will be matching the programs that are being put up for review to the professional teaching standards.

CHAIR—What sorts of things will you be looking for in those courses, in taking into account the Northern Territory's specific needs?

Dr Parry—In terms of the Indigenous population, in the professional standards we have clear guidelines for teachers to meet the needs of Indigenous students by being knowledgeable about, recognising and incorporating Indigenous culture within their learning programs. There is an emphasis on ESL to meet their literacy needs—recognising that, for Indigenous students, English is frequently their second, third or fourth language. We are looking at the capacity of graduates to work successfully with Indigenous students.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a question about where a teacher registration board puts its emphasis. If you look at an education department, it fluctuates between trying to manage a department and actually educating the people who are in the department. That has happened over the last 30 or 40 years. We have only been on this inquiry for a very short time—we have been to Victoria, Queensland and now the Northern Territory. We will do all the other states and then we will go through a review process and go back and pick out which people we need to see again. We have to look at where we go.

We are finding that tertiary institutions are having an argument among themselves about the balance between scholarship and research. They are having a debate about what you should do about entry of people into teacher education, and what you should do at the other end in terms of professional development and accreditation. We have heard arguments this morning about the movement from the implicit teaching of the last 25 years to more explicit teaching.

I notice that the representation on a teacher registration board is fairly wide—there are no businesspeople there, but from an educational point of view it is pretty wide. The teacher registration board administers teacher education. You are a new group; you can do what you like. You do not have the handbrakes that some of the other registration boards have. Do you operate as a representative group or do you have a leadership role to play? In particular, do you have a leadership role to play in teacher education—or is that out of your core business?

Mr Griffiths—We would be backing, wouldn't we, the standards based agenda? It comes out of other registration boards. Our legislation says we have to take an active interest in the standards of the teaching profession. We would assume that to apply to preservice courses and the preparation of teachers generally, prior to and during service.

It will take us a while to get up to speed on those sorts of issues, but I think we would be moving towards endorsing a standards based approach where we would be looking to develop standards in key areas: professional discipline and knowledge areas, literacy, numeracy, how to engage learners, how to create challenging learning environments for kids, professional and

ethical practice, and ongoing professional learning. They are some of the ones that come up pretty regularly in discussion. We have not discussed this as a policy, but my feeling is that there is a developing national agenda that might develop these standards. So watch what happens with NIQTSL and the other organisations that are around. Our legislation requires us to make sense of that in a local setting—that would be my view—and we are working towards that. So we are talking about a standards based approach to the teaching profession and how people get in, how they are supported and how their work is evaluated.

Mr SAWFORD—How do you do that?

Mr Griffiths—Various state governments have had a go at it over the last 20 years. Victoria has had a reasonable go at it. The Queensland registration board has a standards based approach in dealing with tertiary institutions in Queensland. I think there are some interesting straws in the wind. Personally, I find it really interesting to be here again. How many inquiries into teacher education have we had in the last 20 years? You are asking much the same questions, I have to tell you.

Mr SAWFORD—I will answer your question in a moment.

Mr Griffiths—There are issues about whether there is one philosophy in teacher training, and teacher training worries me as well—but these are your terms of reference and I am not sure where you are coming from either. My view would be that in the Northern Territory, as a small jurisdiction, we have to trim ourselves somewhat. I think we would be looking to back the national standards agenda, because there needs to be a debate about a national curriculum and a national assessment approach for year 12 students and their certification. Without saying yes to those as they appear now, there has to be some sense of a national perspective about standards which we then have to interpret in terms of our act and the work we have to do here. I am sorry if that does not sound specific enough, but I think there are some developing standards around. My own view is that there is a complexity and variety of philosophies in the preparation of teachers, preservice and in-service, that we have to be able to articulate more carefully as we go along.

Mr SAWFORD—What sort of formal or informal contact do you have with Charles Darwin University and BIITE?

Mr Griffiths—I do not know—me personally or the board—

Mr SAWFORD—They are all informal?

Dr Parry—Yes, mostly. The board works through me as director. I have both formal and informal very regular contact with Charles Darwin University and we are developing our relationship more with BIITE. For instance, over the last three weeks I have been out to both institutions to talk through our draft professional standards with both staff and students, so they are aware of that. They are also aware, with the upcoming course reviews, that the board will be looking at the matching of course content and philosophy with the outcomes.

The legislation is a little imprecise—I guess that is the word. At one point the board is charged with providing advice and liaising on teacher education courses and in another section of the act

it approves registration of teachers from approved courses. Implicit in that is that the board has the power to approve or not approve a teacher education course as being suitable for registration. That has been communicated to BIITE and to CDU. It is a very new field for everyone. For the last 30 years, CDU in its various forms has been able to put its head together as a collective faculty of education and write its courses, and that is it; it has not had external scrutiny at all. To have external scrutiny by the registration board, and with the registration board also having an eye to the national agenda, will be quite a different situation for them. We hope to negotiate a very strong and workable partnership over the next 12 months as the first round of course reviews comes up.

Mr SAWFORD—Is a real partnership possible between a registration board and an education faculty, or is there some part of your core business that needs to see you kept a bit separate? If that is the case, how do you deal with that?

Dr Parry—I think a partnership is absolutely essential because of the resources that go into writing a course. If, for instance, it were not a partnership and it were based simply on a regulatory function of the board—such that a course was presented to it and the board looked at it and said yay or nay—it would be a great waste of the resources available to people in the Territory. So a partnership that works, right from the initial drafting stage of a course, is really essential.

Mr SAWFORD—What about a partnership with the employing authority—with the department itself? Do you have any comment on that?

Dr Parry—I think it is absolutely essential. The practicums are absolutely essential to the success of the graduates in respect of meeting professional standards, completing their courses and being assessed. It is one thing to have a course written to meet standards—and everybody has agreed that that is happening—but the real crunch comes when somebody signs off a graduate as having met those standards. I think that is much more difficult than putting the courses together. If there is not a partnership between employers and the providing institutions to enable preservice teachers to have the capacity as well as the sites at which those professional standards can be developed and assessed—because the only place in which many of them can be assessed is in the classroom with kids—then a three-way partnership is absolutely essential. I think it is one of the most difficult things because resources are needed to really make a partnership work.

The paper that has been prepared by NIQTSL on the practicum is very good as a guideline. However, although it includes all of the checks and balances and the goals that are essential, it does not deal with how partnerships can be negotiated. Partnerships really require resources. I know that, in the teacher education area of CDU, those resources are stretched to the absolute limit. So, working in a partnership—particularly, now, a three-way partnership—is going to stretch them considerably.

Mr SAWFORD—Going back to my first question on reconciling leadership with representation, do you find that, when you as a registration board try to exercise some leadership in an educational field, people say to you, ‘You’re a representative body; get back in your box’? Do you get that sort of criticism? Are people more wary when you play a leadership role, as has happened with other registration boards around the country?

Dr Parry—We have not faced that challenge in that way yet, but we had a very recent media campaign on the authorisation to employ—where the union was concerned about the way in which they were being handled. I do see that as a leadership issue, because they are very often being used in ways that nurture people into the teaching profession, although not exclusively. There are a number of ways in which the authority to employ are used. One of the roles that the board has been using is a nurturing role so that we are mentoring people back into the profession. That might have been seen as a leadership issue. It went straight to the press; it did not come as a criticism back to the board itself.

CHAIR—I might ask a question on professional learning, if I may. We have a situation where there is a significant number of teachers in one- and two-teacher schools, where they are not going to get the interface with other professionals that they might get in a larger urban centre. In your view, is that situation going to affect the degree of professional learning that will be needed by teachers in those remote schools as compared to, perhaps, practitioners in larger areas?

Dr Parry—I think so much of our professional learning occurs through dialogue with our colleagues. A lot of coincidental learning occurs in that way. In a larger school you have the capacity for that, so it is much less frequent that people become isolated and locked into a particular way of thinking and not being exposed, not so much to the research—I think teachers tend not to be exposed to the research—but to the practical applications of research. I think that, in a larger school, even at a brief staff meeting, that can happen. It is much less likely to happen in a remote school and a small school. So, yes, I do think that it will have an impact. I think that it does have an impact.

Mr Sarev—I think professional learning is a challenge that all registration authorities face, as do, especially, departments of education. I am the President of the Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations. One of the problems that our members convey to us is the lack of inservice professional development. As resources are shuffled and moved around within departments to meet strategic priorities, professional learning for teachers in service seems to be overlooked. One of the common trends at the moment is that there is a dearth of professional development. We just cannot access it, for a number of reasons. It might be that you do not have enough relief teachers to go around. Principals are now not letting their teachers leave the school, because it costs $300 to get a relief teacher to come in and that comes out of your school based budget, and so on.

Teachers are really crying for a lot more professional development, especially teachers in remote parts of the Northern Territory. When you have teachers in one- or two-teacher schools, you really cannot get them out, because you have to fly in a relief teacher from Darwin or the nearest town. That causes a whole number of issues. Professional learning is a huge problem at the moment. It really does need to be addressed. If we want to look at how we can improve literacy and numeracy and how we deal with ICT in schools, then I think we need to keep in mind that there is professional learning that can do that, but it needs to be scaffolded and structured in such a way that you get your money's worth.

With teachers coming out of universities, how long will that knowledge be there? How long is it fresh? How long is it the latest and greatest before there are new trends in education? Once you are in the classroom at the chalkface, what is the use-by date you put on the knowledge that you have before you have to engage in new professional development to maintain your

knowledge? There might be a new way of teaching something, a new way of doing that, but we do not have the time or the money to get out and do those things. I think some consideration needs to be given to the mechanisms by which government departments could do that.

CHAIR—Quite obviously, the practicalities you allude to there—with the business of flying in another teacher—make it virtually prohibitive in many cases. Do you think an IT-based focus on trying to get at least some of the work achieved in situ would be the way to go?

Mr Sarev—I guess it comes down to looking at what you benefit most from. Is it face-to-face networking with colleagues or interactive distant learning via the internet? I guess you need to think of the context in which you would do that. If you are trying to promote your profession and you are trying to promote networking and a sense of doing things together then face to face is certainly worth while, but there may be a time for that IDL—interactive distant learning—stuff, which can break those tyrannies of distance. I guess it is how you respond to it at the time—and, of course, the nature of the professional learning that needs to be undertaken.

Ms Bat—The small schools in the Northern Territory are in fact grouped into group schools which have a supervisory principal or a group school principal. The small schools consider these issues constantly—how to upskill, how to maintain currency and how to support each other. Some of the mechanisms they have tried are conference based programs at the beginning or end of a term, where the communities make an agreement to close the school for one or two days, to allow the whole staff to travel to a central location to undertake professional development. So there have been some very successful programs in place for this.

In the ICT within the government schools and the non-government schools, we are now seeing that connectedness and that support network being extended through those IT systems. So there is this quite exciting development occurring. In the old days remote teachers would get on the radio with each other and you would have to wait, say, 'Over,' and then wait again. That was often your lifeline. Then we got telephones and bush teachers who were not local teachers—they were recruited teachers—would be on the telephone to mum in Melbourne to get their support at the end of the day. Now we are finding that the connection between teachers is perhaps coming back through these computer systems and the Janison platform that the department is using. So there are some developing mechanisms there. Territory teachers are fairly proactive in creating that network.

Mr SAWFORD—But John has a point, hasn't he, in the sense that, if your basic fundamental philosophy is education's impact, mind on mind, which I think John was saying, then doing the other communications, which are via a screen, is fundamentally at odds with the way in which you teach and what you believe is fundamental education, so that becomes a difficulty doesn't it?

Ms Bat—Absolutely. Because it is a big decision for a community to say, 'Yes, the teachers can have Thursday and Friday to go to a conference and we will close the school,' but it is not reliant then solely on those professional development days. The connections are continued. I have seen some professional learning occurring between group schools via the internet—not necessarily formal training.

Mr Sarev—Can I just come back to the question you asked Suzanne about partnerships with the TRB and the education faculty at CDU? I think it goes further afield at CDU. This is my view, as president of joint council. I think it becomes a problem when you have a university that does not offer programs like English or philosophy—subject specific disciplines, if you like. I am an English teacher. I have a content base. I am a graduate of the former Northern Territory University, from a time when it had an English faculty. Having pre-service teachers, I am finding that when you have an institution that does not have, say, an English faculty, they are coming through with a significant loss of content knowledge. It is not there, essentially, and then it becomes my responsibility to teach a bit of the content.

So I think those partnerships go further afield, in that we need to be looking at, or perhaps just be aware of, what is happening at the institution. Is the institution providing the articulation for students to come through into teacher education programs? We are small by comparison to southern universities, where there might be subject-specific departments, such as philosophy, English and so on, but the problem we face is that we have a lot of people coming to Charles Darwin University from interstate to do these programs. If we do not have a university that is offering home-grown courses for young people who want to be English teachers, science teachers, maths teachers and so on, then we need to consider that because I think it is within the purview of preservice education. So it is the partnership with the education faculty but also the partnerships that exist and how they articulate into that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a very valid point. They have a teacher education course in a university with no English and maybe no philosophy. What faculties do they have?

Mr Sarev—I know they have science, business, history and anthropology. I think Suzanne would be in a better position to answer that.

Mr SAWFORD—What about mathematics?

Dr Parry—Yes, they have maths. There are double degrees, where students can do their majors in maths and in their science degrees they can have their majors in maths.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the questions that we are grappling with as a committee is: is it appropriate that every tertiary institution in this country have an education faculty? I am beginning to come to the conclusion that that is a highly wrong thing, because many universities are using the education faculty as a cash cow to subsidise other areas. In some universities the education faculty is highly valued; in others that is highly debatable.

Mr Sarev—From my point of view, an education faculty serves many different functions for your preservice education needs but also for teachers who have been in the field for a number of years and feel the need to go back and do some more professional learning. I know with some of the work I do with CDU in an informal way that there is a lot of that beginning to happen because they have identified a need in response to that deficiency. While it might sound like just plugging the gap now, I think they are building bridges to allow more teachers to access that professional development while in class and use it in their own teaching. There is a role for an education faculty to play in any university, because I think as we find mature age students opting to become teachers, and therefore go into an education faculty, they bring this other-worldly stuff from what they have been doing into that and contribute in that way. So there is a role for an

education faculty to play within a university in terms of preservice education but also in terms of giving something back to in-service teachers. Perhaps we need to look at how that could be done and continued.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we require further information. The secretariat will send you a proof copy of your evidence, and a transcript will be posted on our web site.

Proceedings suspended from 10.53 am to 11.33 am

DEVLIN, Dr Brian Clive, President, Australian College of Educators (NT)

GRENFELL, Dr Wilfred Michael, Executive Member, Australian College of Educators (NT)

HARVEY, Ms Marcia Lee, Executive Member, Australian College of Educators (NT)

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives from the Australian College of Educators. I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard, and a record is made available to the public through the parliament's web site.

Dr Grenfell—We were hoping that our president would be here, but I will introduce our comments.

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and warrants the same respect as proceedings of the House. 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?

Ms Harvey—No.

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

Dr Grenfell—As you can see, this is a fairly lengthy report of a focus group that the ACE held. I think it is fair to say that there was limited actual consensus from that focus group because of the nature of the representation. It had very wide representation and it was a very full discussion. It would be wrong, I think, to point to any overall consensus—except, of course, that we share the concerns of the general public and your committee about the current state of teacher education.

We have looked at a wide range of issues here. I am not sure which ones of those you would like to pick up on and follow through with us. I would like to emphasise what I see as one of the crucial aspects of this discussion and that is the relationship between the universities, teacher education bodies, state governments and district and regional institutions. One of the things that needs attention is the level of collaboration or collegiality between the universities and employing authorities. I see that as a gap between the agenda of the universities, the agenda of academics in teacher education institutions and the agenda of departmental staffers themselves. I am not saying that we pull in different directions or that we are unnecessarily competitive, but the level of collaboration needs to be heightened. There needs to be more of a culture of collegiality, a culture of collaboration.

Historically, the then Northern Territory University was one of the first to institute what is now called site based or school based teacher education. I carried out an investigation into that. It was an evaluation of a report that Victoria University carried out into site based teacher education. That enabled me to visit a number of site based centres. By site based or school

based, we are talking about work experience, workplace practice, on-the-job training and the need to revisit and re-examine some restrictive workplace practices within the schools and teacher education generally. We got very good support at that time from far-sighted individuals within the department to launch a school based program, but the effects of that program were limited because of a cutback in resources and an increase in the work of teachers and university staff. I will not say that the program fell apart, but it did not maintain the impetus that the original program did. We do need to look at ways in which the department of education and the universities can get together.

We have made a little progress with that over the last two years by taking into the university, with the assistance of the department, practising teachers with an excellent record of quality teaching to work within the university. The effects have been quite remarkable. We need to move more towards shared fractional appointments between the department and ourselves, and joint coordinators or co-coordinators of projects such as the PICTL project, which is a professional development initiative instituted by DEST for the introduction of ICT within and across schools. I just recently convened a meeting of the steering group in the Northern Territory on that. I think that kind of continuous interchange, consultation and academic input on both sides bodes well for the future. That kind of project is the type of project that I would offer as an exemplar. It has only just started; it has not been evaluated yet, but it is certainly full of promise.

There are many other issues in here. Everything I have talked about relates to this idea of ‘teacher ready’. You can see that we find ‘teacher ready’ a difficult concept to deal with. It is true that with the intensification of teachers’ work, many teachers, including lead teachers and master teachers, find it difficult to get as involved as they would like in the co-preparation of novice and preservice teachers.

We have a wonderful group within the Territory and we currently have our students out on prac, but we still find that some teachers expect them to be teacher ready when they come through the door. In some situations they do not have the time to give to the students, particularly in the smaller schools and rural schools where a student might end up as a novice teacher and there is nobody they can turn to for assistance. This is problematic. You might ask: ‘Why are they going out there? What’s the policy? Should this be allowed?’ It is certainly problematic. That does happen from time to time and it can be a very discouraging experience for somebody who is still discovering their identity, is comparatively young and so forth.

CHAIR—You referred to workplace practices at the schools. Do you want to expand on that?

Dr Grenfell—Yes. I am talking about the kind of professional growth and development that teachers are exposed to or are able to obtain. If we look at a school as an ongoing community of practice, it has established routines, procedures and practices to which young novice teachers are initiated. One of the problems is that some of those practices may be 10 or 15 years old. We have just talked about ICT, and that would be a good example. This leads to another gap between what the uni does and what the schools are ready for. I do not want to make too much of that—Marcia might have a comment—but it is certainly a problem that some of the practices that might be adopted, in our view, do not suit the kinds of social futures that our young people are going to experience. None of us here can predict those, not with any degree of accuracy, but we do need to consider what kind of social future we want for our young people within Australia.

CHAIR—On page 3 of your submission you mention:

Some graduates from Teacher Education courses have been considered practically illiterate or lacking in numeracy.

We went out to the Batchelor campus yesterday and they are having a great deal of difficulty in getting enough Indigenous teachers through the system as it currently is. What is your view on where the high bar should be set? It might only make it more difficult for Indigenous students in particular to get through the system. What are your thoughts on the high bar versus standards?

Ms Harvey—Generally speaking, from the point of view of having Indigenous people in schools as teachers, that is an ongoing issue. It is difficult to get them into training and to get them to stay to the end of the training. In my current role I work in distance education. We support the remote community schools in the Northern Territory with the delivery of secondary education programs. One of the biggest hurdles we face is teacher readiness, if you like, for those situations and the fact that there are people on the ground in the communities who have skills and abilities but who do not necessarily have a formally recognised teacher qualification. They are very useful in those environments, but getting them to go and achieve the qualifications they need to officially be able to teach in a school is a difficult thing. The issue of maintaining that continuity in communities in relation to giving education to students out there runs alongside of that. Those community people are often the constant in the community, where the trained teacher who comes in who is not necessarily Indigenous moves on at quite a rapid rate.

CHAIR—Given your statement about that, do you see that we should be toughening the standards and perhaps having even fewer graduates through?

Ms Harvey—No. I would like to find a medium where we could encourage more Indigenous people to become teachers, but I just do not know, given the cultural differences, that you are ever going to succeed in getting the numbers that would be useful. They are few and far between, as you say. How that gap is bridged is something that we all grapple with.

CHAIR—I have put forward a suggestion to a number of witnesses this morning to have a much tighter talent identification regime, if you like—a much harder entry regime—but with those lower numbers going in at the start providing far more support, both financial and educational, to those people who are in the pipeline, with hopefully a greater output at the end. What are your thoughts on that?

Ms Harvey—I would agree with what you have just said. The other thing that needs to be recognised is that, although those people can often do part of their training perhaps in their local environment, they are still required to relocate for part of their studies. That, for Indigenous people, is often something that is a barrier to them completing their courses. So the support that you allude to is crucial to increases in that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—How much awareness do you have of the work being done by the Batchelor institute, locally known as BIITE, in terms of the numbers of students who are a part of the teacher qualification program and the very low numbers of students who do graduate? I know this is reflective of a bigger problem in the Northern Territory, with even Charles Darwin University graduating less than 40 per cent of commencing students. So, firstly,

are you aware of the even lower numbers there and even greater level of attrition? What is your thinking on what might be behind those numbers?

Dr Grenfell—This is an incredibly intractable problem. I was brought down to the Territory from Papua New Guinea on a secretarial appointment in 1986 to go to Batchelor, and I spent my first year there. From the point of view of my cultural understanding and my intercultural learning, it was the most wonderful experience I think I have ever had. But what you are saying is quite right, because we are applying a set of standards from our Western epistemology, our way of doing things. I think that is right. If you talk to Indigenous people when you go onto communities and do visits, that is what they want. They do want quality people and they do not want to be soft-soaped or fobbed off. So that is a good thing, I think. But one of the major problems, as you will know from Northern Territory DEET Minister Syd Stirling’s recent speech in the house, is attendance. That is related to very, very complex cultural issues, but it would seem to me that this is one of the areas which, in an intercultural situation, we need to explore with other communities. Most communities have cultural rules and regulations which can provide for variations under certain circumstances. I think we have got to work on that issue of attendance.

It will be very interesting to see how contracts with communities to improve attendance work out. Certainly, in principle, I am not against that kind of approach; I do not see it as coercive or bludgeoning. I think it is a sensible approach to experiment with. I go into that because the history of Indigenous education in this country has caught up with us, and we have to get back to that level to look at it through a whole-of-systems approach.

On occasions over the years, we have integrated quite closely with Batchelor. Often some of our social education and cultural justice stuff has been taught in conjunction with Batchelor. But it has not been sustained, nor has it been sustainable. There are timetable and bus issues—all kinds of things. But, with renewed effort, vigour and attention, those issues could be overcome, and I do not think we have done enough to overcome them.

There is always a bit of a tension with that level of collaboration where we present joint classes. Students at Batchelor often feel that the university gets the most out of the deal and that they do not get very much at all out of it. It needs looking at also that from that perspective. It needs to be recrafted or reworked, if you like. There is certainly considerable opportunity for that. I suspect that I have not answered your question very precisely.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Witnesses this morning have suggested that it might be smart of the Batchelor institute to refocus its efforts on helping Indigenous people get into a pathway—going from the very local level not only into the institute but also into a stream with a future opportunity perhaps to get a qualification either through or in cooperation with another institution, for example, with Charles Darwin University. Do you think there might be something worth considering in that suggestion, given that last year, for example, there were only three graduates from Batchelor—

Dr Grenfell—I did not know that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—in teacher education?

Dr Grenfell—Yes, I do. We ought to be experimenting and listening to Indigenous people in order to find out the ways they think it will work. I am thinking of an initiative such as a local school—we used to call them boarding schools—that is central to a cluster; it would be nothing like the current schools we have. You would have seen my appendix on transformative education and that is where I am coming from on this one. It could well incorporate principles of the middle schooling movement, which we are contemplating in the Territory as a result of *Future Directions*. Some of those principles I think can be embraced.

Mr HENRY—Mike and Marcia, you have both touched on the issue of cultural differences. There is the suggestion that cultural differences lead to a significant attrition rate in Indigenous students. Can you expand on what those cultural differences are and how they might be addressed?

Dr Grenfell—I would start by looking at the difference between education and schooling. Many Indigenous communities have their own approaches—whether they are formal, informal or whatever—to the education of their people, inculcating them with the values, traditions and beliefs that are part of the social group. I think that is one of the things that sustain those communities and we need to develop that. That is an important distinction to make. However, as I said earlier, a number of Indigenous people within the Territory are already part of what we might call the mainstream and others are aspiring to enter the mainstream. That is a legitimate choice and it is a right, so we need to move into what I call intercultural education.

This is a personal view; it is not an ACE view at all. I think the approaches of the days of so-called multicultural education and the ways of teaching in the associated cross-cultural workshops—incidentally, as part of the university's policy, I have just gone through a one-day session myself—are very limited. We have to look at the ways in which cultures work on each other: how they come together, including those unforeseen, the ways that Indigenous language affect English being spoken and articulated in the Northern Territory and the ways in which it becomes invasive of the creative and expressive arts—all those kinds of things. I would rather be looking at it from a much more supportive and intercultural point of view.

Years ago, we used to talk about biculturality—preparing people who were both Indigenous top-end Aboriginal people and Australians. A lot of interesting work was done in that area. There are times when an explicit and direct focus on, for example, metacognitive or learning needs has to be addressed with people from other cultures who wish to become more fully conversant with what is happening in the mainstream.

Mr HENRY—More specifically, what are those cultural differences? How are Indigenous groups in remote areas living with different approaches and different attitudes? That is what I am interested in—as well as what you have said, of course.

Dr Grenfell—It is being done in the use of time, space and agriculture—I think practically in every area. It is being done even with the circulation of money. For example, in going to a community, we tend to see on its perimeters people engaging in gambling, playing cards. But that can be interpreted as one way of circulating money within the community—whether or not it is the best way is a different ball game. CDEP is faced with all those kinds of problems. So I think there is that. There are cultural beliefs. What is 'business' to you and me in a corporate

setting becomes a different terminology for local people attending to cultural business. In each of those areas, there is a very widespread cultural difference.

Mr HENRY—Is there scope to mould our programs into their culture?

Ms Harvey—I think there is but a different approach, as you say, has been touted as needing to be taken. From a school point of view—not from the point of view of training people to become teachers—certainly in the delivery of programs that I have been involved with in my work setting, we have had to significantly change our thinking and expectations about the time it will take after enrolment for a student to complete their course, purely because of what might happen at the community level. For example, they may have to undergo initiation and be away from the community or school setting for a number of weeks, if not months. We have to make it possible for that student to rejoin the school setting and still be successful. That is one example of those cultural things that kids are taken out of school for and we have to adapt to suit them. Obviously, the time frame for such things to happen will be longer than normally anticipated.

Mr HENRY—So, with teacher training, can we make provisions for that in terms of the flexibility of the delivery of programs and things of that sort?

Ms Harvey—I would hope so. Batchelor would probably argue that they are very flexible, and I am sure they are—but, at the grassroots, I do not know. I cannot comment.

Mr HENRY—I think you also made a comment about taking them out of their communities, which you need to do for part of the program.

Ms Harvey—You do, yes. I think, for students who have perhaps gone from school settings and communities into universities to pursue pathways, probably one of the biggest issues they face is that they have this wonderful opportunity but they do not know how to assimilate, because it is a big change.

Mr HENRY—Yesterday, we were out at Batchelor and we observed a couple of young women who were obviously very shy and, I would say, probably came from a remote community. It is difficult, obviously, and it is a huge challenge for those people to integrate into an environment that is away from their community.

Ms Harvey—Absolutely.

Mr HENRY—Are there strategies to help with that?

Ms Harvey—I think that the university has programs that assist Indigenous students. Don't you have a program?

Dr Grenfell—Yes, we do, but as to whether the objectives are the same I am not too sure. We certainly have a compulsory introductory unit of Indigenous culture and Aboriginal society: CAS100. As for explicit, direct, Indigenous education courses, most of our units—for instance, our language, learning and literacy units and the new ones that have just replaced them; I am sorry, I do not have the title in my head—would deal with educational pedagogic issues with regard to Indigenous people teaching ESL and the provision of bilingual education.

Mr HENRY—I wonder if, for some of those more remote communities and particularly entry-level education, our systems are far too prescriptive in terms of accreditation and things like that. Would you care to comment on that?

Dr Grenfell—You can see the different views on that from the brief report on the focus group, because all kinds of other considerations impinge on it. Could you repeat the question?

Mr HENRY—Basically, I said that I think that the process of accreditation for teaching is too prescriptive to suit some of our Indigenous groups and communities, particularly at the entry level.

Ms Harvey—In the end, the goal is for the student to go through, get the appropriate training and want to go back and work in their communities. So, back to the support again, the support mechanisms involved, including what you just spoke of, are crucial to the success of that. How long they last outside their community will depend on those support mechanisms, I guess. I do not believe we have that sort of program. It is at their level. They go back into the community, knowing that the links are there.

Mr HENRY—Do we need to do more on that?

Ms Harvey—I think so. For us, as non-Indigenous people going into those communities and trying to support them just at the school level, one of the biggest frustrations is the continuity of staff in the schools. The same teacher's assistant or Joe Blow who comes in every week and helps with that class is there year after year and could probably teach.

Mr HENRY—I note in your submission there was not a lot of response from your contributors with respect to this particular section about attracting high-quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences, to teaching. It seems that there is some resistance to thinking about how that could be more flexible. Is that a reasonable assumption?

Dr Grenfell—I am just looking at the history of DIT, NTU and CDU and I would say that the successive deans that we have had, including Brian when he was dean, have always addressed this issue very sympathetically. The dean has always got the right to admit a student under certain conditions or situations, and I think we have done that. Also, if you really get behind it all and it becomes a university-wide focus or a school focus you can get people in. We have just had four Indigenous lecturers with us. For a start, they have halved the attrition, and a couple of units they have been running have been very successful and very well attended. It is a judicious blend of that social, casual, informal, collective kind of approach with, nevertheless, a really skilled and focused outcomes approach. People like Linda Ford, who I had hoped would be able to be here, have really pioneered the way—and I think that is also important, because they give young Indigenous people the confidence that they too can succeed.

Mr HENRY—Like role models.

Dr Grenfell—Yes. They see them dealing with people like me and Marcia and Brian as equals and being assertive, putting forward their points of view and being listened to. So I think it is a question much more of focus; but accreditation, as you put it, or initial requirements do come

into it. At CDU—Brian may wish to comment on this—I think we have a good track record with supportive programs. We have a second-language centre, which has done some wonderful work from the point of view of tertiary entrance programs. The numbers have been small where we are concerned, but they have nevertheless worked exceptionally hard to retain individual, promising Indigenous candidates.

Mr BARTLETT—Your submission makes a number of recommendations, as does the focus group, that I think are very practical. However, I fear they will have barriers, be they financial or political, and I will mention three as examples. One is the recommendation for extra pay for the mentoring of new teachers. Mentoring is obviously an essential part of developing those skills in the early years. We have had anecdotal evidence around the place that that is taken very lightly, almost as an imposition, by some teachers in schools because of the extra workload without any reward to assist them in doing that. A second recommendation facing barriers is for scholarships and other financial assistance to attract teachers to remote areas. A third one is the proposal for extra financial incentives for maths, science and IT teachers. Again, that is one which I suspect would receive a lot of objection from teachers unions, for instance. They are all very sensible and practical recommendations, but how effective is ACE in convincing the Northern Territory government that these are to be pursued with some degree of enthusiasm or rigour?

Dr Devlin—We think there are opportunities for ACE to have an influence. In fact, that is part of the reason why Mike and I chose to appear in our capacity as members of ACE rather than as members of the university. Because ACE is an independent, ethical, research oriented, professional organisation which stands apart from the university and from government, we believe—partly because we have been able to run a number of well-publicised and well-attended forums—that we can, in a modest way, influence the debate on education in the Northern Territory. We have been associated, for example, with the setting up of the Teacher Registration Board. We have planned a forum on teacher standards. On 15 September we had a very well-attended forum on the mooted Australian Certificate of Education. It is certainly the view of many people associated with teacher education in the Northern Territory that it would be desirable for Commonwealth practicum money to find its way to the place where it can have the most benefit, namely in the teacher education schools and faculties, rather than being siphoned off at higher levels.

Mr BARTLETT—What are the chances at CDU of having that money specifically targeted and not being available as part of the general education fund?

Dr Devlin—The chances of that working within the system at CDU are very limited. The chances of naming it as a problem externally and getting some debate around it, I think, are better. I believe, as a member of ACE, that teacher education practica should be funded in a way that is analogous with nursing practica. We have said for a number of years that it would be good if the practica could be funded appropriately so that it makes it possible for teacher education students to freely go out to remote rural communities to experience life and work out there without it having to be funded from the constrained budgets of teacher education schools.

Mr BARTLETT—Do you think there is any chance at all that, within the Northern Territory, the teaching profession would consider a pay differential that better rewarded maths, science and IT teachers?

Ms Harvey—I do not think so. Maybe maths and science teachers up here would see that as being appropriate—

Mr BARTLETT—Of course they would.

Ms Harvey—but I know that, in the case of attracting teachers to remote locations, getting them to go there and having rewards for staying is an ongoing issue for the Australian Education Union NT branch. They are trying to get improved conditions for teachers who are prepared to go and work and live in those communities. I do not think you would have problems with different pay or remunerations along those lines, but I cannot comment on maths, science and technology teachers.

Dr Grenfell—This was included in what I was saying about restrictive workplace practices. I think this needs to be really opened up. Obviously, the AEUNT would have to play an important role in that.

Mr BARTLETT—Have you had any dialogue with them about that?

Dr Grenfell—Only informally. They have attended some of our meetings. The university has put in an internship program, but it does not conform to the kinds of internships that you get in the United States or in Alberta, Canada, or those sorts of places. We basically now have students in schools for 13 weeks in the internship program in their fourth year. That is a significant breakthrough for us. We feel that those people ought to be taken on by the department and paid as associate teachers. There is a grade for that. That is the way that I think we need to be negotiating.

Members of your committee will be aware of the NIQTSL paper on quality in the practicum. Most of the recommendations that we have put forward are drawn from this document, which I think is an invigorating, far-sighted and courageous document. We would support a large number of these recommendations.

Mr SAWFORD—This morning we had witnesses from the Northern Territory education department give an example of increased attendance—I think it was in Arnhem Land. They put it down to explicit, lock step, structured, quality programs. Added to that was a sense of fun and a sense of purpose to the educational program. How do you see the relationship between culture and a quality education program?

Dr Devlin—That is a hell of a complex question.

Dr Grenfell—Could you perhaps add a sentence or two?

Mr SAWFORD—I am trying not to lead you. It just seems to me that it makes so much commonsense that, if you have quality education program, it has a sense of purpose that is identifiable to the learner and that there is a sense of fun. I think they used the terms ‘lock step method’, ‘structured’ and ‘highly explicit’ for the program. Learners, whoever they are, will respond positively. That was the experience in the inquiry into boys education; it has been the experience in the last 15 or 16 years of this committee. When that has happened, I am saying that the significance of culture—I am not trying to underplay its significance—means that there is

more of a balance. It does not become the determining factor; it becomes a factor. Most international research will tell you that the quality of educational programs is the most successful determinant of failure or success and that other issues—gender, socioeconomic background, nationality and ethnicity et cetera—play a role but it is a secondary role. So I go back to my question: in your role in ACE, how do you see the relationship between culture and quality education programs that are being offered to children?

Dr Devlin—That is not a question that we have addressed as ACE. It is not something that we have talked about in any of our forums or discussion evenings. That is a question we would have to discuss and respond to individually on the basis of our own experience. I believe that what you are saying is correct. On the basis of 5½ years experience working in Arnhem Land as a teacher-linguist and as a school principal, I think what you are saying is exactly right. I do believe that well-conducted, good quality programs will draw students and hold them. I have also seen very capable non-Indigenous teachers who have immersed themselves in the community and become known and have stayed for a number of years, maintaining exceptionally high rates of attendance. So I certainly agree with what you have said.

Dr Grenfell—I think it goes back to what I was saying earlier about social futures and where you see things going—what sorts of communities you expect and what sorts of problems those communities will face in the future. The key word, which has not been mentioned in all this, is ‘pedagogy’. I have seen lock step, regimented teacher education programs in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and central Africa generally. They can, under some definition, be made to work. But whether they are going to equip people with the life skills that they need to face what is increasingly a risk society—I am sorry about the jargon, but I think we have to face it—to act innovatively, creatively and to communicate effectively is another question.

Mr SAWFORD—To be fair to the Northern Territory department, I had no impression that they were talking about regimented. They were talking about structured, and you have just given the structure: innovation, communication, relationships—the whole range. That is a structure. I do not think the department, to be fair, were saying anything about regimentation. I thought they were talking about innovative, structured programs. That is the way I took it. I did not take it as regimentation. I take your comments about regimentation, but I do not think they were talking about that at all.

Dr Grenfell—Currently, we have a very interesting program going on in the Territory. No doubt other members of the community appearing before this committee will talk about that, and that has accelerated literacy skills.

Mr SAWFORD—That is what they were talking about.

Dr Grenfell—There is a perception among some critics of that program that it is overregimented in the sense that it works while the people who are implementing it—who conceived it—are working alongside the tutors and the people involved. Having said that, I personally know very little about that program, except for what our students bring back to us after their practicums and what they overheard or saw in the next-door classroom or in the staffroom. But it is not something that the originators yet feel that they want to discuss more widely or that they want to bring closure to. That is the problem with that particular issue.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a more general question about teacher education. At this stage we have been to Victoria, Queensland and now the Northern Territory and, in the next three months, we will go to Western Australia, New South Wales and South Australia. Quite a diversity in the evidence from witnesses who are coming forward to the committee seems to be emerging regarding the balance between scholarship, teaching and learning—or pedagogy—and research. There are quite stark differences in the evidence from the many different universities. You mentioned Victoria University. We were very impressed with the presentation from Victoria, as we were with some other universities. Can you give us an individual view, or ACE's view, of what you see ought to be a fair balance between scholarship, pedagogy and research in a teacher education faculty?

Dr Grenfell—I do not know what the balance is. I can certainly deal with the provision of it. We feel that research, in the sense of the school and the community researching a project, not necessarily academic research, is absolutely crucial. We have embedded in our program something called the school community research project. Students who are currently out there will negotiate with their cooperating teacher—their mentor, if you like—the principal and me or the university teacher educator to find a manageable, workable, small-scale research project that the school and the community want carried out. A good example is one that I was dealing with yesterday called Twilight School. The school has an additional 'Twilight School' which involves parents and they want that evaluated in a very simple and straightforward manner, and our students give back something to the school for all the work and the time that the teachers give them. They are, if you like, the interviewers, the guided research assistants. They will collate information. From that point of view, I think we have embedded that kind of research within the undergraduate course.

If you were to look at, for instance, the literacy units that we offer, there is considerable room for scholarship in that, particularly within the distinction and high distinction level, so there is quite a bit there about the actual scholarship of teaching. That is embedded within the courses but it was part of our overall philosophy when the course was accredited, and we do talk about teacher scholarship. What the balance is, I do not know. Different lecturers will give different emphases to it, but it certainly comes together very firmly in the final year and the final practicum. We are moving towards electronic portfolios at the moment and we are experimenting with these. Some of those capture the nexus between the novice teachers' experiences in the schools and their academic reading—the theoretical, philosophical stuff—that is part of the course.

Mr SAWFORD—Another witness, from the registration board, made mention that at Charles Darwin you do not have an English or a philosophy faculty—is that correct? Does that disadvantage teacher education?

Dr Grenfell—I think not having an English faculty disadvantages any university, quite frankly, in an English-speaking world. We have had, as many small regional universities do, some very hard decisions to make, so I do not condemn the council for getting rid of the English department as it then was. From the point of view of philosophy, you will not find a course marked the 'philosophy of education', because unfortunately in the kind of world we live in today I do not think we would get very many subscribers to it, unless we made—

Mr SAWFORD—You might be surprised.

Dr Grenfell—We might be. We certainly had an introductory core unit for a while that dealt with philosophy which you could draw on from the whole university. It was not just education; it was a first year unit called 'Reading and writing the world of ideas'. But for various reasons I will not go into now, after the evaluation of those courses, we decided to run with an academic literacies core unit. If you take a unit like social justice, for example, that is underpinned with a considerable amount of philosophy, and I think some of the linguistics courses would also draw quite heavily on the philosophy of language.

Dr Devlin—I will respond to your two questions and first of all to the balance between research scholarship and teaching. My contention would be that research should underpin all of the work of teacher educators. For example, there was some discussion earlier on in relation to Indigenous education. I commend the approach of the Commonwealth government that was taken with respect to the What Works program—the search for which methods and which programs are working well across a variety of Indigenous contexts in Australia. I think we need to know whether a given program stands a good chance of working effectively.

Twenty years ago, at the time of the 'Improving teacher education' inquiry in August 1986, the ELIC program for early literacy intervention was being recommended. In 2005, accelerated literacy is being strongly recommended. That is fine, but we also need to maintain a comparative stance where we are looking at a variety of programs to see which works, which works better so that we can commit money and time appropriately. I think research is fundamental to the work of teacher education. I think what we offer to our students in faculties has to be based on good, robust, reliable research. Scholarship is necessary because we need to be up to date. We need to keep up to date with our reading. Everything that we present should be based on good scholarship as well.

Your second question asked whether CDU was disadvantaged by not having a faculty of philosophy or English. Putting aside the question of whether it should be a faculty or a school, I do believe that a university should have strong offerings in philosophy and English. Starting with philosophy, I am hardly saying anything new to point to the troubled and difficult times we live in. I am very attracted to the work of Laurence Splitter, formerly of the Australian Council for Education and Research, on philosophy in the classroom for children. To my mind, if teachers are going to open cans of worms with their classes, discussing such topics as comparative religions, comparative world views, then they had better be very well trained in the skills of handling philosophical differences. So, no matter whether a number of children in the classroom strongly disagree with each other, the teacher needs to be sufficiently well trained in philosophical methods of inquiry to be able to handle that wisely and well.

As for English, I must say I regretted the day when English disappeared from the Northern Territory university. That is partly a matter of bias and my own training; but also I think that a high level of literacy is desirable, and exposure to great literature, to my mind, is one of the best ways to obtain it. Having good literature courses at the university has a variety of spin-off effects. Teacher education, for example, would benefit from that.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one last question. I am responding to an intervention Mike made early in his introduction when he was talking about collaboration, and I am particularly thinking between the university and the school. You were talking about secondments and coordinators and so on. It seems to be a nationwide problem that that interchange is a very difficult to do,

because the differentials between conditions and salaries are so significant that they can almost overwhelm the goodwill that obviously is involved with individual people who take on those roles. Obviously this is something this committee is going to have to come to terms with in making, I think, a major recommendation. Do you have some particular ideas that you would like to put to us as to what we ought to be considering in trying to solve that problem? I think that problem needs to be solved. I agree with you: I think that collaboration should be continuing and should be part of the ordinary rigour of what happens in teacher education in schools and universities. But that is not going to work under current circumstances at a national level. It will not work because the differentials are too stark and they need to be overcome. How do we do that? What is the best way to approach that?

Dr Devlin—I hesitate to assert that I was able to suggest what the best way might be, but I think you are right; I think you have pointed to a very significant difficulty. Referring to the situation in the Northern Territory, there is very much goodwill between the school of teacher education and the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, so much so that there is a willingness on the part of NT DEET to allow a number of its staff to be seconded to the School of Education, and it would like to see a reciprocal arrangement. That has not really been possible in of the last couple of years, not for the reason you mention, but really because staffing is stretched as tight as a drum and, when it is not possible at the moment to fill any vacant positions, it is very difficult for the School of Education to release a teacher educator to go into a school.

My suggestion would be not so much to mandate but to recommend that a number of exchanges occur between the department and the School of Education. Perhaps a notional figure could be suggested—three or four such exchanges in a year would be considered to be normal. Salary top-ups would be negotiated where appropriate. The way that would work is that the departments would give an undertaking to top up the salaries of the teacher educators for the 12 months in which they are taking a secondment position in a school, or vice versa, if a teacher happened to be taking up a higher position.

Mr SAWFORD—A couple of months ago, I attended a seminar of my local GPs and a couple of specialists—all medical doctors. I went around the table and I asked: ‘Where did you become a doctor?’ Without exception—specialists and GPs, males and females, old and young—they said: ‘I trained at such-and-such.’ I notice this argument that comes up in some universities where there is a distinction between teacher education and teacher training. I find it a bit defensive and a bit silly, to be quite honest. I cannot care what you call it. I noticed, Mike, that in your introduction you used the term ‘on-the-job training’. I find this a silly debate, and it just wastes everybody’s time. People define things in different ways. Isn’t it much more important not to get defensive about training, education or whatever people call it and to get on with the substance of what it actually is? For some people, ‘training’ is not a negative word. I notice that medical doctors do not see the word as negative at all. They all, without exception, said that they were trained. They do not have a problem. Why do teachers have a problem with ‘training’ and ‘education’?

Dr Grenfell—I do not think teachers do; I think it is academics who do. Speaking for myself—and I wrote that section—I have some concerns about a clinical, VET type training model such as those you can encounter in other countries. I have some concerns over those because I think you have to link this, as I have said on several occasions this morning, to the

much broader, bigger picture of social need and social futures. So I think it is a more educative process than it is a training process. On the other hand, there are clearly times in the development of a young person as a teacher where training—basic, simple, straightforward training—is required. That is why I included it in there. I respect what you are saying. In fact, I share some of your concern over that. I certainly would not want the debate to be bogged down in that.

Mr SAWFORD—I just think it is an unnecessary debate.

Dr Grenfell—It probably needs to be cleared out of the way, because I do think that some people have a very narrow view of what training consists of. Whether that is the way to go—we were talking about regimentation earlier on.

Mr SAWFORD—But then some people have a very narrow view of what education is too.

Dr Grenfell—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Where do you stop and where do you begin?

Dr Grenfell—With your permission, I will just follow up what Brian was saying. You are looking for ways of improving this connection, this collaboration. One of the ways that would be well worth exploring—and I think DEST is already moving in this direction—is the setting up of professional development schools. I am not talking about old-fashioned model schools or example schools but about professional development schools where people in the universities, the students and the teachers, are working. I think there is a possibility there for a career track which could be suitably financed.

Mr SAWFORD—Teaching schools, like teaching hospitals.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we require further information. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence as it is to appear in the *Hansard* and a transcript will also be placed on our web site. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 12.40 pm to 1.33 pm

FORD, Ms Margot, Lecturer in Education, School of Education, Charles Darwin University

RENNIE, Dr Jennifer Ann, Acting Head of School, School of Education, Charles Darwin University

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that the proceedings are being recorded in the *Hansard* and they will be posted on the parliamentary web site. 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. Do either of you have anything to say regarding the capacity in which you appear, or any introductory remarks?

Ms Ford—I am the coordinator of the Bachelor of Education graduate entry and the Bachelor of Education in-service at Charles Darwin University. My special areas of interest in my own teaching are cultural diversity, social justice, language and pedagogy.

Dr Rennie—I would like to clarify the capacity in which we appear. I was invited because I was head of school at the time. What we are suggesting today is not a school response. I invited other staff members who might like to come along. I do not have an opening statement and I am happy to answer questions. That is the capacity in which I appear.

Ms Ford—I have prepared a statement. I probably should clarify again that this is not necessarily a reflection of the views of the school of education at Charles Darwin; it is my own personal view.

I think what I want to address really is just a general statement about the underpinning agenda that prompted the inquiry, which might overtake the process or pre-empt what might follow. In an interview just prior to the launch of the teacher education inquiry Brendan Nelson made his position quite clear when he referred to teacher education courses as being run by pseudo sociologists. His insistence on the word ‘training’ speaks volumes about how he perceives the preparation of teachers in this country. He has made no secret of his love of phonics and his distaste for approaches such as critical literacy. He wants to embrace easy, technicist and formulaic approaches that ignore the diverse sociocultural skills and needs of Australian children.

I think the government also wants control over school curricula. For example, a great deal of money—millions of dollars, in fact—has been spent on implementing the national values education framework. This is to be embedded throughout the curriculum as a very effective way of imposing a monoculturally prescribed set of values on the Australian populace. There is a clear agenda—centralising the school curriculum and controlling the content of teacher education courses in universities. There is a theme emerging here—ignore cultural and ethnic difference by pretending we all need the same thing. Hopefully, this inquiry will guard against that as an outcome.

Furthermore, this government wants to separate research universities from others. Divorcing research from teaching creates a completely false dichotomy. I am currently studying for a PhD and I am involved in other research projects, the results of which have immediately benefited my own teaching and provided preservice teachers with first-hand experience of the latest research. The autonomy of university courses is at stake here, but also what is a danger is the dumbing down of teacher education courses, as we face the retrograde step of returning to the old colleges of education model.

The government now, quite rightly in my view, advocates evidence based research, a tautology, I think, as the way to demonstrate rigour and the efficacy of government funded projects, but this masks the government's own failure to take accurate account of research. For example, the government creates the impression that there is a crisis in schools—a crisis of low literacy—to promote teaching phonics. There is no crisis, except in Indigenous education, if you have a look at the research.

Without any basis, the government invented the idea that state schools do not teach Australian values, just prior to the launch of the national values framework—first create a need and then be seen to fill it. Again the hope is that this inquiry examines current research into pedagogy, in all its complexity, takes account of the diversity of effective approaches and is not lured by simple responses to multifaceted issues.

CHAIR—Thank you. I would like to start with a question in relation to the issue of Indigenous teachers and the lack of graduates from the Indigenous community for teaching and the impact that is having on education services in the Northern Territory. Going to Batchelor yesterday was certainly an interesting experience. Coming out of that we see, among other things, that there are only some 10 Indigenous graduates a year coming through the system. I would be interested in your views on whether we should be having a far more intense interview and application entry program. I have asked this question of other witnesses during the day. Rather than having a broad number of applicants and then having a huge attrition rate, I wonder whether we should focus our attempts in far more detail. For those students who enter the program should we better resource it both financially and educationally, with a view to trying to produce more Indigenous graduates at the end of the day, rather than just the 10 we are getting at the moment? I would be interested to hear your comments on that.

Dr Rennie—I think it is really important that we do whatever we can to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in Australia. I think we probably need to have a look around the country. There are probably a number of things contributing to the attrition rates. I think support mechanisms for Indigenous students within universities need more money. I think having a better understanding of the ways in which Indigenous people learn is also an issue for universities.

There are some places in Australia—and I will speak of North Queensland's James Cook University—that graduate quite a number of Indigenous teachers yearly. But they have a different kind of model and delivery in terms of how they do this. It costs them huge amounts of money, I understand, but it is very successful. The teacher education is delivered primarily in the communities. I think it needs to have money put into doing some really good investigation on models that might work to try and improve the number of Indigenous graduates that we have. I would be in favour of having money put into that. I think you are right in that it is better to have

20 enrol in the program and have 18 or 20 graduate, rather than have five graduate. It is possible to up that if we put more money into the support mechanisms, the pathways and the sorts of learning opportunities that there are for those students within our courses.

Ms Ford—I would like to respond to your question. I was a lecturer in early childhood education down at Batchelor for about six years before I moved to Charles Darwin University. I think the issue for Batchelor will always be that the cohort of the students comes from, in the main, remote communities. If you look at the history of Aboriginal education, which has had very poor outcomes since the 1950s, it is clear that the students who go to Batchelor are coming from a different baseline. The funding model has always been similar to funding models of other tertiary education institutions, but, in my experience of what happens, what you need to have data on is not so much the number of end graduates but some research into the tracking of individual students over a period of about 10 years.

In my experience, students come in and out of the course. All the social statistics about Indigenous people on low health rates, high suicide rates and low education rates conspire, if you like, to provide lots of barriers for Indigenous people in terms of successful education outcomes. They are starting from a very different base, and they need to have a different funding model which is much more flexible so that they can go in and out of the system if family members die, which happens on a regular basis throughout a year. An individual student might go to five funerals in a year, for example.

That is just one small aspect: a flexible funding model that allows students to come and go, and an acknowledgment that they are coming from a much lower literacy and numeracy base to begin with. A solution that just says, ‘Okay, we’ll up the ante,’ is not going to work. You are not going to get a cohort that you can work with. Students who I have had, who might have had year 5 reading and literacy levels, by the end of five or seven years were competent teachers. It is what you put into the system in terms of foundation and making it flexible that I think would resolve some of the issues.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe we need to clear up just how this inquiry got under way. It is true that the minister, the chair and the members of this committee negotiated the terms of reference, but I can assure you that this committee is not the plaything of any minister, Labor or Liberal. This committee’s recommendations have always been made in terms of the evidence presented. It is not a plaything for the minister. There would be points of agreement with the minister. There may be more points of disagreement. This is not about dumbing down education. I think this committee has a proud record of lifting the bar. I think I can speak for everybody—I am a Labor member of parliament—on the committee in saying that everybody who has ever been on this committee has been about lifting the bar, not lowering it.

This report will be based on the evidence produced before us. As you would know in academia, there are controversial and mixed views of how teacher education ought to be conducted. We have received that contrary information. It is our role to pick out what we think are the most effective recommendations. Please do not think we are captive of a minister, because we are not. On teacher education, would you like to make any comment on the balance between scholarship, research and pedagogy, from Charles Darwin University’s point of view?

Dr Rennie—I have been at the university for about four years. In that time there has been a big turnaround in the amount of research being done, particularly in the School of Education. Staff have been involved in a number of projects that have had them working in schools and on particular different initiatives seeing how things work in schools. The research has been very much connected to the classroom in a lot of cases. I do not have any experience of other universities. I was a teacher up here for 14 years before I went to Charlies Darwin University so I do not have anything to compare it with. I know the school was struggling with research when I got here and that that has greatly improved over the period. The staff are starting to get involved in the sort of stuff which is connecting research to learning to the classroom, and not just in schools but also in the university. We recently had appointed a new pro vice chancellor of teaching and learning, who is a good operator from a university in Western Australia. She is getting staff involved in research projects. One of the things they are involved in at the present time is how students learn online—the kinds of strategies they use to learn. That project is happening right now.

There is the SIMA project—I am not sure of the acronym—which is about mentoring science students in schools. There are lots of things happening across the university and DEET—a lot more than when I first arrived at the university. We are starting to build up. As acting head of school I have seen the figures so I know that is happening in terms of the money coming in. A lot of it is connected to teaching. For instance, the SIMA is about mentoring school science students using university science students. It is peer mentoring between tertiary and school aged students. That is working really well. Other staff are looking at the mentoring of pre-service teachers from one country to another. There are some good things happening, and research that is connected to teaching and learning and not other things.

Mr SAWFORD—Scholarship?

Dr Rennie—What do you mean by 'scholarship'?

Mr SAWFORD—Subject discipline. We learnt this morning that Charles Darwin University does not have an English faculty anymore. Do you find that is a dramatic disadvantage?

Dr Rennie—I am not aware of any universities that have an English faculty. I do not think that is a huge problem. I have just been in Adelaide with the national inquiry into the teaching of literacy. I teach across four or five literacy units and there are English specialists within the School of Education that teach in that area and also in the practicum units as well. It is really important that all lecturers have a stake in the practicum part of the curriculum because that is where the students are putting into practice what you teach them in these discipline areas that you are talking about.

Ms Ford—In terms of the research, it is a very small regional university, I have worked there for six or seven years and I have struggled and struggled to get a PhD. At times there have been six or seven members of staff in the school of education that were enrolled in PhDs or doctor of teaching and in that time, a bit like the rate at Batchelor, there would only be about two or three that have successfully completed a PhD. What I and another colleague had to do—and I think another one is contemplating doing this—was to take leave without pay and do our PhDs outside the university because the workloads are such that it is almost impossible to do a complete PhD at the moment. So that involves an enormous financial cost—and, having done that for two years

and just got back, I am now realising what that cost is. There are times when you look at the people there and you can see that there is real potential for the current staff to be involved in a lot more research and to attract many more postgraduate students if there were pathways available and funding for staff to be involved in completing PhDs and then going on to postgraduate research. There is simply very little of that practical support available.

In terms of scholarship, we are both talking from a primary point of view and it perhaps does not impact quite so much there because every student does a range of the curriculum units, but you might like to ask that question of the secondary people later on. However, I think it is detrimental, and not just in relation to English, that in the faculty of arts generally we have a dearth of variety in courses. Within the bachelor of education preservice, the structure is such that four units are done as interdisciplinary subjects, so they are done in other faculties and with other subject areas. That is part of our pre-service course structure as it stands now anyway. But in terms of their choice, it is obviously not as great or as diverse as it is in other universities.

Mr SAWFORD—How would you describe Charles Darwin’s partnership or relationship with the employing authority, the teachers union, the Teacher Registration Board and the schools?

Ms Ford—I am on the working party of the teacher standards framework that is currently being developed out of the Teacher Registration Board. Certainly we have a reasonably good relationship with them, given that the previous head of school is now the director of teacher registration, so we are able to have lots of dialogue. Also, I am not sure if I have actually been nominated but I was put up for nomination for the Board of Studies. So we have those formal links. Having said that, I think there are lots of ways that we could have much closer links professionally with the department, particularly in the area of professional development. There is a move that we should start discussing much more coherent professional development for teachers that can tap into our courses but also that we give credit to teachers for the professional development that they do, particularly for the Bachelor of Education in service, which is the fourth year.

Mr SAWFORD—You anticipated my next question, which was about professional development. We have only been to three states, Queensland, Victoria and here—in the next three months we will go to all the others—but it has been a bit of a surprise that there has been a limited amount of professional development. I would have thought that would have been a key feature of a teacher education program, particularly these days when teacher education programs are attracting mature age students, people changing from other careers and so on. What is the reason for that? Is it the lack of resources? Is it the relationship between the department and schools? What is it?

Dr Rennie—I worked for this department of education for 14 years before I moved into the university. During those 14 years I did a lot of PD as a teacher for the department. I have continued to do some of that stuff with people that I know—principals and schools that I have worked with. However, I think you are right: formally, there could be a lot more. There are staff members that do PD quite regularly. One of our staff is involved in the Quality Teaching Program, where there is funding for professional development, and she does a fair bit of work out of that program. And people do stuff individually; it is not—

Mr SAWFORD—In a consultancy role rather than—

Dr Rennie—Yes, and it is not a really consistent kind of way of delivering.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is hit and miss?

Dr Rennie—It is hit and miss. I think everything that is done is done because people want to do it. It is done with good intentions; they actually want to get in and do that. I will go back to when I was a teacher to give you an example of how things have changed in terms of how PD works in schools. For the first six or seven years that I first worked as a teacher, at the beginning of each year we got a book which was about this thick and it told you everything that was on for the whole year in terms of PD. Teachers could go through and select what they wanted to do. Schools had rules about that. It had to meet state education departments' agendas and the schools' agendas, and your personal professional development agenda came in last. You often got to go and do something with that, but of course there were priorities in schools, strategic plans and all that sort of stuff. That was great, and there was often stuff delivered there from people outside the school system—other teachers, people in the university. It was fairly well laid out for the whole year, so people had a really good idea of what was on offer. That disappeared after about six years that I had been with the department.

Since then, both as a teacher working in schools and as a lecturer working at the university, until this QTP program came in—and even that was a bit of a hit and miss kind of thing too, but it was a bit more structured—it was really all over the place. There were a couple of years where I did not get to go to any professional development as a teacher. There was actually nothing on offer. It has been really difficult. I think funding has been an issue. We used to have a group of people that worked with all of that stuff. I do not know whether the department has a group now. I imagine they have with the QTP money that is there. There used to be curriculum services, which was really around that stuff. Now it seems to spread out a bit. So, yes, I would agree with that.

Ms Ford—When I first went to Charles Darwin there was a suite of units called 'renewing teachers' knowledge' which teachers could do as a formal part of getting credit against various courses. They were terrific. It was a funding matter. It was because the department at the time supported that. At the moment funding from the department is going into the Accelerated Literacy Program. There is a suite of four units and you can do a certificate in accelerated literacy. That is the only formalised program of professional development for teachers that I know of that can be acknowledged with a suite of four units at the university and that the department is funding.

I was talking to a teacher just the other day who was saying that one of the problems with professional development is that the new thing comes up and they do one or two things but there is not a coherent program of professional development. I was talking to her in the context of being a coordinator for the bachelor of inservice, where we are trying to give credit. These are three-year trained people that need an extra year, particularly for registration purposes—we have a registration board up here. We are looking at ways that we can give them recognition of prior learning for their teaching. Some of them have been teaching for 10 or 15 years. They have to track their PD as part of that exercise. As I said, it is sometimes very hard to say, 'You can have 10 credit points for this or that,' when they have fragmented pieces of one day here and two days there for their PD. So it is definitely an area that could be improved.

Mr SAWFORD—There is often a vast difference in how academics and practising teachers approach education and their views on teacher education. I get the feeling that, when you talk to a principal group or a teacher group, they are more likely to say that what propels their educational program is their personal philosophy or their school's philosophy about education—it is not research; it is what their philosophy is. Then from that philosophy they develop a set of processes that are coherent and consistent with that philosophy. And then they develop a series of curriculum units in order to also be coherent in that trinity. Finally, they need the research in terms of what they are doing and why and how. In other words, we have had outcomes based approaches in education, contents based approaches and needs approach, but I think most teachers would say that, if you cannot get the purposes of education right, you will never get anything right. There seems to be a bit of a conflict between practising teachers and some academics in teacher education. Is that a fair assessment?

Ms Ford—I do not think it is; I think it is overstated. For example, in the Northern Territory, we have had the new NT curriculum framework, which includes this *EsseNTial Learnings* aspect, for about four or five years now. What was interesting about that whole process is that we at the university were very involved in the development of that curriculum framework. We had several meetings with the people that were developing that. When we then went on to reaccredit our four-year pre-service course and the bachelor of education graduate entry, we took the language of that framework and used it in the way we developed the units for that course. I think there is actually quite a degree of cohesion between the approaches that we are using at the university and the approaches that are reflected through the NT curriculum framework.

Mr SAWFORD—Is your cohesion between how and what rather than why, what and how? That is the impression you are giving me, that you have cohesion between how and what.

Ms Ford—And why.

Mr SAWFORD—If you do not have the cohesion with the why—

Ms Ford—I think there is.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not see any evidence of that.

Ms Ford—That is interesting. From my point of view, as a person involved in social justice and cultural diversity, in the years prior to the NT curriculum framework I would say to the students: 'You need to address the skills and needs of the school students. You need to take into account the ethnic, sociocultural and diverse racial backgrounds when you are planning a program.' When they went into schools, at that stage that language was not part of the school ethos because the curriculum was very content driven. Teachers were complaining about it like mad because more and more content was being imposed upon them. The change that happened with the NT curriculum framework was that *EsseNTial Learnings* put the child back into the centre of the formula. Constructivist approaches were something that we had been teaching at the university for six, seven or eight years. Suddenly there was a match between the kind of language we were talking, which was put the child at the centre of your programming and focus on the needs of the child. Suddenly it made sense. Students were coming back off prac and there was not a mismatch between the kinds of things that they were experiencing in the classroom

and the language that was now being used within the framework of *EsseNTial Learnings*, which was all those kinds of more social outcomes rather than the content based—

Mr SAWFORD—I know what you are saying. You are saying how and what but not why.

Ms Ford—There is a why there. I think the purpose of it became more similar. But we may be talking at cross-purposes.

Mr SAWFORD—We may be.

Mr HENRY—Ms Ford, I am somewhat intrigued by your view of training and the aversion you seem to have to the term 'training' as opposed to 'education'. Doctors and lawyers who are trained, in particular, have no aversion to using that expression, but with academics and some teachers there seems to be some aversion. If you could address that issue I would be very interested.

Ms Ford—It is about the educative process. For example, surgeons need particular skills to do their jobs in an operating theatre. My understanding is that their approaches have changed quite a bit. In the last 10 or 15 years they have said, 'Hang on, we need to start thinking about this body of flesh as a person,' and now their courses have lots of training, if you like, in how you deal with people. For me, that is the difference. Because children are diverse, you are never going to have a formula that will fit all children—you are never going to have one approach that is successful for all children. I think the idea of education reflects that dynamism of having to be creative and flexible in ways that the word 'training' does not. For me 'training' often reflects a more formulaic, prescriptive way of doing things—there is a process that you can go through for a given result.

Mr HENRY—It is perhaps more focused on the practical skills development aspect that you might get in, say, surgery.

Ms Ford—I think so, yes; whereas pedagogy, for example, which people now use as a matter of course, really reflects that—it is the art, the science and the philosophy of teaching.

Mr HENRY—But surely there is skills development or skills acquisition in terms of classroom management, and those aspects are picked up to some extent in pedagogy.

Ms Ford—That is exactly right; it is an art and a science, if you like. I think the idea of education and the emphasis on that as a term reflects that much more than a narrower definition of what 'training' might be.

Mr HENRY—Some of the evidence we have heard from other areas is that there is a fairly significant attrition rate for those people who have graduated from teacher education—as high as 50 per cent after six years, which is a significant figure. I am not sure what those figures might be here in the Northern Territory; we have not heard any information on that. But there certainly seems to be a fairly high attrition rate amongst undergraduates undertaking the program. Would you care to comment on that.

Dr Rennie—Do you want comment on the undergraduates who are actually in the program or who have moved into schools?

Mr HENRY—If you have comments on those who have graduated, gone on to school and then left teaching, I would be happy to get some feedback on that.

Dr Rennie—I can talk about both. Going back to when I first started teaching in schools, I did see a number of teachers who I guess got burnt out. Over my 14 years in the job I can still remember my very first lesson and how dreadful it was. There is that real idea that you are going to get to perfection. It is not just that you are confronted with a struggle there and then in the classroom; it is also the idea of wanting to do it better. It is about learning. I think that some people set unrealistic expectations for themselves in those first couple of years teaching. I know I did that myself—I stressed myself out.

In some schools I have worked in there has been terrific support for first year out or second year out teachers—for example, staff have voluntarily mentored people, people have put you in classes that are more easily managed and that sort of thing. But I know of and have heard of stories—I do not have any evidence as such—where that support for first year out teachers is not as great.

Even if you go to the government’s standards, where you have beginning teacher standards et cetera—I have just been to a meeting this weekend with NIQTSL on the proficient or accomplished teacher standards—people recognise that you have this development that happens from when you start your career. You are not coming out of university as an accomplished teacher; you are coming out as a beginning teacher. That is quite stressful for some people, particularly if they are used to doing very well. I have seen students who have not necessarily pulled out but who have done very well in our course but in their first couple of years of teaching have felt very inadequate in terms of the high standards that they set for themselves.

It is hard enough just coming to terms with doing the whole thing on your own without adding to that stress by saying, ‘I’ve got to do this better’ and ‘Gee, that was a really bad lesson’—that sort of thing. It is hard for first-year out teachers, so support in schools is really crucial. In fact, I was talking about the national literacy inquiry yesterday in Adelaide with someone from ACSSO, and she told me about what happened many years ago when she was going through university. They came back after six months of being in schools, so they kept those ties between the university and themselves as well as being in the work force. I think that whole mentoring idea really needs to happen for beginning teachers.

Mr HENRY—So mentoring could help address that in that first year in particular or even further than that.

Dr Rennie—Definitely, and it could be a combined mentoring arrangement between a university and the schools. I personally think that the relationships between schools and universities need to be really strong and people need to work really hard at making sure that there are productive partnerships between schools and universities. The University of Wollongong in New South Wales has a good teacher education program. It works hard on collaborative relationships between schools and the university and staff and it works really well. I know people in that university.

Mr HENRY—So is your university moving towards those sorts of partnerships?

Dr Rennie—At the moment we are going through the process of course reaccreditation. We have a new head of school coming in at the end of September and I think one of his agendas is to look at our course structure. I cannot comment too much because I do not know what it was like before I got there, so Margot is probably better equipped to answer that.

Mr HENRY—Going back to those initial impacts after graduation when you take a class, it has been suggested by others that perhaps more time being spent on classroom management as part of the practicum would help address some of those sorts of issues.

Dr Rennie—I think we are starting to do that really well within our course. Margot can talk about this. She teaches a unit which is called 'creating positive relationships', and the whole unit is about managing the learning environment and issues to do with that. When I was teaching the first practicum unit I got a colleague of mine who works in the school system and who does professional development for teachers on management strategies for the classroom to come in and work with my students.

Something that is really nice that does happen in our university is that I certainly have a lot of contacts within the school system and I know that there are other staff members who do, and quite often we get people coming in from the department with those areas of expertise. Regarding behaviour management—I do not like to call it behaviour management; it is learning management, because you are managing a whole lot of things and often it is connected to teaching and a whole range of things when things go wrong in the classroom—I think we are starting to do that quite well within our course.

Mr HENRY—Just on the attrition of undergraduates, I think Margot mentioned the flexibility in the funding model to address Indigenous people's training and educational needs in the program. Firstly, do you know of anyone who has actually addressed the government in terms of changing those models to create that flexibility? Secondly, you mentioned the Queensland model that seemed to be fairly successful—

Dr Rennie—It has a different kind of delivery method.

Mr HENRY—What is preventing those sorts of things happening?

Dr Rennie—Money, I think, and resources. We do not have the same staff resources that other universities have. The other thing—and DEET has just started to do this as well—is that we need to do some numbers research in tracking where these students go. In terms of the ones that go into schools, they might jump out of the education system here but they often end up in another system in another state or they end up in London teaching. So they are not necessarily completely opting out of the teaching profession.

The other thing that I have seen happen to a number of friends of mine is that they might teach for five or six years and then will go and work for private organisations as teachers, because there is a lot of that sort of stuff going on in private organisations. They actually like the skills that teachers have.

In terms of the attrition at the university, I am not sure that our attrition is much different from anywhere else, from what I understand. However, I think there are a number of things that attribute to it. There are issues with literacy and numeracy in our course and we try to address those issues through the course, but the way people get into teacher education courses all over Australia is through their TER score or their school leaving score. Often you will look at transcripts and you might see mathematics on there but it is not necessarily a year 11 or year 12 kind of mathematics or it is not necessarily the proper English studies, which is the matric kind of English studies.

I think it is good that we let lots of people into our course because many people who do have issues to start with, as you said, actually end up becoming very good teachers. But we do not have the time in four years. This is what came up in the reading inquiry yesterday. I said to them, 'If you tell me I have to have a whole unit on teaching reading I will do it because that is what I would really like, but you were talking about the overcrowded curriculum.' When you are also getting students—you have seen the studies, no doubt, from around Australia of the different things that people have done—who have year 7 standard in mathematics or they have not gone past year 7 grammar knowledge, and when you are trying to help students with those kinds of issues as well as prepare them to be teachers, it is quite hard work for university lecturers, and often there is not the time.

What we need are ways to support those students better in universities and perhaps different kinds of pathways to actually get them into the courses. We do have a tertiary enabling program but I think that we could offer other things. It is not necessarily the best thing that students could do. For some students it works really well and for others it does not. If those kinds of things were worked out better, I think we would end up—

Mr HENRY—With an improvement in the selection process.

Dr Rennie—Yes, but not necessarily eliminate that. Like I said, some people have come into our course who have not done particularly well in school and they have worked really hard and they have become really good teachers. I have seen some of them turn into the best, hardest-working teachers I have known. If they are not coming in with the standards that you expect, it is more about having support there and the means by which they can work on those issues themselves outside of our course.

Ms Ford—The message is the same for Batchelor and us. You are looking for every single graduand to be at the same level when they graduate. But they are coming from an extraordinarily diverse base, so there need to be flexible pathways with the necessary support as they are going through. At the university, funding has been cut for support for students. We do have a much higher cohort of English as a second language, for example, so the enabling course is sometimes not going to be the most effective pathway for supporting students as they go through the course. Sometimes it does take them longer to go through. The funding models currently, particularly at Batchelor, do not account for that.

Mr HENRY—I certainly support the need for more flexible entry points in many of those. On the Queensland model that you mentioned, Dr Rennie, what was the university?

Dr Rennie—James Cook University.

Mr HENRY—And they have programs where they go out into the community?

Dr Rennie—Yes, they go out and deliver. I am not fully across it, but I know that they have quite a large number of graduates that they get through in that particular program.

Ms Ford—Batchelor are located in many of the communities in the Northern Territory, and certainly that was the way Batchelor operated when I was there. What changed, again, was funding. What was scrapped was money for community based tutors. My understanding is that that has been cut back and cut back. It is expensive. Locating education programs in communities is probably the most effective way of getting successful education outcomes, but it is a huge undertaking to develop infrastructure, technology and personnel to be on the ground in those places.

Dr Rennie—I finished a research project on the Tiwi islands, the year before last. There were some brilliant school assistants working in that school. They would make great teachers. But the thing is you would never get them to—

Mr HENRY—You could never qualify them.

Dr Rennie—I believe they could qualify, but you would never get them to leave their communities to access the education. I trained them up as research assistants for the project, so they were helping me with research, transcription and doing the interviews. There is a lot of potential out there. The terrific thing is that no Western teacher will ever know what these people know about the kids in those schools. The kids respect them and listen to them. Not that the kids do not respect us, but they have a different kind of understanding in relationships with the assistants. We should do anything we can do—because there are good people out there, and I witnessed two very good teachers' assistants in those schools—to make it possible for those people. A lot of that is testament to the teachers they are working with as well, but the teachers do not have the time to fully train. I am using the word 'train'!

Mr HENRY—Well done!

Mr SAWFORD—Of course; that is what you do.

Dr Rennie—It is interesting that you say that, because the people I spoke to there preferred that kind of model. I had one research assistant in one community and one in the other and I had to do two different types of teaching to the two different people. The women I was working with in one community wanted to me to show them how to interview and to be with them, then they would gradually do it. They really liked the idea of having somebody there, showing them all the time, whereas the person in the other community liked me to tell him, then he went away and did it. So they did like the training mode.

Mr HENRY—Just picking up on something you just said there about the responsiveness of the Tiwi Islanders to their own people in an educational sense, we have had a little bit of conflicting evidence on that over the last couple of days. At Batchelor yesterday some Indigenous people suggested that people in remote communities responded much better to their own people, rather than to European or Western people coming in to deliver educational programs. Other people today have suggested that, if teachers from white society go into a

remote community, providing they assimilate into the community they will get the same level of recognition. Would you like to comment on that?

Ms Ford—I have also taught in Aboriginal communities. The point is that it is not about your racial background necessarily; it is about whether you can engender a relationship of trust as a white teacher going into that community. That is the issue. If you can build up that trust and have the support of the community, then you can be very effective.

Having said that, though—and having worked in Aboriginal communities—as a teacher, you recognise that the students in that context have to do things other children do not have to do. They are currently second-guessing whether what you are saying you want them to do is what you mean. They have to do another cognitive exercise in that they are always translating and interpreting what a non-Indigenous person means. It is not just an Indigenous/non-Indigenous issue; it is whether you are Warlpiri or Yolngu or Yangandara. If you are from that community and you have that relationship with the students and that rapport with them, you are not having to second-guess and interpret things through a cultural and linguistic lens, if you like.

Mr HENRY—So it would be much better for young children to have an Indigenous teacher to bring them down the educational pathway to start with?

Ms Ford—As long it is an Indigenous person from that community and someone who has the language. It is as much a language similarity thing as it is anything else—and a relational similarity.

Dr Rennie—I and another person were involved in research where we were documenting teachers' career pathways. Two of the teachers who we interviewed were Indigenous teachers who worked in Darwin. One is from Darwin, so she is a Larrakia person. But she was telling me that when she first started teaching they sent her out to Port Keats. She felt alienated in that community, although she was Indigenous, which is what a white teacher would have felt. She felt quite inadequate in terms of working with those particular children. That is what Margot is trying to say there.

Going back to what you were saying about the idea of having a teacher or a teaching assistant who is from that community working with the children, going from the experience I had with the two people I worked with on the Tiwi Islands, we need different pathways for getting those kinds of people into our teacher education courses. Those two people already had a lot of quite refined teaching skills. We are already starting to do it in vocational education training with the Bachelor of Children's Services and stuff. Women start out working in child care and get diplomas in that area, and we are actually making it easier for them to access teacher education programs.

What we need to do is start to figure out what teacher's assistants are doing in these communities, what level they are working at, what they already know about teaching and how we can help them better to access a teaching course so they can become trained teachers. That is something we need to muddle through. That would be very useful for some of the talent that is sitting out there in some of the communities.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will be contacting you if we require any further information. The secretariat will send you a proof copy of your evidence for you to have a look at and a copy of the transcript will be posted on our web site.

[2.33 pm]

GRENFELL, Dr Wilfred Michael, Private capacity

RORRISON, Ms Doreen Dawne, Private capacity

SPIERS, Ms Helen Gilmore, Private capacity

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these proceedings are being recorded in *Hansard* and will be made available to the public through the committee's web site. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Dr Grenfell—I also work at the Charles Darwin University as a lecturer in the School of Education.

Ms Spiers—I am also employed at Charles Darwin University as coordinator for the Bachelor of Education Secondary.

Ms Rorrison—I am also employed at the Charles Darwin University and I coordinate the secondary programs.

CHAIR—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, as such, 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?

Ms Spiers—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make some opening remarks.

Ms Rorrison—There were a couple of typos in my submission that I apologise for. You may or may not have read my 14-page submission. I do not blame you if you did not get right through it. I found in my own teaching and in the presentation of my research that a storytelling technique is very successful in making information accessible to a wide range of readers. What I do is weave social and educational theory and anecdotes to help readers—and my students, of course—make sense of very complex situations. It appeared to me on re-reading my submission that I employed this storytelling technique that I use with my students. I hope it has helped you to gain a sense of what it is like working in teacher education. Like teaching, teacher education is moral work.

On analysis of my submission, a number of themes emerge. I will talk about them briefly. Firstly, the quite different cohort of applicants for the secondary course emerges as an important theme. I only claim to be knowledgeable about the secondary courses at Charles Darwin University. Very few of our students in the secondary course actually come to us because of their tertiary score at the end of their secondary education. These individuals come from a wide range

of backgrounds, are generally mature aged and have a range of motivations for pursuing the qualification. We have a 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female cohort. In my submission I say:

We do attract a range of students and whether they are ‘high quality’—

which was the question in part 2 of the terms of reference—

depends on your ideology and perspective. We attract school leavers with a wide range of TER scores, post-graduate student with Masters and PhD degrees, practising Lawyers, the Crown Prosecutor, successful executives and business leaders looking for a ‘sea change’ on the one hand and on the other individuals who have volunteered in third world countries or remote indigenous communities, mothers and fathers who have spent many years involved in a range of community activities and bringing up their children (sometimes home-schooling them), people who have travelled the world as freelance writers or photographers, elite sports people, both men and women who have served in the defence services or the police force, people with both physical and mental disabilities who have come to terms (both medically and personally) with their disabilities to the point where they feel they can contribute to the education of our future citizens. All of these people have rich and varied experiences that may help them achieve the role of ‘successful teacher’.

I go on to talk about the fact that we can attract them, but keeping them is another matter. Almost without exception, these students have quite substantial financial commitments—and who doesn’t by the time they are in their late 20s, their 30s or their 40s? These financial commitments demand that our pre-service teachers remain in paid employment during their course. It is not unusual, sadly, for them to work evenings and even night shift, even when they are doing their prac placements, where they are working all day at school.

A second theme that emerges from my submission is that of poor support for teacher education courses within the university. Teaching about teaching and learning about learning should be focused on the how, why, when and what of teaching and learning. This is best achieved through workshops, group work, reciprocal relationships, discussions, presentations, practical activities, making connections, constructing meanings, focus groups, learning circles, negotiation, guidance—and I could go on. I have about 100 of these, if you would like me to list them. These activities are resource and time rich. Being resource and time rich, they are commodities that are not popular in a climate of efficiency, accountability and market forces.

The final theme that I will highlight here—although I suspect there is more that I could draw out—looks at the focus of teacher educators in the Northern Territory, in Australia and in the Western world generally on meeting the needs of both learners in the university and learners in the schools. If we agree—and we may not—that the purpose of education is about increasing life’s chances for all young people then our education systems have been in need of major reform for many years. They do not appear to meet the needs of the vast majority of young people they purport to service. Nor does the current university system that privileges research, outsourcing, publication and funding contracts above teaching and academic integrity meet the needs of teacher education.

Ms Spiers—I would like to speak to you about my reflections on teacher education and neophyte or beginner teachers as they enter the school system. I have a background of over a decade managing vocational education and training in the Kakadu-Jabiru region and another decade of teaching maths in a variety of high schools. I am actually a secondary maths teacher. For the last three years I have been doing my PhD studies in looking at support strategies for

Indigenous students in tertiary education and actually asking the students themselves what they thought of the support they received and what they considered was critical to continuing their studies, and I am writing that now.

My comments will be brief, but they will be based on reflection on just four points. Firstly, I think our secondary teachers do not come out with a full grasp of what vocational education and training is about. VET in Schools is a dynamic and exciting new area in secondary education. I do not think that we give it the content or the experience time that it needs, and I would like to see that increasing over time.

Secondly, we need more Indigenous students in our courses. Currently, about 10 per cent of our students are Indigenous students and, with our population, we should have 30 per cent. From my studies, I feel that there are two ways we can go about that. Over 90 per cent of the Indigenous students whom I interviewed—and they were urban or rural students—felt that they needed to study in order to assist their people or their community. They need a purpose to study and that purpose is often based on what they see as a need within the Indigenous community. We need to educate and raise their awareness of the fact that we need more Indigenous teachers. They currently think we need Indigenous teachers out in the bush, but we need Indigenous students in the urban area. They are not aware of that; they do not see that.

The way to keep students in the course is to encourage the building of relationships and to give staff time to build those relationships and to develop more of a rapport in a mentoring role. What is important is the building of relationships, not what you give students in terms of access to computers or things like that. It is about whether they have a sustainable relationship that holds them there when things get tough. We as staff need more time and we need Indigenous support to be more fully funded than it is at present.

Thirdly, the maths knowledge across all levels of teaching is currently very poor, and there is a lot of research to support that. In our teacher education at Charles Darwin University we have implemented a standard whereby we do not graduate our primary teachers unless they can complete two tests or exams—whatever you want to call them—that test their ability to do mathematics to year 8 level.

They are tested when they come into the primary education course. Over the last couple of years we have not had a very good pass rate in that initial test. This year, 15 out of 75 passed the test at the beginning of their primary education four-year degree. That meant that the rest had to go and do some supplementary maths units, then they resit the exam later in the year or at the beginning of the next year. They cannot graduate from the primary course until they have passed that exam.

In secondary we have lots of maths, so we work closely with those who want to be maths teachers to make sure that they are at the right standard. I would like to see that kind of standardising of mathematical ability at primary encouraged across Australia. I have talked informally to number of primary teachers and they would much prefer to teach early primary. When you ask why, they say, ‘Because I am a bit scared about teaching maths at higher levels in primary.’

The fourth point I would like to make is about support for beginner teachers. I think that the current probation system or induction is insufficient in terms of actually giving them on-the-ground support. I would like to see teacher education and training go down the same path as engineers and psychologists, and actually have a provisional registration in the first year, so that they have to have support—it is mandatory at the school level—and they are not all thrown into year 8 and 9 classes, where the classes are large, there are behavioural problems and there is a big learning curve for them. They need to have some experience in a range of types and levels of classes. Psychologists have to do a year or two under a qualified psychologist and engineers have to do a three-year cadetship after they graduate as engineers before they can become chartered engineers. If we looked at that for teachers, we could have provisional registration until they have been mentored through, as was mentioned earlier, to the standards of a more advanced teacher.

Dr Grenfell—This morning, on behalf of the ACE, I talked to you basically about collaboration; that was my main theme. The submission you have from me as an individual deals more thoroughly with the overall approach to teacher education. It deals with curriculum issues and it deals with pedagogical issues. There are some things there that we do not wish to lose sight of. It particularly draws attention to the way we construct the relationship between teaching and learning, which I think is fundamentally misunderstood by many people in education generally. It denies the fact that there is explicit, transparent correspondence between the two and that if you teach something, something is learned in the way that you actually intended. That is in the paper. Those are the issues that primarily concern me: the approach that we use in teacher education across the board, the actual curriculum that is in there and this relationship between teaching and learning.

CHAIR—I will start with questions to Helen. You referred to the selection process for teachers. We were at Batchelor yesterday and basically the situation we saw was that there is a very large intake, a very high attrition rate and then a very low output at the end of the day. I just want your views on it. You talk about the methodologies for recruiting graduands into the course. Would we be better placed if we were far more rigorous about accepting students into the course—but then, once they are in the course, supporting them at a far greater level, both financially and educationally, throughout the course, with the hope of getting more Indigenous students coming out the other end as qualified teachers? What is your view on taking it beyond the interview stage to something along the lines of an executive recruitment type approach to selecting potential candidates?

Ms Spiers—That has flaws, in that if you did that and you went to communities then you would get certain families that would put forward people to go into courses. That is currently done to, say, select rangers in Kakadu National Park. It is a community consultation process, but you find that certain people miss out because they might not have the status that other people have. I think that is one way to go but—

CHAIR—Can I just stop you there. Let us just say that we implemented some sort of aptitude test over and above TER scores and so on—a broader ranging aptitude test—as well as candidates being put forward.

Ms Spiers—To me, what has been successful is what Jennifer mentioned previously, and that is going through a VET course. We do not have that up front, but going through vocational

education and training and then articulating into higher ed is an excellent and really successful way to go. We implemented that with the Indigenous rangers, whereby if they got through to a diploma in conservation and land management they articulated into halfway through the degree in environmental science. So they got 18 months credit. VET is a slower process; they can take their time. It is very competency based and therefore they get their confidence built up over time. Whereas if you hit higher ed you have got to get going: you have got nine months or so to do it in the year and there is very little leeway in terms of that support. So whilst you could implement certain levels of passing tests or having some sort of entrance requirement you might be limiting who you get. It may be better to have another pathway, which we currently do not officially have, in the way that they have in primary, where they go through child care up into primary. In secondary, we do not have that sort of pathway.

Mr SAWFORD—You made a comment about the paucity of maths right throughout Australia and I could not agree more. Governments get blamed, and rightly so—and oppositions too, like I represent—for making lots of mistakes. But one of the mistakes we are not responsible for is the dumbing down of mathematics in this country.

Ms Spiers—Absolutely.

Mr SAWFORD—No government is responsible for that. Twenty-five years ago we had 100,000 students at tertiary institutions and universities doing some form of pure mathematics. The numbers now are less than 16,000. There is a paucity of mathematics in secondary schools and, as you indicated, some of it no more than numeracy; it is not mathematics at all. It has nothing to do with mathematics. That is a problem that the lack of leadership in our tertiary institutions has created. It is interesting to compare us with China. China produces one million graduates in engineering, with a strong base in mathematics, each year and only 10,000 lawyers. I think you would find that the ratio in Australia is absolutely the other way around. Would you like to make any other comments about mathematics than what you made in your opening statement? How do we overcome this? What do we do?

Ms Spiers—We have to get primary maths better taught. It has to come from right down at that level because the primary teachers do not know the maths. If the primary teachers do not know the maths then the kids are not going to get taught the maths and they will come into year 7 with very little maths knowledge.

Mr SAWFORD—This question is for Doreen. On page 6 of your submission you mentioned being attracted by the teaching scholarships of the 1970s. I remember those too. I remember a teacher in my year 7 class saying to the 56 of us: ‘You might want to consider teaching scholarships.’ I think they were available then at the intermediate level, the third year of high school. It was a minor amount of money but there was the acknowledgment and status of a teaching scholarship. One of the characteristics of entrants into teacher education, I feel, is that they are very middle class, urban females—I am talking about Australia wide. There is a lack of representation from remote, regional and provincial communities and from basically poor socioeconomic areas. That is quite a contrast to what I think you were suggesting existed back in the 1970s when going into teaching was often an opportunity for all of those groups to get a territory education.

Why do you think that has happened? Do we need to consider that again—maybe not in that same form; you cannot go back and create a world that does not exist anymore—and to do something more? There were mentions about bonding and more financial support, about acknowledging that we have more mature entrants who have family and jobs and that the academic week has to be restructured around what is going on. Do we need to have a fresh look at all of this? I will come to the provocative statement that you made on page 7 in a moment.

Ms Rorrison—Yes, we do need to have another look at it.

Mr SAWFORD—What would you do first?

Ms Rorrison—We have to have another look at it at the systemic level. I believe that teaching is much more complex than it used to be. If we talk about the mathematics example—or even if we talk about the previous question: why don't we give everyone a test to get them into tertiary institutions?—what would we be testing? Worldwide it is generally accepted that there are eight learning areas. There is maths, English, science, SOSE—studies of society and environment—but there is also health and physical education, the arts, technology and design, and languages other than English.

The areas other than our traditional areas of maths, English, science and SOSE need skills, dispositions and intelligences—if we look at the whole range of intelligences—quite different from those that are privileged in our current systems. What is the point in giving somebody who is going to be a teacher in the arts area a test on numeracy and literacy to get them in? Let us face it, that is what tests are because you have to read them et cetera. We want a really creative person who can enthuse the students and has those skills—the ability to draw, dance or whatever. We are looking, but with our minds very closed, at what nowadays is a huge kaleidoscope of expectations within our schools. Getting back to the question, I guess we have to have schools and teacher education that can accommodate all of that. Currently we do not.

Mr SAWFORD—Is it the case that no individual, even in a primary school, can deliver the breadth of curriculum that needs to be delivered, and that that is actually the problem?

Ms Spiers—I agree.

Mr SAWFORD—I have been a school principal, a teacher, a demonstration teacher and a consultant; I know something about teaching. I have never seen a teacher in my life who could cope with the primary curriculum at the level that is required today. I have never met anyone in the world who could do that. I have met people who could do the maths, science and maybe the SOSE, and other people who could do the language and maybe part of the expressive arts. I would break those eight areas into four: mathematics and science, including health; language, including other languages; expressive arts, including all the expressive arts; environmental studies, including all the SOSE things. No-one can teach all that, yet we have a school structure that is demanding that teachers do that. It seems to me that often the maths and science falls off the bandwagon at a primary level, and we have done nothing significant to remedy that.

Ms Spiers—I was out at Jabiru for a decade. It was an area school that only went from transition through to year 10. They did not make much of a separation between primary and secondary. We had maths and science people coming from secondary down to primary and

supporting that. They got a much better science and maths education in the primary there because they filled the gaps. Also in art, some of the teachers in primary did not feel confident in art so they brought the art teacher to the primary. They mixed and matched, and it worked really well.

Ms Rorrison—That is why middle-schooling pedagogies are really popular with teachers—you actually have a core group of teachers developing a wonderful relationships with the students, as young people need. They cannot relate to 12 different teachers like they sometimes have to in secondary school, but you have this core group who each have particular strengths relating to the same group. So you have relationships developing, but you also have the strengths in the different areas.

Mr SAWFORD—I will put a very strong statement, which is from page 7 of your submission, on the record:

Teaching in teacher education units is not popular with academics in the 'school of education', many of whom concentrate on their own research, sell out their teaching and marking and avoid the onerous roles of coordination which tends to take your work load to 70-80 hours a week.

Would you like to expand on that? It is provocative.

Ms Rorrison—And true.

Mr SAWFORD—What do we do about it?

Ms Rorrison—When you apply for a job in a university, the essential criteria are usually: has a PhD, brings in lots of funding and has lots of publications. You get employed and all of a sudden somebody says: 'Yes, those were the essential criteria, but that is not going to be what you do. You are actually going to be working with the undergraduate students in teacher education.' People get a little upset and resentful and say, 'But I was employed because I have these skills and now you are saying I have to do this.' If we want people to prepare teachers, then we want people who are passionate about teaching. The essential criteria should be: loves teaching, loves kids, wants to pass on their knowledge, has recently taught in schools and is familiar with the latest research in education. But that is not what happens. I think universities—correct me if I am wrong—get more funding if they have more PhD lecturers et cetera, and of course it is all about bringing in funding.

Mr SAWFORD—So the balance between scholarship research and teaching is just a myth. I have some other questions, but I will let Stuart take over while I sort them out.

Mr HENRY—I do not have a lot of questions, other than that I am a little intrigued that we have a number of individuals giving evidence to this inquiry who are employed with Charles Darwin University but no-one is actually representing Charles Darwin University. I would be interested in why that is so. In the submissions of those individuals from Charles Darwin University there is certainly a focus on the difference between training and education. I ask: if politicians, bureaucrats and others differentiated between training and education, would that make any difference to the level of attrition in undergraduates in teaching schools here in the Northern Territory?

Ms Rorrison—It might just lower the frustration rates a little bit in the teacher-bashing arguments.

Mr HENRY—And I think Mike was fairly strong on some of those issues in his submission.

Dr Grenfell—I will take your first question. As I understand it, it relates to changes in governance at the university—a new vice-chancellor with a microanalytical approach and a different way of evaluating what people within the university believe. The experience of the three of us goes back to *Future Directions*, which was a research project carried out by Gregor Ramsey. We put a lot of work into that. We were very excited by the project and I think the outcomes have been worth while. We did a proposal, which we fought over as academics do, but we eventually got a consensus proposal which went up to the university authorities but never saw the light of day. Some of us felt that the same thing would happen to our submission to your inquiry. So it is a question of governance, and I think it is a question of learning to work with one another and with the new system. I am not apportioning blame or anything; that is the way it happened—in my personal view; I do not know if the others would agree.

Mr HENRY—As I said, I was interested because we have certainly had a number of submissions that represent the views of other learning institutions, yet here we have had this individual representation—which is certainly quite welcome.

Dr Grenfell—It was a source of sadness to us. The three of us have our own little working party for our course review. We have met at weekends, informally, casually, to look at issues of pedagogy, issues of curriculum and the kinds of reforms—I suppose that is the word—that we consider are necessary in teacher education.

Ms Rorrison—It is also related to the fact that we have not had a head of school for 15 months. The wheels begin to fall off when that happens.

Mr SAWFORD—Hopefully you will enjoy David Lynch.

Ms Rorrison—Hopefully.

Mr SAWFORD—I think you will. Mike, this is about one of the points we talked about this morning, but it is really a question to Helen and Doreen. This exchange of personnel in the relationship between schools and universities seems a very desirable feature, but it confronts differentials in salaries and differentials in conditions. Albeit that there can be some goodwill, those need to be overcome. In my view and I think the committee's view, we need to overcome that in some way. People have suggested that we can top up those salaries and that it ought to be a departmental or maybe a joint departmental-university responsibility. What is your view on how you can overcome those constraints and on the exchange between teacher educators and practising teachers in schools?

Ms Rorrison—I think what we have running at the moment—where the department is paying for someone to work with us on campus and they just continue to get their salary, which is higher than they would get if they worked at the university—works really well, and that has now been going for three years. A seconded teacher—

Mr SAWFORD—Does that create some problems with the teacher educators at the university who are getting a lower salary? Other institutions have mentioned that that is a problem.

Ms Rorrison—For the last three years, to this time, that person has worked directly with me. No, I do not get upset.

Ms Spiers—People do not know.

Ms Rorrison—People generally would not realise that teachers get more than lecturers.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a very manipulative way of saying things!

Dr Grenfell—I think it is also that the people who were brought in fitted in well in the salary scale.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe in a small institution you can get away with that—

Ms Rorrison—Maybe.

Mr SAWFORD—because the goodwill is evident for people to see rather than being distant.

Ms Rorrison—It is a brilliant system: just to have people coming in from the schools for a year and a half and working with us and then going back out into the schools. Both systems benefit immensely from that.

Mr SAWFORD—You had a very passionate response just a moment ago. One thing that seems to come out in this teacher education inquiry is that there is a huge variety. There are people like you, Helen and Mike who have a passion for teacher education in its true sense of having a balance between scholarship, research and teaching. A lot of other universities give me the impression that teacher education is research based, as you said; that the teaching is inconsequential and the scholarship is inconsequential as well. It is publish or perish; research or perish—and that is what it does. What role do vice-chancellors have in Australia in changing that way of thinking? Who takes the leadership role in turning that around? Is it a head of education? You have a new one coming in. He is full of energy and bright ideas. He might upset a bit of the status quo. He may do wonderful things; he may not. But he will certainly give you a bit of a rollercoaster ride—I am sure of that—and he will probably be a great advantage. That is one of the necessary aspects of change, isn't it: an impetus of new ideas? Where does the leadership come from?

Ms Rorrison—I think we are very lucky that our institution is so small, in that we can survive on just the passion of a few people to drive the programs, to make the changes. It is not huge when you want to make changes. But until the last 15 months, when we have not had a head of school, I would have said that the head of school in the School of Education is certainly very important in terms of modelling as well as really supporting and valuing their staff. I say that in schools too. If we really support and value teachers, they will come up with the goods.

Dr Grenfell—I think the last 15 months have in fact seen a considerable shift, a movement. We have appointed at the university a teaching and learning project officer—I cannot recall the

title but it is a senior post. Her name is Lynne Hunt and you are probably aware of her. I think that was a deliberate move on behalf of the vice-chancellor to attempt to invigorate teaching and learning within the university. I think we can already see signs of that. The leadership there came from a teaching and learning committee, which I think you, Doreen, were a member of or certainly took part in. I think that the method that has been introduced with regard to champions, although a little bit inorganic or artificial, nevertheless has focused upon the need for people to be given responsibility. So we have got a much more distributed form of leadership at that particular level. I think the last 15 months have seen a change away from the top-down hierarchal head-of-school model.

Mr SAWFORD—It is a long time. I think it would be a terrible position to be in, to be acting in that role for 15 months. That is just appalling.

Dr Grenfell—There have been several of them. We have had a range of people. Because of the intensity of the job—and this morning I spoke about the intensification of teachers' work and Doreen has talked in her comments this afternoon about the intensification of the work of university lecturers—the person who has had that job has had minimal relief, because of the situation in the university as a whole and within the school as a whole. People like Jennifer Rennie have done an absolutely sterling job, considering everything else they have done. But it is like anywhere else: people of quality are able to cope. Jennifer does all her research and all her writing, but it is nevertheless at a considerable cost.

Mr SAWFORD—Was getting rid of teachers colleges a good thing? Just for the benefit of Hansard, I will say that Mike has put one finger on his lips. That tells us everything!

Dr Grenfell—It is a good question, but you know the expression: teaching and nursing are the milch cows of the university. We have carried this university through. It has, as you know from the press, tremendous financial problems, and this is part of being a small regional university. When I go away to the AARE conference at the end of the year and I meet my colleagues from Bunbury and elsewhere it is the same cry. There are major difficulties within the university system.

Mr SAWFORD—I often saw the Dawkins review as a means to change the culture at universities and hopefully do a favour to teachers colleges. I am not too sure it did either.

Dr Grenfell—It is an interesting question. There are pluses and minuses to that.

Ms Spiers—I think it is quite ironic that teacher education is still just a part of the university when you think that part of the job of the university is to teach. They still do not have a whole-of-university effect. If you looked at it from a higher perspective, you would think you would be involved in assisting people to teach better, rather than just training teachers. But that does not happen.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that too logical for education?

Ms Spiers—Higher education lecturers do not have to have a teaching qualification. Until that happens, until they value teaching as a qualification on equal par with one's research and one's PhD, you will not get the respect for the vocation and the skills that are involved.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not know what your memories are, Doreen, but my memory of the South Australian teachers colleges is that there was that fantastic impetus of new ideas from international countries. A lot of them came from the red brick universities of the United Kingdom but some came from Europe as well—Holland, Scandinavia. They were young, they were vigorous, they were energetic and they turned it upside down. Being a student teacher at that time was just a wonderful experience to look back on. Does education need that? Is it a personnel impetus of new ideas? It needs an impetus of new ideas—I think you are all saying that—but where does that come from? Where do you start?

Dr Grenfell—That is what my paper addresses. It is, again, a very personal view.

Mr SAWFORD—It does not tell us where to start.

Dr Grenfell—I think it says: 'Let's open up education. Let's develop communities of learners. Let's work on building up communities of learners. Let's go for a more—

Mr SAWFORD—Can I interrupt you. Just give me step 1. One of the things we have to come up with in this report is a set of recommendations. Janet, our inquiry secretary, was telling us last night that there have been 89 reports on teacher education in the last 20-odd years. That says something in itself. It must be that some of those recommendations have been valid—maybe some were not—but have not been acted upon, because it just goes on and on and on. We would hope to change that. Maybe we will not have a huge set of recommendation; maybe we will have a smaller set of very substantive and fundamental change recommendations. So we are looking for people who are involved in teacher education to make recommendations to us about where that beginning is, as far as they can see—like step 1.

Dr Grenfell—I am not doing it in a step-by-step recipe approach but I am going to highlight some things. They are not in any particularly priority area that I referred to in my paper. Firstly, we need to move to a much more problem based learning situation. I am talking about genuine problems—not problems invented in simulations, not problems invented by academics but actual problems that exist within, say, the Northern Territory, some of which we have discussed today. Secondly, we need to move to much more transformative education. I do not have time to develop that theme here in its full implications but if we look at the work of, say, O'Sullivan on transformative learning and education it is incorporating moral education, values education, which Margot is taking the lead in, and civil and civic education, which the current government has had a considerable interest in in view of the apathy towards democratic institutions that is prevalent in some areas.

Mr SAWFORD—I will stop you there. We have got your submission. I take the point of what you are saying. What would you do, Helen?

Ms Spiers—It depends on if you are wanting to fix the whole system or to start small and get bigger.

Mr SAWFORD—Either, or both.

Ms Spiers—To me, the schools have done themselves a disservice because they are too insular. They need to open up to the community. They need to be part of the community. They need to be free to walk in and out of and for parents to get involved in.

Mr SAWFORD—More so of secondary than primary, or both?

Ms Spiers—You need to start somewhere so I think you start at primary because there seems to be more parents involved in primary, possibly for a number of reasons. I think you need to open up the schools. You need to get people involved from the community. Our courses work far better if you get the community involved and do not remain insular. Schools have to have people involved. If I could teach something, I should be able to go into the schools and deliver it and be on equal terms with the whole delivery—so it is a whole community thing. Then people will know what teachers do. They do not know what they do and they do not want to go into the classroom. They do not want to go into the school. They do not even know where the entrance is. They just do not like it. We have to open it up, let people see what it is and get the teachers more support by bringing in, if you like, experts in certain areas, like you say.

Mr SAWFORD—What do the universities have to do?

Ms Spiers—I think the universities form the partnership. They are part of the partnership. They are also in schools. They can come and go in terms of bringing in their expertise.

Mr SAWFORD—What should the employing authority do?

Ms Spiers—Like DEET or the university?

Mr SAWFORD—DEET or Catholic Ed or whatever.

Ms Spiers—They have to see the big picture and see that we are producing people who are going to work in the community, and be more flexible in the whole structure. VET in Schools has changed some things. For example, kids at Taminmin High might only be in school two days a week and they are with an employer three days a week. That works really well. Everyone is in a partnership arrangement; people feel that they can come and go. It is not too tight and too insular.

Dr Grenfell—There is a Palmerston school that employs one of these community based teachers who links the work in the school to the community, the community problems and the community needs. I cannot remember her name, but she has worked with us on occasions. It is a community driven approach.

Ms Spiers—It is not the approach with the Nightcliff High and Nightcliff Primary. You probably know about the lighthouse schools or the investigator schools. I have observed that and it is fantastic. They logon, they have computers, all their work is on the intranet, they select what they are going to do over a semester and they are committed to that program because the students and the parents have been involved in planning it. A whole host of teachers come and go in their lives as support and facilitators.

Ms Rorrison—I will take a slightly different tack. You said that the teachers colleges in the seventies were vibrant, exciting places because they were attracting vibrant, bright, excited, enthusiastic people. Teaching had a higher status. I thought at the time that teachers were valued in the community. That has changed. The studies show that one person cannot relate to 30 people for 50 minutes—maybe 22 or 23 if you are brilliant, but not 30. If we make the teaching doable, we attract and keep teachers—and we do not keep a lot of our very capable teachers—who are going to make a difference in the lives of young people, and then we are half way to dealing with the problem. That is why I am suggesting that there has to be some way of supporting our preservice teachers while they are still studying, especially during that prac time. I was speaking to one of my students last night. He has the flu, and he is trying to work night shifts and then turn up at school every day, because he has a family. He is passionate; he is going to be a great teacher, if he survives. We need to attract people who want to teach. We have to make teaching doable. And we have to keep those fantastic people that we do attract as teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—What about doing something about getting more males, more country kids and more kids from poor socioeconomic areas—this is for Australia, not just here—into teaching? They are not in teaching; none of those three groups is in teaching to a main degree.

Ms Rorrison—A lot of that is about selection. We do have that; we have 50 per cent males in the secondary program, and have had for the last two years.

Mr SAWFORD—Done deliberately?

Ms Rorrison—No, we just get what the other people do not want.

Ms Spiers—Look at nursing. Nursing in the Northern Territory was given a real push about three or four years ago. The courses became external. I had friends out at Jabiru who had been at-home mums for, say, five years and had not done an ounce of study, and they came to me and said: ‘I read in the paper that you can do nursing from home. You can do external studies.’ They were into it and they have since graduated. There were scholarships, there were external courses, there was flexibility, and there was a real push in the media that we needed nurses and that there were jobs out there. And they did it: the nursing numbers went through the roof. We need that scholarship support. We need to have it flexible so that they may not even have to come to the university. We may be able to deliver it through multimedia—all sorts of ways. In nursing, they do not have to come except for intensives; they can do it all from home. We have to get the flexibility so that people do not have to leave their jobs or they do not have to come and live in Darwin.

CHAIR—Thanks for appearing before the committee today. We will contact you if we need any further information.

[3.33 pm]

DWYER, Mr Richard John, Student, Charles Darwin University

JOHNS, Mr Sam, Student, Charles Darwin University

JONES, Mr Roger, Student, Charles Darwin University

JORDAN, Miss Helen, Student, Charles Darwin University

McAULAY, Mr Matthew Frederick, Student, Charles Darwin University

McCASKER, Mr Benjamin Walter, Student, Charles Darwin University

MORGAN, Miss Cherie, Student, Charles Darwin University

NEWLEY, Miss Martha Cusick, Student, Charles Darwin University

WEATE, Miss Catherine Louise, Student, Charles Darwin University

CHAIR—We really appreciate your taking time from your studies to come and chat with us today because it really is important. The information that we get informs our recommendations. It is vital that we hear from the students who are receiving the teacher training so that we can get it from the horse's mouth as to what you find good about your training and what could be improved. You are part of the formulation of our recommendations and I thank you for that. We are hearing from academics, we are hearing from school principals and we are hearing from a range of people throughout the community, but it is really important that we hear from the student teachers who are actually the ones receiving that training. So thank you for that.

I would remind you that this forum is a proceeding of the parliament and it is being recorded in *Hansard*. We will be providing proof copies of the transcript for you to have a look at. Also the transcript will be posted on the web site, so all your friends can see what you said. Thanks again for being part of it. I will start with a pretty general question: what do you like about the teacher training that you are getting and what do you think could be improved? Would anyone like to kick that off?

Mr Dwyer—Not much.

CHAIR—You don't like much about it, or not much could be improved?

Mr Dwyer—I do not like much because it is academically challenging for me.

CHAIR—Because it is academically challenging?

Mr Dwyer—Yes, to extremes.

CHAIR—What made you want to be a teacher?

Mr Dwyer—Circumstance more than anything. I cannot do my old job any more because of injuries so I did not have anything much to do except to get away from the labouring side of things and start teaching. It is just a different career path—not by choice.

CHAIR—What about the girls? What do you like—or not like—about your teaching course?

Miss Newley—I disagree. I do not think it is as academically based as the arts degree I have just done, which was only essays and exams. Teaching gives you an opportunity to do more relevant assignments and more relevant study on something that you are interested in—to a degree.

CHAIR—Do you find the pedagogy that you are learning to be an interesting field?

Miss Newley—Yes, I am pretty passionate about teaching.

CHAIR—Great!

Miss Newley—Not so much about the content because doing the content through the arts degree was quite boring because just essay after essay gets you down after a while. Although I do not think it is perfect I think that teaching gives you something that you can actively participate in more, especially in class where we get to do a lot more group work and a lot more discussion. And everything that we do outside of class is relevant to what we are studying in class, which I find helpful instead of doing textbook reading that we will never, ever look back to again, which I find quite useless.

CHAIR—What was your arts course based on—literature?

Miss Newley—History, geography and English, so it was very academically based. It was lots of research and not a lot of time out in the field. It was just reading and dictating lectures.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you completed your arts degree?

Miss Newley—I have two units to go.

Mr SAWFORD—So you are not in a Dip. Ed. year?

Miss Newley—No, I am doing a combined degree.

Mr SAWFORD—Following on from the question that Luke asked, can we go around the table and find out how each of you came into teacher education. Richard Dwyer came from a labouring background; where did you come from—straight from school?

Miss Newley—Yes, although I have had time off since. In high school—it sounds stupid—I had some great teachers and so in trying to decide what I wanted to do at university I thought I would try teaching and now, in the early stages, I am really enjoying it. Although it can be difficult I find what we do exciting and relevant.

Mr SAWFORD—How did you others come to be in teaching and did you do something beforehand?

Miss Morgan—I had previously been working with youth and had studied youth work and social work when I was living in Adelaide. I really wanted to work with the adolescent age group and, like Martha, thought that I had a skill there that could be offered. I thought that teaching would be a good way to be able to do that. I found with youth work that I was not really comfortable with the counselling side of things and the in-depth personal stuff. I found it difficult to separate myself from that a lot of times.

Mr SAWFORD—Did you move up to Darwin on your own or with your family?

Miss Morgan—I have family who live here so I came back home, I guess you could say.

Miss Jordan—I have a VET background. I am a chef by trade. I now have a family, so the working nights did not exactly appeal to me or my family. I had an interest in teaching. I wanted to go to TAFE to train apprentices, but since I do not have the 20 years behind me the only way was to go through the schooling system. I do not know who to go with—Martha or Richard here. The academic side of it is interesting, but then again I am teaching a trade, so some of it can be irrelevant. I think personally that some of it is not VET friendly. It has its relevance, but I do not think it is as friendly to trades as it is to the people who—

Miss Newly—Who are doing SOSE and English—the two broad areas.

Miss Jordan—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—'Not VET friendly' is an interesting term. Do you want to expand on that a little?

Miss Jordan—I understand that VET is more broad than just trades but, like Richard, I am not academically minded. I am more hands-on, so it is pretty much a clash between my skills and the way I learn and the fact that I have to sit in a classroom or university room. I just think that you cannot learn to cook out of a book, so how can you teach out of a book.

Mr Dwyer—I can elaborate. A lot of the assignments we do—and I have had three major assignments in the semester that has just gone—require that you have a look at a unit of work on a subject of your choice, be it history or whatever it is in relation to where you are going as a teacher. With the VET stream, the unit of work type set-up does not work the same way. There are no outcomes and indicators. VET has not got that introduced yet, so I am doing assignments on stuff I have absolutely no idea about because I have to pluck it from another curriculum. That is just one little example where the assignments are not VET friendly.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is not structured or explicit and it is vague?

Mr Dwyer—Yes. It is a bit much to ask of them to structure a separate assignment for the poor old VET teachers.

Mr HENRY—That is an argument that I have heard and I sympathise with you. There is a different learning process. We have heard today about academics being concerned about the expression ‘training’, but training is about people who do things with their hands and learn through that process. As a trade teacher, do you really need to have the sort of academic focus that this sort of course provides? I certainly think that you need to understand classroom management and develop some of the teaching skills, but do you really need to go into all the academic aspects that this particular course might provide?

Mr Dwyer—Yes, that is pretty much it.

Mr Johns—I have come to the teaching degree after having already completed another degree.

CHAIR—What degree was that?

Mr Johns—It was a Bachelor of Arts.

Mr SAWFORD—So are you doing a Dip. Ed?

Mr Johns—No, I am doing a Bachelor of Education (Secondary).

Mr SAWFORD—Is that a two-year course, on top of the arts degree?

Mr Johns—It is another two years, but I am condensing it into 18 months.

Mr Macaulay—The reason teaching has been brought into my life is that at a young age, at 17, I started coaching baseball under-16s. The parents of the kids gave me lots of praise and said, ‘Are you going to become a teacher?’ I thought about it and thought that sounds like a good idea, but I started to think that music was the way I wanted to go. So I went into music and then I started to think, ‘What type of career can I get out of music?’ There are pretty few ways to make a career out of it. After my father being in my ear about it, saying, ‘Why don’t you be a teacher?’ here I am.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you all work while studying?

Miss Jordan—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What sorts of things do you do?

Miss Morgan—I pick up part-time jobs during semester but not too much. Prior to studying, I worked for the department of education. Generally in our long break in the middle of the year and in our long three-month break over Christmas I do temp work with various government agencies.

Miss Jordan—When I was part time at uni I did part-time work as a chef, but then it was a bit of a juggle with the baby so now I am a full-time university student and a full-time mum.

Miss Newley—I have always worked since I went to uni. I work most days that I do not have classes, plus weekends. I have been working in hospitality. I was at university in New South Wales to start with and I worked on the campus before and after class. I still do that because there is no other way.

Mr Dwyer—I am a diesel fitter by trade, so every now and then I do odd jobs for a couple of blokes. That is about the extent of my work.

Mr McAulay—I worked part time for Woolworths for a bit and then I went to the casino. I worked there for about a year. Now I am working for my father full time. He has branched off his laundromat to a drycleaners, so he has got me managing that, which is very nice of him. That is my work.

Mr Johns—I used to work for Mobil at a service station doing nights but now I am working for Coles as a night filler. Every day that I have got off from uni I do that. I am trying to get as much money as I can together so I can pay for my HECS, hopefully by the end of next year.

Mr Jones—How I got into teacher education—I am not too sure; I am still wondering. I started doing science and sort of branched off. Now I want to do PE.

Mr McCasker—I am pretty much the same as Roger. I almost completed a Bachelor of Science majoring in exercise and sport. Like Matthew said before, I wondered where I could go with that. Always at the back of my mind an option was teaching, so that is the path I have chosen.

CHAIR—If there were one thing you would like changed in your teaching course to make it better, what would it be?

Mr McAulay—I have an answer to the question you asked before. I think that the pracs are probably the best part of the education part of things; however, I think that they should maybe have an observation prac. They have got one now but they have put it into the third year of your degree. Apparently, this unit is supposed to open your eyes to see if you want to be a teacher or not. I do not understand why that is not in the first year and not after you have done three years of studying. If you go to this observation thing and decide that you do not want to be a teacher you have wasted your time, haven't you? You could have done a trade. You could have done something else. Maybe that is something that could be changed in the early part of the degree—a prac where you do not do any teaching but observe how teachers do it and what is all about.

Miss Newley—I agree with what Matt has just said because a lot of us do a degree first or we have a trade first. My arts degree has been based on becoming a teacher. If I decide that I do not want to be a teacher after I have been out on my practical then I have an arts degree that is pretty worthless. I have to then go back and do further education to make it worth while, like a master's and honours, to make it useful for anything. In the first year when you enrol in either a combined degree or you want to pursue teaching at the end of it in a Dip. Ed., they should offer a preliminary course to go and see what it is all about. What I thought teaching was about when I was a student and what I have learnt it was about as a preservice teacher are two very different things. You think you get 12 weeks holiday a year and work six hours a day but you do not. They should make that very clear from day one when you enrol in the degree, I think.

Mr SAWFORD—You mean your teachers never told you that?

Miss Newley—No. They were probably not very nice teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe you did not listen!

Miss Newley—I do not have a problem with that, but the preconceptions that you enter into a degree with and the realities when you get to third year and are going on prac and having to do full-time university and part-time work leave you thinking, 'If only I could have got this out of the way earlier.' While I see observation as really important, I do not think you should have to wait until third year to be able to observe properly.

Mr SAWFORD—I take your point.

Mr Johns—I agree with what Matthew and Martha said. I have a brother in Adelaide who is doing a teaching degree through the University of South Australia. In his course, he began observing and teaching classes right from his first year and he was able to grasp what teaching was about straightaway.

CHAIR—Which university is he at?

Mr Johns—The University of South Australia. I think that is what they should have done at Charles Darwin University. If we had been able to see what the classes and teaching would have been like from day one, I think it would have been a lot better. I agree with what Martha was saying. You get to third year and you are just starting to do teaching. If you decide then that you do not actually want to look at that as a career and you want to go into something else, you are a bit stuffed. I am lucky, because in my arts degree, I have majored in history and American studies. I am going to continue on and hopefully become a teacher but, even if I decide I do not want to do it, I can look at going into other areas. I am not restricted in that I do not have to go back and do another course at university, go into a course at TAFE or do whatever; I can use my study areas to branch off and look at something else. I am not quite restricted in the same way.

CHAIR—Richard, you must have a suggestion for improvement?

Mr Dwyer—Not really. There is not a unit that I have done yet that has not got some sort of relevance. As you said before, I am talking about all the academic stuff and what is involved in being a teacher. Even if it is only 10 per cent of that unit, it is still relevant. I want to be a VET teacher but I could get thrown into high school the year after next. They may say: 'Bugger! We are down an English teacher. Off you go.'

Mr HENRY—Would you teach in diesel fitting? Is that what you would like to do?

Mr Dwyer—I would like to, but I am ex-Defence, so I have the whole spectrum of the trade. I did not just do a trade through Caterpillar, Cummins or whatever, so I can do hydraulics.

Mr HENRY—There is probably potential for you. I do not know about Darwin, but there are different training organisations, including TAFE and private training providers, who, with skills

in some of that heavy and big equipment in the resource sector the way they are, are looking for people with skills.

Mr Dwyer—I am a bit worried about how many programs there are in schools that I would like to teach. All I have been able to find so far is teaching how to service a car battery and stuff like that.

Mr HENRY—I do not know. I am not here to give you advice, but perhaps being a school teacher as such in a schooling environment at this stage of the development of VET in Schools is not going to give you the opportunity that you might want.

Mr Dwyer—I am hoping it is going to get better and a bit more advanced in the future. I know that VET is only just coming of age. Hopefully it will get better in five or six years. Helen probably feels the same way.

Mr HENRY—On that point, I think that, in vocational training, the move towards associate degrees and things like that for trainers and instructors in that area is a good one in terms of developing teaching skills, but I think it is much more valuable if it is industry specific so that the modules you are doing are relevant to the skills and the knowledge that you have rather than the broader academic approach, which may suit a secondary school teacher with a specific approach to teaching in science or maths but not necessarily a teacher in VET, because the learning methodology is often quite different as well.

Mr Dwyer—I would like us to be able to fast-track a bit and avoid all the academia and all that sort of garbage, but, as I said, everything I have done so far is relevant in some way.

Mr HENRY—Yes. I think there is benefit in it. I would be advising you to persevere with it too. These things can often get easier.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of the practicum—there is no observation—what happens in your first, second, third and fourth year? What happens in the practicums in first year in Charles Darwin University?

Mr Johns—Nothing. There is no prac until the third year.

Mr SAWFORD—There is no prac—not in second year?

Miss Newley—There is nothing until the second semester of the third year.

Mr SAWFORD—That is amazing. In third year is there observation?

Mr McAuley—Only in second semester.

Miss Newley—They have only just introduced the bachelor of secondary education as a whole degree. Before that, you had to have some previous learning—either a degree, a VET background or a degree from way back when—before you could go into it. So it is only designed to go over the two years.

Mr SAWFORD—But you are in the education faculty?

Miss Newley—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—What you were saying about observation just seems to make so much commonsense. I would have thought the next step would be in your first year as well.

Miss Jordan—As Richard and I have come through, we had to have a certificate in workplace training and assessment, certificate IV. With that, you have to have some qualification with training. So, with observation, I have already done the training side of it. I already know what I am getting myself in for. If you were to put a practicum or something like that in the first or second year, what would we—students who have had recognition of prior learning of a year and a half—miss out on?

Mr SAWFORD—But surely in a practicum someone involved in teacher education could give you a synopsis of what you should be looking at and what you should be trying to observe—in other words, give you a framework under which you could operate. Then you could go out and do as Mr Johns said: get a bit of a feel of whether you want to do it or not. I would have thought that was pretty logical, and I am amazed that it does not happen.

Miss Newley—Also, when you are starting this education degree you are learning how to think in a different way. You are learning how to identify different things with different people. Instead of just saying, ‘This is my life and this is how I am’, you would say, ‘This is a teacher-student situation.’ You have to handle it differently. If you could learn that back in year 1 then by year 3 you might have it more cemented in you. But now we are frantically trying to figure out with our personalities how we are going to adjust to this. I am finding that difficult with the case studies that we get in class—‘How would you respond to this situation?’ I do not know. It is a bit freakish.

Miss Jordan—I do not know if that comes with age. Sorry, I do not mean to put you down.

Miss Newley—No, but I think that only being in a classroom as a student and as an aide I do not have to identify the things that a teacher would have to identify—for example, see situations that might become important or behavioural problems that might lead to something further. You do not learn to identify that by doing an arts degree. You do not ever go into a school. You do not have any of that connection with a school.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think you are mollycoddled a bit too much? Do not take this as a personal thing, but I get the impression that people running teacher education seem to be afraid of someone falling over a bit. Education is about learning, falling over, getting up and standing up. I am sure you did it in your high school career—you had some successes, you had some failures and it did not destroy you. After an observation period, some will say, ‘Well, this is not for me’ or ‘This is for me—I love this stuff.’ And then you do the next stage. I would have thought you would do that in your first year too. It may be a limited thing where you get in front of a group of kids and tell a story. Some of these things are not rocket science. If a teacher was saying to you, ‘This is what you need to do to tell a story’ or ‘This is what you need to do to introduce a concept in something,’ these are not difficult things to do in front of a class. It is a confidence thing more than the subject matter.

It is intimidating to get in front of class if you have never done it before, but you never find out whether you can do this or not. Some people get out and they love it. It is like an audience; it is like being an entertainer. They suddenly love the teaching thing. Other people know in their head and in their heart that it is wrong for them, and they say to themselves, ‘This ain’t for me; this is not my scene,’ and they get out. I would have thought you would get out of that situation, get out of an arts degree and get into something else. You need to make those decisions in year 1, don’t you, not in year 3? Or am I wrong? Are you in a better position to make the decision in year 3 than in year 1? That is the other argument that is put forward to us: that you are not ready to make those decisions in year 1, but you might be ready in year 3. What do you feel is the right way?

Mr McAulay—I do not really see how anything could change your mind. You would go and observe things. You would notice little things like the behaviour of the kids or of the older students, if you want to go to a high school. You would notice the way they respected their teacher. You would notice little things like that. You would not be there as a student to study. You would see it through a teacher’s eyes. If you find that you do not like it, you will be saved three years worth of education. I think it should be done in first year. It is fair enough, if there is to be a unit with 10 credit points, that there has to be some kind of assessment you have to go through to get those credit point et cetera. For a little thing like observing, they might teach you how to observe and to write a journal on what you have to do and on things you might think about later—that is why you would journal; you can actually scaffold on this. But why not just go in there for five working days and see how it is? If you do not like it, you will not study it. It is as easy as that.

Mr SAWFORD—A week would probably be long enough for an introductory observation, wouldn’t it?

Mr McAulay—I would say so.

Mr Dwyer—If you got attached to a teacher.

Miss Jordan—Matthew, are you trying to say that observation should be done at the start and not at the end?

Mr McAulay—Of course.

Miss Jordan—That means that someone like me would miss out totally on the observation period.

Miss Morgan—You would still have all your other practicums where you are going out and applying your teaching methods. Although you might miss out on the observation, you would still have all the other pracs.

Miss Newley—What is the problem with having two observations, though—one when you do not know and one when you know what you are really looking for? I think they would both be worth while.

Mr SAWFORD—They are not mutually exclusive.

Miss Newley—But it would also get you into the school. I would have liked to have started as an aide, but I did not know how to get into it. Now I know how, but I am so heavily loaded with work and uni that I do not have the resources to offer them anything—I go to uni in school hours. Doing that would have given me an even better idea. But you do not get that early-on relationship, which I think is a big problem.

Mr Dwyer—There is one issue—and it might be not so much for a lot of us, who are a bit older now and not straight out of school. My sister's position is that she has just left school and gone straight to uni to do a Bachelor of Ed, because she knows that she wants to be a teacher. If she were to do a week or whatever of observation in her first year, she would still be thinking like a school student. Kids straight out of school going into a Bachelor of Ed I do not think would be in the right frame of mind.

Mr SAWFORD—I think the proviso Matthew put on that was that first you would have some work at the university to prepare you for undertaking that observation. You would then have a framework of reference to operate from. You would not be going straight from school. You would have a framework for what you should be observing and doing—writing up a journal or whatever. I take the point that you would not send a schoolkid, without any preparation whatsoever, off to a school.

Miss Morgan—At the moment, in the first two years you do your arts degree and in your second two years you do the education. Perhaps it should be more side by side. At present they say, 'Well, you first need to learn your craft'—or whatever it is that you are specialising in—'and then you will come to us with all that knowledge and we will teach you how to stand there and teach it.' That is great and it is a logical way of looking at it. But, as you can tell by all the comments being made, we feel that surely somehow there can be more of a crossover.

It is only 18 months until I graduate and yet I would not know how to write a classroom program or evaluate students. I feel I have a lot of knowledge about what I will be teaching, but I think, 'God, how will I be able to stand there in 18 months time and call myself a teacher?' At the end of your second year, in many ways you feel great because you have pretty much done your arts degree and you feel as though your knowledge is up there and all that. Then you get to a point where you are like: 'Oh, God, I actually don't know anything.' Because you have not done any of the education side of things yet, you feel as though—I have felt this, anyway—that you are starting back as a first-year student again.

Mr HENRY—Picking up on what Martha said earlier, do you think that the teaching faculty should have partnerships with schools in the area so that there can be a more integrated process through the course with various schools and you can participate in the teaching process in a practical sense?

Miss Jordan—For one of my assignments I went out to a school and spoke to a teacher who is what I want to be—a home economics teacher. Upon telling the placement facilitator she said that I was not allowed to talk to them about my working in their school in my practicum. I said I did not mention that and that I was just trying to do my own research and it was actually the teacher who begged me to be a student for her. So I think there was a bit of protocol and policy there.

Mr HENRY—Do you think there might be barriers to that?

Miss Jordan—Yes. We did not even know you could not approach them. I just thought: who else to ask but the horse themself if you need an answer.

CHAIR—Commonsense.

Miss Jordan—That is what I thought. You do not know these things until you touch the boundary, then I did know that I could not talk to them regarding those issues.

Mr SAWFORD—Being trained as a chef certainly gave you some commonsense. That is a good thing.

Miss Jordan—Yes.

CHAIR—It is hard job being a chef.

Miss Jordan—Mum or chef—yes.

CHAIR—Both hard jobs. Are there any more comments or thoughts you want to convey to us?

Miss Newley—When we go in and enter into our degrees we get an outline, and we are not actually allowed to do education early on, otherwise we would. In first year we are not allowed to do any education units in a combined arts-education degree.

Mr SAWFORD—You do not have a BEd?

Miss Morgan—I do not think it is that you are not allowed. What I got as a first year was a four-year plan on a little sheet and it said that was how you should follow it along. I have since found out that you do not actually have to do that. So long as you do the core units at the end of it and so long as your credit points at the end are right, it is kind of up to you how you fit it in. So I think perhaps the lecturers might prefer you to do it in such a way because it is logical or it is easier for them. But if you knew that it did not have to be like that, then you could—

Mr SAWFORD—I am a bit confused here. At Charles Darwin, do you have a Bachelor of Education, or do you have a Bachelor of Arts which you then convert into a teaching degree?

Miss Newley—We have a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education Secondary, so it is a double degree.

Mr SAWFORD—So that is the rationale for delaying the observation and delaying the practicum?

Miss Newley—Yes, learning your content first. And when they give you that little sheet of paper it says arts for your first year—your common units—and arts for second year, in third year a little bit of education in first semester and nearly all education in second semester and then just all education from then on. But education subjects are put down as fourth year subjects, so you

cannot just jump into it straightaway. You have to do your preliminary stuff first, which I guess is why we do have to wade around in the world of not really knowing.

Miss Weate—Can I say first that I am glad the committee is here and I think what you are doing is good. It probably does not really relate so much to me because I did my BA in Tassie about eight years ago. I had no idea that I wanted to be a schoolteacher until a couple of years ago and I have been in the work force for the last six years. I think what these guys are saying is valid and we do need to get into schools earlier. But at the same time it is good to learn that arts stuff and focus on the subjects that you do want to teach, and actually enjoy studying those subjects and gaining that knowledge, and then get to a point of asking yourself whether you want to impart that knowledge. So I can see why the two years of arts is set up and then the two years of education, but I think that it could be blended better.

CHAIR—Thank you all again for coming along. We really do appreciate your thoughts and input.

Mr SAWFORD—And good luck!

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

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 4.10 pm