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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL
TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

TUESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2005

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
Tuesday, 27 September 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: Ms Corcoran, Mr Michael Ferguson, 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.

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Committee met at 9.01 am

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, which is looking at teacher education. The inquiry has examined a broad range of issues which impact on how well we are preparing our teachers for the complex, demanding and critical role they play in educating our children. The inquiry has generated significant interest across Australia. We have received 150 submissions and continue to receive more. We are about halfway through our schedule of public hearings, having visited Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory. We have also held several hearings in the ACT. I take the opportunity to thank Flinders University for hosting the committee today. I also thank those responsible for the arrangements made during our visit.

[9.01 am]

EDWARDS, Professor Anne Rosalie, Vice-Chancellor and President, Flinders University

TRENT, Professor Faith Helen Elly, Executive Dean, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, and Professor of Education, Flinders University

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and the record is made available to the public through the parliament's 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 contempt of parliament. Do you wish to make any amendments to the submission you have provided to the committee?

Prof. Trent—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Prof. Edwards—I am here to say a little bit about Flinders University and the context within which the programs that you are looking at for teacher education sit. We are very conscious of that at Flinders, because next year is our 40th anniversary. The university was established in the 1960s and from its outset it had in mind having a mix of general undergraduate education and professional courses leading to particular occupations. We still have that mix. Education has been with us for a while. It was also at Sturt College of Advanced Education in its various forms in South Australia before it joined Flinders University in the early 1990s.

Recent developments have probably raised the profile of education within the suite of courses at Flinders. We have allocated more places to the education courses. There has been a fair amount of curriculum development, most recently, as you are aware, in the introduction of combined degrees between Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Health Sciences and so on. This is a new development that came in in 2005. It goes back to my initial comments that it is only because we have a well-rounded discipline base in science, arts, health sciences and so on that we are able to provide that kind of education for teachers. We have made it more visible, obviously, to the students coming into our courses and also the schools and employers of teachers. Students are now going to have clearly flagged in their transcripts the combination of degrees that they have taken to set themselves up for a career in teaching. That is an important development.

We also have a range of postgraduate courses for ongoing professional development of teachers and for attracting people from other occupations into teaching later in their careers. I was on Brendan Nelson's earlier review of teaching and teacher education, which had a particular focus on science, mathematics and engineering. One of the main recommendations of that review was that we needed to be more actively out there, encouraging people at various stages of their careers to think about moving into teaching from a whole range of other occupations. That is an important part of the way in which, here at Flinders, we have constructed

our courses and gone out and promoted them. We are looking not just at 18-year-olds coming straight from school but at people who are switching careers at various points.

I am sure you are aware of this but I think it is very important that a school of education have a range of access points into teacher education and that it thinks ahead about how to construct courses that are appropriate for people at different stages of development. It is obviously very important to have close links with the schools in an ongoing way to make sure that the way in which you design those courses is appropriate to where students are going to end up, as well as where you want to bring them in. Flinders was established to be a research university from the outset, so all the disciplines, including the professional schools at Flinders, have a strong research aspect to their activities. I personally am a strong advocate of any institution that calls itself a university expecting its staff to engage in research. We have a broad concept of research. It may be research around the discipline and the education of people into that discipline, as well as research that is of a basic curiosity-driven nature. All our staff expect to look at interesting fundamental questions and to be out there acquiring knowledge in order to assist in their activities as academics.

The only other thing that is worth touching on, which is again a university-wide initiative, is the very exciting development of the Australian Science and Mathematics School on our site, a development which has occurred during the period I have been at Flinders, although a lot of people are responsible for it and I certainly would not claim the credit. That was seen to be one of the ways in which the university could try to enhance both its interest in education and its interest in science and technology—by operating with a completely different concept of how an upper level secondary school might operate and then working very closely with state government—two different state governments and different parties—and the federal government. As minister, Dr Nelson has also taken an interest in the school and made a financial contribution. That has been a very exciting development in terms of the philosophy and pedagogy of education, particularly in the teaching of science. We are still looking at a variety of ways in which we can derive benefit from that partnership.

Prof. Trent—I would like to add that I have been through most phases of education as it currently is. At Flinders I was the last dean of Sturt and was involved in the various changes as education has responded to its environment. One of the great strengths of the program here at Flinders is its ability to respond to its environment and the relationship it has with the various stakeholders. As the vice-chancellor has said, in this latest iteration we have taken advantage of the fact that we are a single campus to bring together what we see as a very strong program. The results of that have been that we have always had very strong demand and our graduates have always been very widely seen. We were the first college and university to introduce a middle school program in Australia. That has now turned out to be something that most people now want to do, but we have been doing that for a period of well over 20 years. A lot of those students go into area schools and into unusual teaching situations, because they have the benefit of both primary and secondary things coming together—depth in discipline but a great knowledge of students.

CHAIR—Are they all the remarks you care to make?

Prof. Edwards—We thought you might want to pursue certain aspects of your terms of reference. I thought it would be helpful to say something which is not directly captured by the very detailed submission we have put in—from my own point of view.

CHAIR—I would like to start by focusing on funding. You have got quite a comprehensive section in your submission on funding. You may wish to expand on the issue of funding for teacher training and how, perhaps, teacher training fits into the total university field.

Prof. Edwards—I am certainly happy to do that. Flinders has a fairly transparent process of allocating funds to those schools and departments through the faculty structure, which is associated with the individual students who have enrolled in those areas. This has become even clearer since the latest version of the Commonwealth Grants Scheme was introduced this year. So there is a direct correspondence between the income line coming in and the allocation that goes out to faculties and then to the schools and departments. There is obviously a proportion of the budget that the university takes for admissions and student support services. We are one of the universities that take substantially less than 50 per cent for that. Some universities divide it more or less 50-50. Sometimes that is because there is a different arrangement between what services are provided through the university part of the budget and what services are provided through the faculties.

In relation to the overall funding, we have said in a number of places, as has the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, that we do not think that the way in which the national priority occupational areas of nursing and teaching have been fixed at a specific amount and precluded from using the variable HECS component of the Higher Education Support Act is actually an encouragement to universities to increase the number of places made available to those two particular courses. So, while I recognise that they have provided some additional funding, in order, in part, to meet the problems of not allowing universities to use the variable HECS provision, it does mean that by comparison with some other courses they are more expensive to provide, and we are restricted in the income sources that we can tap in order to adequately provide for those. I think there is a contradiction there. If nursing and teaching are in fact such important areas for Australia on the national scale then I think someone needs to go back and look very carefully at what the real costs are.

The additional payments for the clinical practicum for nursing and teaching are certainly very helpful. At Flinders we pass those on 100 per cent to the teaching areas. We take no levy off those. That amount of money remains a separate budget line or income line, and that goes straight to those professional schools to assist. However, I am advised that in both cases it falls short of what increasingly are the associated costs of having your students, through the course of their degrees, spending time in the appropriate organisational settings that they need to spend time in in order to get professional experience. So I think there is an issue there. I imagine you will be getting this from a number of other sources, but I think it is something that really needs to be addressed.

Flinders does not have undergraduate fee-paying students in other courses, so we do not have a competition for some of our resources from those parts of the university that are able to significantly increase their income through being able to enrol students in law, business and some of the other high-demand courses. Nonetheless, the amount of money that comes to us from the Commonwealth and that students provide through HECS—as all universities are

finding—is not sufficient to keep up with the increasing costs of delivering courses which require greater and greater use of modern technologies. Certainly education is one of those areas where, if you are going to send people out to be teachers, you have really got to be able to provide them with access to the latest in the information and communication technologies and multimedia. Those need to be improved on a regular basis, and that is a very costly exercise.

So I think all sides relate to funding. There is the issue of keeping up with technology, there is the need for adequate staff-student ratios in order to deliver your courses on campus, and there is the cost of the time that the students spend in schools in order to provide top-quality teachers. I do not think any universities believe that is happening at the moment. They could easily demonstrate their belief that they do not have enough income provided to do that adequately. So it is a big issue.

Prof. Trent—I think there are a series of things, some of which I have touched on in the submission. Education has, in fact, been underfunded since as far back as the time of the RFM model, because it was such a big discipline. When Russell Linke did the original numbers they then took money away because it looked as though it was going to be too costly. So what you have got is a whole series of incidents of underfunding over a long period of time, and the gap is getting far greater.

It is compounded in the case of the teacher practicum. None of the money goes to the faculty. As the Vice-Chancellor has said, it does not go to the university and it does not go to the faculty; it goes straight to education. But, of that funding, a considerable proportion then goes straight out to teachers in schools; therefore, the amount that actually helps us to run the practicum inside the university is very much reduced. There is an issue inside that that you might want to explore with the group later.

Also, some 15 years ago we used to provide support for students to do a rural and remote practicum. We cannot afford to do that anymore and we have stopped it. We are very concerned, particularly in a state like South Australia where there is Adelaide and the bush, that we should be able to get good teachers out into the bush. There is only one exception to that where there is some support and that is because it is the Anangu lands and DECS provides some of the support. But, simply, the students—most of them work—cannot afford to give up work, rent, practicum et cetera. So I think it is a really important point in terms of the funding.

The other thing is that our staff-student ratios have grown and grown. We have tutorial sizes of up to 30, simply because that is the only way we can fund teacher education. In an area in which you are trying to produce people who can work with other people, understand them and deal with them, we need to try to replicate best practice in education in our teacher education programs. Those sorts of ratios makes it extremely difficult.

CHAIR—Professor Edwards, you mentioned the fact that all areas of the university are under pressure. I see from the figures there that the money that is available from the Commonwealth for practicum does not even cover the costs of the payments to schools, let alone those other costs listed, but, if we were to look at the relative cost pressure on teaching as opposed to the cost pressure across the universities generally, how would you rank that cost pressure? At what rate is teaching falling behind in resourcing compared to perhaps other subjects?

Prof. Edwards—I do not have data on that. I could identify several other professional areas—those areas where you have the kinds of professional activities which need to be supported within the university as well as paid for outside. For instance, in our commerce or accounting courses, which are again professional courses, the kinds of placements that our students have do not need the same kind of preparation from within the university that is needed before you send teachers out in front of students or nurses into hospitals with patients. So there is a difference there in the nature of what the training is and what the preparation needs to be in the university.

I think that the serious national policy problem is that those two particular occupations are flagged as the two national priorities, so they have been raised above all the other professional areas. We would like to argue that there are areas in science and technology which are just as vital for the future and the future economy of Australia which are not flagged as national priority areas. It is only those two. We understand that this is to do with work force projections and public pressure. But if on the one hand you signal that these are the two national priority areas as far as universities allocating places are concerned and then you do not actually look carefully at the real costs of providing that kind of education for those work forces you just create a whole lot of other problems down the track.

You would be aware—I am certainly aware—that we are getting criticism back from schools and criticism back from hospitals and other health organisations. They do not believe that the graduates they are getting are adequately prepared to step into the classroom or the ward as soon as they have finished the university's course. That is their view. We are getting pressure, I think, from the government because we are reluctant to keep increasing the number of students we allocate to those courses in preference to others and we are also getting criticised by their subsequent employers who say, 'We think you could do a better job'. We feel that we are caught in the middle. At the same time over the top of all this we hear: 'This is a national priority, so, universities, you have really got to pull out the stops and do your best.'

It seems to me that that is a major policy issue that needs to be teased out. I imagine that that is one of the reasons you are looking at some of these questions. I do not know whether the answer is to make an argument about trying to establish what the real costs actually are—which could be done as a separate exercise—and then look at what you would need to do if you were really serious about meeting this looming and very significant work force shortage.

That is tackling it, as it were, at the supply end—from the point of view of what universities could do to better meet those needs. My guess is that the quality of the bachelor of education courses that we provide is also one factor in attracting, or not, people to make career changes and therefore to feed people from other occupations into the work force. That is the other strategy that we clearly need to employ—you are not going to get all the people coming in to be recruited into the teaching profession simply by going out and banging on the doors of the schools; you actually want to get people who have had all kinds of varied experiences looking very enthusiastically at the possibility of a career switch. Again, you are back asking things like: what kind of education environment and what kind of support will those individuals have if they come in aged 35 into an undergraduate course in a university and are they going to feel that they are going to get the kind of quality education that they need to keep them there and have them in turn go and work in the schools?

CHAIR—Going back to the point you raised about employers believing that the graduates are not adequately prepared: do you think that that is an unrealistic expectation? If you look at engineers, or any other profession you care to name, very few graduates come out of university able to step into—

Prof. Edwards—Absolutely, that is right. We are obviously in communication with the potential employers all the time, and this is something that I think we are never going to agree on. But I think that what makes this a particularly acute issue for us is the status of ours as a national priority area for universities to be in. That puts extra pressure on us and creates higher expectations, but I do not think that teacher education is different from any other professional category.

Mr SAWFORD—But it is unlike the engineer. The engineer is not put in charge of building a bridge, but the teacher is put in charge of controlling the class.

Prof. Trent—One of the areas we hope to explore with you is the area of the first year out. We actually believe that it should be some kind of partnership with the schools, where you are looking at a transition. But, again, we do not have the funding to do it. We would love to do it. We try to provide support for our graduates, but it is almost impossible. I think the other issue, as I said before, is that, unlike some of the other professions, a lot of the money that comes in, goes out, because we are the only profession in which we pay for practicum. I think there is another set of issues inside all of that that are really quite complex.

Mr SAWFORD—While we are on the funding, it seems to me from the arguments that are being put forward about practicum that the available funding is about half of what it ought to be—it may in fact be a higher percentage than that. It seems to me that there is something wrong. Why are the employing authorities not contributing something to the practicum? Is that a reasonable suggestion to make?

Prof. Edwards—State-federal relations, I think.

Mr SAWFORD—There is the Commonwealth to make a contribution. I am talking about the state—the employing authorities in terms of Catholic Ed, independent schools or whatever. Why are they not making a contribution?

Prof. Trent—They are making a contribution in the sense that their schools become venues in which we undertake practicum. It is a question that is very difficult for me to answer. I suspect it is one that you need to ask them. But, again, I believe—or they believe—that their budgets are stretched. It seems to me that we need to have a rethink systemically about how we manage this process. Certainly, one of our problems is getting practicum places at a time when we are saying we need to take in more students because there is going to be a workplace shortage because of the average age of teachers and when they will go out. We spend a lot of our resources actually cajoling, asking and talking with teachers to say, ‘Would you please take students.’ That takes a lot of our time. You will get an opportunity to talk that through.

It seems to me that we ought to be looking at different ways of dealing with this. One of the suggestions that comes to mind, for example, happens in Canada and the US, where teachers who go on to do further qualifications and further education get a pay rise as well as getting a

postgraduate education. You could tie practicum into getting credit instead of all of this money flowing backwards and forwards. It seems to me that you could do several things by doing that. That means a change and an expectation that, like other professions, teachers should have professional upgrading—lawyers do it, doctors do it, engineers do it et cetera. In the teaching profession it is not an expectation, but it ought to be a part of the big picture. Then perhaps you would have the state authorities seeing some way systemically of making staff available and supporting them to do various things.

Mr SAWFORD—So a demonstration teacher 2005-style?

Prof. Trent—There would not be enough teachers if you made it demonstration style, because they were a select group. But if you can get a larger number of teachers involved in their own education they will then be better role models for some of the students. The problem with an apprenticeship system is that you just get what you get. If you get a good teacher it is terrific, but if you get a poor teacher you are only replicating the poor practice that some of the public object to.

Mr SAWFORD—I am sure a central tenet of our report will be this statement that you put in your submission:

... teacher education is currently funded on a limited set of understandings which do not properly cost the needs of a modern teacher education program.

That could be the brief. I have another question about people involved in becoming science teachers. It seems to be a terrible constraint that they pay more HECS. That just does not make sense. What is your comment on that and how can we resolve that?

Prof. Edwards—The universities would argue that science is more expensive than arts and we therefore need some capacity to address that. That takes you back to the basis of the banding and the differential costing for different disciplines in terms of both what the Commonwealth contributes for the different discipline clusters and the three bands of HECS levels that universities have available. There are a whole range of arguments that the Australian vice-chancellors have put, saying that it would be timely to come back and have a look at the differentials across the board. There are a whole lot that we think really ought to be adjusted, but it is a big job and it has not yet met with much enthusiasm.

Let me go back to some of the things that Faith was saying. It is not only in the teacher education area that placements are required and that we are meeting increasing resistance. People in very busy workplaces see, at least on a short-term basis, that this is just an added pressure on their staff, even though they all know intellectually that on a medium- to long-term basis they need to have recruits coming in to those occupations. We get this across the board. It is in the health sector and it is in most of the areas, both public and private, where people are working under greater pressure and are less willing to have a student spend some time learning what it is like to practise that occupation from the other side, as that appears to be taking time away from their own activities. That is a generic pressure on us. At the same time, employers across all areas are asking universities to be much more engaged with the world of work and to make sure that our students are more engaged and prepared for the world of work while they are students. That is something we try to tackle in a variety of ways.

From your point of view, in this particular case you would be looking at ways to put in place some of the suggestions that we have put forward in the submission and some of the ideas that the school of education has, by working at the interface. There is some scope. The one thing about the education profession is that they are even more alarmed at the impending shortages than some of the other occupational groups. So they want to assist in finding ways in which we can address those problems, and they clearly recognise that providing the best possible working environment for trainee teachers is a necessary part of that.

Mr SAWFORD—Should all universities have teacher education?

Prof. Edwards—Isn't that an interesting question? Not under our current federal philosophy. The government want universities to be increasingly differentiated from each other and to concentrate on a certain range of things which they believe to be the best ones for them to meet the needs of their communities. So I would not have thought every single one, no, any more than any other particular professional area.

Mr SAWFORD—Would teacher education be better off if there were fewer?

Prof. Edwards—I think a very large proportion of them will because it is a very important and substantial area of undergraduate education. So they will have teacher education courses.

Mr SAWFORD—Some people have a rude comment. They say it is a wonderful cash cow for the university.

Prof. Trent—It is not for us.

Prof. Edwards—Quite the opposite.

Mr SAWFORD—We have had that comment on the record.

Prof. Edwards—There are no cash cows for the university any more; I can say that.

Mr SAWFORD—What about DipEds? Have they had their day?

Prof. Trent—I believe so. The pressures on teachers, the nature and complexity of the work, the new research that is coming in and the necessity to meet a variety of things to do with families and communities and so on are such that I do not believe that in 26 to 28 weeks you can take somebody and get them to understand enough. The kinds of complexities that you can do in a one-year DipEd mean that that is not an appropriate vehicle.

We are very committed—as was the submission of the Council of Deans of Education some five or six years ago—to the notion that there should be no teacher education courses that are less than two years in length, because, if you look at the nature of what you are trying to do, it is impossible to do it properly in one year. It is difficult to do it in two years, which is why you need ongoing professional education, but it is certainly impossible in one year. I believe they have outlived their time. Unfortunately, because students are paying and because they want to get out, the DipEd seems like a great thing to do: you can get a credential. But we want to turn

out good teachers. The credential comes along with it, but students see the credential as the way to go. I think that is a very sad commentary. So, yes, I think DipEds have had their day.

Prof. Edwards—I do not think there any other professions for which you can get a full professional accreditation, from start to finish, in one year.

Mr SAWFORD—In the normal course of these degrees, when does teacher practicum start?

Prof. Trent—Second year.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that too early or too late?

Prof. Trent—It is right.

Mr SAWFORD—Why?

Prof. Trent—There are two reasons. We used to start it in third year under the old regime where students came in, and we believe that is too late. We think it is important, once they have got some basis in the disciplines, including education, that they go out and have some relationship with the schools in a different sort of way. We also do not believe the students should be out in first year, particularly those who have come out of schools, because you need to make a transition from being a pupil, a student, to being somebody who is going to be in charge of learning. Therefore we believe that there needs to be at least one year in which they do not go into schools. But, by second year, at least if they start to decide it is not for them they then have other pathways and options so that they do not lose. Particularly with the combined degrees, they can go and get the BA, the BSc or the Bachelor of Health Science and they have not lost anything. It is just right. We have spent a lot of time over this, and we have changed over the years as we have come to learn. We have researched our own practice, and second year is just right.

Mr SAWFORD—That raises another question, but I will leave that until later.

CHAIR—Thank you both.

Prof. Edwards—Can I say that the vice-chancellor is very supportive of education in this university. I do not believe it is true of all universities, but it is of this one.

CHAIR—We are delighted to hear that.

Prof. Trent—We certainly would never be closing it down!

[9.33 am]

LEWIS, Ms Felicity-Ann, Acting Associate Dean (Academic) and Lecturer in Curriculum Studies (Health), School of Education, Flinders University

MacMULLIN, Professor Colin Edmund, Professor of Education and Dean, School of Education, Flinders University

RUSSELL, Professor Alan, Professor of Education, Senior Lecturer and Director of Studies (Education Doctorate), School of Education, Flinders University

TRENT, Professor Faith Helen Elly, Professor of Education and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University

CHAIR—Welcome.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The deputy chair was right: we have had other witnesses from other universities suggesting that, contrary to your experience, education studies are being seen as a cash cow, principally to cross-subsidise other courses offered at the same university. That is a very different comment to the one that you have offered today. Could it be that one of the reasons for your difference of opinion is that you offer your education studies only as double degrees with other disciplines?

Prof. Trent—No, that is not the answer. I suspect that if you are getting that answer—and I do not know where you got it from—it may well be from the money from international students.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—No, we were getting that in relation to Australian students. I think we heard it in Queensland—

CHAIR—We did.

Mr SAWFORD—And Victoria.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—and Victoria.

Ms Lewis—It could be that they do less practicum.

Prof. Trent—It is beyond my comprehension. It may be that, as Felicity suggests, they do less practicum and they therefore believe they are saving money. But I do not see how that could possibly happen, and I do not know what they would be subsidising.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—But you must wonder why there is such a different experience.

Ms Lewis—We would like to meet them.

Prof. Trent—As I said in the submission, we are really struggling to provide what we believe to be a good education for our teachers. I really do not understand how you could see it as a cash cow.

Mr SAWFORD—It is not the practicum money; it is the overall money.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Yes, from the overall course.

Prof. Trent—It is on the lowest HECS, there is no HECS plus. As I said, under the RFM—which is what the clusters still are; it is all dressed up, but they are exactly the same as the RFM—it was always underfunded, and the pressure is on things like having to provide living laboratories as well as the technology and science. I am sorry; I cannot shed any light at all. It certainly is not true here, and I would not have thought it would be true at the University of South Australia.

Ms Lewis—Do they offer a physical education program in that course?

Prof. Trent—That is another area which is extremely expensive and which we also have trouble paying for. We are completely bemused, and we would love to know how they do it.

Ms Lewis—Could you link us up as sister programs and we might learn something?

Prof. Trent—I have just remembered one way that they might do it. If they are employing a very large number of casual staff who come in from school, do two hours of curriculum studies and then rush off, that may be a way of paying very low wages. If they have very few permanent staff, they may be using the money to overcasualise. We believe we have too many casuals now, but we are trying to balance the budget. We are trying to increase the number of people who are either on contract or employed for a longer term, because the students need to be able to have contact with staff. The casual person just is not there. That is the only explanation I could possibly imagine.

Prof. MacMullin—Another possibility is that those staff may be more engaged in research. If you had a teaching-only program then that might explain it, but our staff are teachers and researchers.

Mr SAWFORD—Or a combination of all of those things.

Prof. MacMullin—Yes, perhaps.

Prof. Russell—Was this comment with respect to education or the university?

Ms Lewis—Teacher education.

Prof. Russell—But was it with respect to the components of teacher education where they come to us or was it with respect to the rest of the university? When they were doing their biology, history and so on, did the university see that as a way of filling up those classes? Perhaps the benefit came from that, because we cannot imagine how it could come from the time they spent with us.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—We will take your suggestions and look at them.

Prof. Trent—We were not suggesting that—

Ms Lewis—I would be interested in where they are.

Prof. Trent—It does not mean that we would copy their practice, either.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The comments have come to us out of frustration. Faculty staff and representatives of education units in universities were frustrated that their pool of funding was not being taken advantage of for their faculty and that they were perhaps helping to prop up the costs in other faculties.

Prof. Trent—Did they have evidence of it, or was it a feeling?

CHAIR—I think it was more than that.

Mr SAWFORD—I think they were going to provide us with the information, which will be interesting.

Prof. MacMullin—One explanation could be to do with staff-student ratios. If that were the case, if they had very large classes in education, they might divert those resources to another part of the university.

Mr SAWFORD—One university has very few permanent staff.

Prof. Trent—That was the casualisation.

Mr SAWFORD—It has a large number of students and also high casualisation. The other university has an extremely high level of casualisation and huge differentials between teacher education people and research people.

Prof. MacMullin—So it is a combination of all these things.

Prof. Trent—It is a combination of all of the things that we have suggested, but we would not see that as a way forward.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I have a final question, in relation to remunerating your supervising teachers in schools. You, Professor Trent, and the vice-chancellor said that you felt that there were cost pressures.

Prof. Trent—Yes.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Is there any merit in or have you given any thought to not paying—

Prof. Trent—I have given it a great deal of thought.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Have you given any thought to not using finances as a way of, if you like, rewarding supervising teachers? The amount of money that you pay teachers is so minimal anyway—and from my experience in Tasmania it seems to get split up in so many different directions—that, really, it is not appreciated. There could be other ways of acknowledging the staff who take on those extra duties. What are your feelings on that and on whether or not the funds that are available to universities could be used in other directions?

Prof. Trent—I would agree with you 100 per cent. The only problem is that there is an award, and we have no option. There is a federal award and a state award, and we have absolutely no option. The view is not necessarily shared by everybody in the School of Education, let me say—this is my view. I think we should not be paying teachers. I think it is part of professional responsibility to look after the next generation. I do think there are other ways we could reward them. I suggested some of them a little earlier when we were talking about systemic change. You could reward the teachers by paying them if they finished their master's degree—in other words, acknowledging their academic achievements. I would agree with you 100 per cent but we actually have no option. They are part of the industrial conditions under which we operate.

Ms CORCORAN—I have a few different sorts of questions to ask. First of all, Professor Trent, there was your comment earlier about thoughts you had about how we deal with—although I do not want to use the word but I cannot find a better word—first-year-out students to help them through that first year. Do you want to talk a little about that?

Prof. Trent—I might flip it to Colin, because he is closer to the coalface than I am but we do have a view about it.

Prof. MacMullin—The chalk face! One of the questions that is central to this is the partnership between the schooling sectors and the tertiary sector and the responsibilities for the preparation, transition and ongoing education of teachers. The belief that we can prepare all of our students to meet the needs of the different employers straight up is beyond the capacity of our time and our curriculum. Part of this needs to be an induction program that is developed together so that we know what each other is doing. As beginning teachers go into the employing sectors, those sectors realise that they have a role too. Their role is more focused on the unique aspects of their particular culture and their particular needs. That will change from time to time. They are constantly telling us, 'We want drug education'—or they want this or that—'and please put it in the curriculum.' We attempt to add to our curriculum the skills, knowledge and understanding that the employing sectors are asking for. But it is crowded. What is needed is a close relationship that sees the employing sectors accepting responsibility for contributing to the transition.

This ties in—and I would like to go back to this a bit later—with the practicum issue. The major employing sectors leave that as a voluntary endeavour at the level of the individual school and the individual teacher. There is no systemic view from the major employers that they have a major role in this. So we have not achieved that level. It is at a level of individual schools or individual school districts.

Prof. Trent—And sometimes individual teachers.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to talk about the practicum, not from the money point of view, although I think I am starting to understand why that question has been raised. But I want to get away from that and ask your views. Do you have control, if you like, over who your students do their practicums with in the schools? Is there room for improvement here?

Prof. MacMullin—Yes, massively. It ties back in to my earlier comments. There was a time gone by when the employing authority accepted responsibility for the quality of the practicum placement—Rod was talking about the old demonstration schools years back—when the major education authorities would say: ‘This is what we want. We identify good teachers and they are made available to us.’ Now what happens in practice is that it is completely devolved right down to the local school level, so it is completely up to the individual school. What happens in practice is that the principal or the deputy or assistant principal in charge of the practicum asks for volunteers amongst teachers. There is no quality control at all. Quite frankly, we are just so grateful to find a warm—

Ms Lewis—A warm room—with a living, breathing teacher in it!

Prof. MacMullin—Yes, because with a day to go before practicum we are still 75 places short. So we are grateful for practicums. But, in fact, so often the practicum supervisors provide a modern quality of teaching that we think is quite unsatisfactory. It is a real dilemma.

Prof. Trent—We have tried to tackle it. We have actually been to see the state authority. We have said to the CEO, ‘We believe you need to do something about this.’ We have done this over the last four to five years on an annual basis.

Ms Lewis—Adding to the complexity around the funding, not only do we pay the teachers in schools, as we are required to; we also have a commitment at this university to support our students when they are in the schools. We have a close relationship with our students when they are on their practicum, and many of the academics continue, as part of their workload, to do that work. However, given the increasing amount of work with increasing numbers of students, we have looked to people in the field who are retired or in some other part-time capacity—often women who are out from teaching with child-rearing duties and choosing to work part time—and we pay them to be that liaison person in the school to try to buffer somewhat this at times difficult scenario where the student is not in an ideal place and to support the student through what at times are increasingly complex issues where they are dealing with a teacher or a system that is not particularly good in that sense in trying to get the skills, knowledge and experiences. That is where funding comes in as well, because we have now got I do not know how many part-time people who are involved in the program.

Prof. MacMullin—We have 110.

Ms Lewis—It does allow us to have people supervising out in remote and country areas, where we have actually built up a base of people who go to schools regularly and have a good relationship with the administration and the staff there. That further adds to the complexity of the funding, but we believe that it is the responsibility of the university to our students, given that we cannot have control over the quality of experience that they are having.

Ms CORCORAN—I am assuming practicums are regarded as a good thing?

Ms Lewis—Yes.

Prof. Trent—They are essential.

Ms CORCORAN—I just wanted to get that on the record. If all these practical problems were to be solved, do we do enough practicums? Should there be more days out in the course?

Ms Lewis—Our students would say so.

Prof. Trent—It is a complex problem, because I am not sure that it is the number of days that it is about; it is about the acquisition of ongoing relationships with kids in schools. There is a variable time length, of course. Obviously some students respond in different kinds of ways. We can talk more about this, but there are a number of different ways students are in schools. Some of them are one day a week—they are inside ordinary topics—while some have a lengthy practicum. There are different kinds of skills that you are trying to impart and the students need time to reflect. I am not sure that there is an ideal length, but maybe you have different views, Colin.

Prof. MacMullin—It is more the linking. In our changing degree program we are incorporating the practicum experience and the classroom experience here at the university in different ways. For instance, in the second year, our students are going to schools one day a week, but that one day a week is tied into their two major subjects. So in the first semester, it is development learning and teaching—essentially an educational psychology subject. It is their first introduction to this field and that is accompanied by one day a week in the school. It is a very powerful one day a week because it is giving them the opportunity to test their ideas again in class and gain experience.

Ms Lewis—Colin, it is literacy and numeracy first.

Prof. MacMullin—Oh, it is the other way around—there you go. Just a slight correction there! The other one is in literacy and numeracy, which actually comes first. Despite the mistake, the point is that it provides the opportunity to tie together the semester-long learning—in this case in literacy and numeracy—with the school experience. It is not just a matter of going from 80 days to 90 days; it is a matter of making much greater connections in the learning.

Prof. Russell—If you asked us, ‘Would you want to improve what you are doing now or add more of it?’, I think our first priority would be to improve what we are doing now before we started thinking of any more.

Ms CORCORAN—Point taken. Thank you for that. Following on from what you, Colin, were saying about the students doing one day a week, that must mean that they all do it here in the city, which is another dimension to the whole problem, isn’t it?

Prof. MacMullin—That is right. The only time they can get to the country is when they are doing block placement, which is available to them in both third year and fourth year, of course.

Ms Lewis—We did flirt with that notion, but it just became so difficult. These young people—and, indeed, many of the mature students—live complex lives. They often have

commitments to employers which, even though they are a full-time student, unfortunately come before their studies, because they have to live, they have to pay the rent and so on. We did look at it but it just got too hard. We have realised that we must endeavour to put the focus on the blocks of teaching—the four- and six-week practicums—and try and get them to some good quality experiences in the country where they can save up for that and get accommodation and manage with that at that point in their career.

Ms CORCORAN—I also wanted to talk about students coming into the course. You talked about older students switching careers. You have gone out and have been quite proactive, I understand, in attracting older students. What are the issues—what are the things that stop them from coming in? What are the reasons students would come into teaching after doing 20 years somewhere else?

Prof. Trent—You are talking about the ones who come later and not school leavers—you are talking about graduate entry?

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, I am talking about the 30-, 40- or 50-year-olds who have done 20 years somewhere else—in a bank—and decide to do teaching.

Prof. Trent—In some cases it is simply that they want to have a change of occupation. They have decided that whatever they have been doing before means that they want to go and do something else. That happens as a lifestyle change. Blockages are obviously things like being able to afford it. If you have a family and a mortgage, dropping salary and having to pay HECS and whatever is difficult. Many, of course, try to juggle continuing to work. About 75 per cent to 80 per cent of our students are working up to 20 hours a week and sometimes trying to do full-time work and full-time study. That is an issue. Interestingly enough, this year, 2005, the graduate entry into education had a higher cut-off in tertiary scores than the graduate entry into law. If you look at the documentation we have produced, what we are getting into education in this university is extremely high quality and we are filling pretty much on first preferences—we are actually filling with people who say, ‘I want to be a teacher.’ That has been going on for the last five years or so. That is reasonably unusual. It is about the reputation we have—the fact that our graduates are tending to be employed.

Ms CORCORAN—These are students coming here from school?

Prof. Trent—From school—and they are filling on first preferences. In some cases it is second preferences into science, because that is more complicated, but they are all people who say that they want to be a teacher—not that this is the fifth preference on the SATAC guide.

Ms Lewis—We actually have quite a significant number of mature age women who come in. I have had the pleasure, as part of some research I have been doing, of looking at the journals they complete as part of one of their topics—development, learning and teaching—where they do journal entries for five weeks before their first practicum in their third year in the current program. It is interesting to read those. It becomes evident who are the mature students and who are the school leaver students as you read about issues that they are discussing, because they reflect on their life’s experiences and what they bring to teaching and why they have come to teaching—that is part of the journal. The insights into that, particularly from the women—it is not only the women; it is men also—is interesting. With the women often it is their experience as

students themselves in having perhaps at that time of their lives not been encouraged or been in a situation where they did not have the opportunity to go into tertiary studies. So at the age of, say, 35 or 45 that opportunity is now available to them. So it is something that they wanted to do but the circumstances were not right and they did not have that opportunity.

Often they have been encouraged being with their own children and experiencing going to school and being with teachers and I guess that more inclusive nature of schools these days where many schools endeavour to bring community in, parent volunteers and that sort of thing. Many are encouraged because of the model that they have seen and they want to be more involved. So they think that this is something that fits well for them and they enjoy being around children and so on. Many of them reflected on those kinds of things. I thought that might be of interest to you. Those were the kinds of things they were saying in their journals about why they have chosen to become a teacher.

Ms CORCORAN—Does your combined degree mean that students come out with two degrees?

Prof. Trent—They come out with BEd/BA, BEd/BSc, BEd/BHS and at various levels—junior primary, primary, middle school, secondary. We have also included, because we think it is important, a BEd/BSc at junior primary and primary. We are concerned about getting science back into the primary school because we think that might change some of the attitudes.

Mr SAWFORD—I have been on this committee for a long time. When we did the literacy inquiry, a lot of people criticised it as irrelevant and as having a go at teachers. In actual fact the committee was presented with a set of data which no-one questioned, and the committee started from that. The boys' education thing started from the same thing—a set of data which was wrong and should not be continued with, but the committee goes on. For lots of reasons this committee inquiry also has taken some criticism. I come from an educational background myself and I wonder why the profession buys arguments that it should not buy and which distract from the whole thing. It is in this submission too. Why have the silly argument about teacher training and education? If you ask a group of doctors where they studied, they would all say, 'We trained at so and so;' they do not seem to have a thing about teacher training. With regard to dysfunctional families, if you go into any political office you will certainly know there are dysfunctional families, I will give you the big tip—or if you work in a welfare mission down in Port Adelaide, at Hackham or at Elizabeth, you will know there are dysfunctional families. They exist. They are real. They are there. I am not having a go at whoever wrote the submission but it is defensive; there is a sense of denial. You get this in terms of the employing authorities, and I often wonder why. Why buy arguments when there is a lot more substance there?

Ms Lewis—I will have a go at answering that.

Prof. Trent—No, I will have a go; I wrote the script.

Ms Lewis—I will go after you.

Prof. Trent—There are several things about this. First of all, there is a lot of meat in the submission as well as that.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, there is; it is a good submission.

Prof. Trent—Thank you. The issue about education and training for this profession is an important one, because in the history of education, both in universities and outside, there has been a lot of debate about the nature of it being a kind of competency: ‘Let’s have a checklist; go ahead and, if you can do these 15 things, you will be a good teacher.’ The notion is that it is a training. The problem with education is that everybody has had some, so everybody is an expert; everybody knows how to do it better. We are looking to build on a research base as well as an experiential base and that we have a flavour that talks about it being much more than the immediate of, ‘What will I do on Monday?’ or ‘What will I do in my first year out?’ We are trying to talk about changing a perception which says that teaching is a profession and that we need to behave like professionals.

It is an area in which those of us who do it actually have some expertise but it is not valued. Everybody knows as well as we do what we are doing and, if you had a bad experience at school, you know that all teachers are rubbish and that they do not know anything. It is that kind of thing. What we are saying is that the dichotomy between education and training has been a very long debate. When you look at TAFE, for example, it is competency based—the training is competency based. There are obviously elements of training in teaching, but it is much broader than that. So the submission was not being defensive; it was putting an argument.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you see how it was read as being defensive?

Prof. Trent—Yes, but it was not defensive.

Mr SAWFORD—Some universities in their submissions do not even buy the argument. They state what you just said just a while ago and do not worry about the other part. In other words, there is a part of the profession that is in denial about anything even remotely—it is not even critical of what is going on. It is just a statement, and people overreact.

Prof. Trent—No, I am quite critical but I think that the point is worth making. It is particularly worth making in the university, because education has often been a cinderella compared with some of the other professions. Nobody doubts that medicine is a profession—

Ms Lewis—But they doubt that nursing is.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, they do.

Ms Lewis—That has had a similar history to ours. I was on the nursing review, and they have struggled with this too. We would just like to clarify that we are not trainers.

Prof. Trent—Can I do the dysfunctional family one too?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Prof. Trent—The issue is not about: ‘Yes, there are families that don’t work; they’re dysfunctional.’ However, if you get into a situation in schools where teachers label kids as being from dysfunctional families, quite often a number of other things follow in the way they are

treated. We hear it all the time. I have to say that even some politicians say, 'These children are from a single-parent family; they therefore must be X.' What we are trying to do, and the reason we want to put it on the record—and Colin can answer this better than I can; he works in the field of children's wellbeing—is that we want our students to understand that you can make a difference. If you label somebody, you quite often cannot deal with it, and that is the point.

Mr SAWFORD—That is the big difference between what you are saying and refusing the term, which is what comes across.

Ms Lewis—I think it was about the notion of 'deal with' dysfunction.

Prof. MacMullin—It was both: it was 'deal with' and 'dysfunction'.

Mr SAWFORD—By the way, there were no assumptions from the committee who put the thing together in terms of what they were doing—none at all. I just make that point.

Prof. Russell—How were we to know that?

Mr SAWFORD—You didn't—

Ms Lewis—He just wants to clarify.

Mr SAWFORD—just as we find your defence of it a little bit over the top.

Prof. MacMullin—It is interesting. Term of reference 7 starts off:

Examine the preparation of primary and secondary graduates to ...

And then there is a whole list of dot points. In a sense it is worrying if you say, 'That is really the work of teachers.' The work of teachers, of course, is to assist graduates to work with families, amongst whom there are families who are struggling. But it is not put that way. It is put as 'to deal with dysfunctional families'. So whoever put this together constructed this role of teaching—

Ms Lewis—A deficit.

Prof. MacMullin—from a deficit position. We are not in denial. In fact, I wrote that particular section, 7.5, in which I say that we do not prepare students to deal with dysfunctional families. We do not have lectures or classes in which we say, 'This is what a dysfunctional family looks like and here's how you deal with those families.' Rather, we say, 'This is what family life is about and here's what we know about quality relationships between professionals and families.' That is the starting position, rather than this construction that out there there are dysfunctional families. I also work in the area of professional development. I am working with a number of schools south from here, and I keep hearing repeated, 'We can't do anything with these kids because look at their families.' You walk into a school and you hear straightaway, 'We've got 15 per cent of our families on school card, 23 per cent of our families are this and 15 per cent of our children have disabilities; therefore, there's nothing we can do.' We do not want to reproduce that sort of idea here rather than saying, 'Families, as do children, vary, and there's all kinds of

things we know about what quality relationships are with children and family.' We focus on that. I bristled at that notion of dealing with kids with disability as though you are dealing with this aberrant group called dysfunctional families. So it was worth a bite, Rod, to put a comment in.

Mr SAWFORD—Okay. That just confirms my point of view, nevertheless.

Prof. MacMullin—Fair enough.

Ms Lewis—You have to remember we are academics.

Mr SAWFORD—We are at a stage in this inquiry where we are looking for the directions which we want to take. We are conscious of the fact that there have been about 80 inquiries into teacher ed. over the last 20 years. None of them seems to have been implemented in a constructive way or even at all. We are going to meet in Canberra later in the year, and our secretariat is putting all of those recommendations into some sort of order. We need to find out why all this has happened. Universities, schools and employing authorities are very good at looking after themselves. We have had some examples where the three have seemed to be working in very close cooperation and to be on the same track. We have had other instances where one has worked and seemed to be trying to do the right thing but has not got the response from either the school or the employing authority. There seems to be a trend that the employing authority in the states that we have been to is playing a limiting role. That is putting you people on the spot. But they do not seem to be part of the action.

Prof. Trent—My view would be that I think you are correct in a number of ways. We believe our relationship with the schools on an individual basis is very good, and you can test that because we have asked some principals to come in. Where we are dealing in professional development our relationships are very good. But I think the employing authority is on about its own business. I said to you earlier I think there should be systemic change. I would include the employing authority as part of that systemic change, along with the Teachers Registration Board and the teachers act. It seems to me that right from the very top we need to be looking in a much bigger way at where we would like to be, how to stop replicating what is not the best and how to replicate what is the best. There are big questions, and there really is no forum in which those big questions can be discussed.

We have been proactive in going to the employing authority. On a regular basis we have asked for meetings and those have been better or worse, as the case may be. But, certainly, our relationship with the schools is very healthy. The schools have been enormously important for input for us in what we are doing and how we are doing it. The employing authority—the bureaucracy—is very much more difficult to deal with.

Prof. MacMullin—I mentioned this earlier. I think one of the problems is the devolution within the major state departments to local school level. It comes along with the idea of devolving responsibility for a range of things to districts and to schools. The responsibility of relationships between the system and the universities is acted out at school level by design, because that is part of the devolution of responsibility that our state governments—

Mr SAWFORD—What would you do?

Prof. MacMullin—I would centralise it. I have mentioned this to the chief executive of DECS: it is insufficient for DECS to say it is up to a local school as to whether or not they want to do prac or to say it is up to the individual teacher within the school. My view is that the chief executive needs to say, ‘This education department has an intimate relationship with the universities and therefore we should be setting directions from the top.’ For instance, I would build something into the teachers award where they have advanced skills teachers. If you are an advanced skills teacher, part of your job description—because you have shown yourself to be an advanced teacher—is that you are managing prac in the schools. I would build it in at that level, but DECS are not willing to do that; they would give authority to the local level and let people make decisions at that level.

Prof. Trent—The same thing is true with the other systems as well. Of course, the independent schools are not a system; they are a set of individual schools. The other area that is really important is that we believe we should be the research arm of the department. If they want research done, they ought to come to good researchers, and we have good researchers. That is one of the things we are trying to push now, but it is very difficult. We get caught up in all sorts of things, like documentation.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have a good balance between research and scholarship in this university?

Prof. Russell—I think we have a fine balance.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not having a go.

Prof. Russell—One of the things that has happened in the last 15 to 20 years especially is that the meaning of ‘knowledge’ has changed. Whilst we do a lot of research and we base a lot of what we do on research, we fully understand that the knowledge that is relevant to our profession comes from all over the place. It comes from web sites in other parts of the world or other states and so on. Research and scholarship in the construction and use of knowledge are absolutely important in our work. You have hit on an absolutely critical thing about the quality of what we are doing—namely, the relationship between us, the employing authority and schools. If you can find a way to enhance or improve that without making one dominant, you would have achieved a huge amount.

Ms Lewis—And you would have made it much easier for us as a university to deal with the issues with schools, because it means that we have to go to each individual school and negotiate on every individual placement that we have. If there were some system-wide understanding, memorandum of understanding or whatever you want to do with the department about what they will provide for us, that would give us a greater level of certainty. That is not only with the public system but also, I think, with the Catholic and independent systems.

Having said that, though, the thing that I would like to reinforce and reiterate is that our practicum officer—for want of a better term—is an ex-principal and has grown through his networks that whole relationship. The work that he has been able to do in that sense is really fantastic, so we do have good support from our local principals. We have worked really hard with that, but it is very time consuming. Of course, those principals do not always stay; you just get a network and then they go. That whole relationship of getting placements for our students is

very much individually based. Having said that, though, we have had the ability to call those people in and give us very good feedback on our program. Indeed, that has informed us in our new double degree program, so the 10 days of school experience in the second year has been as a result of feedback from not only our students but also the profession. I would like to point out that we do listen and try to manage our programs based on that feedback.

CHAIR—Would you be able to give us a financial estimate of the cost that the university invests in trying to negotiate with all of those schools?

Prof. Trent—I will. I am in charge of money; I know how much it costs.

CHAIR—We have universities right around the country doing this.

Prof. Trent—Basically, when we said to you that we pass the money straight on to the school, we think that is really important. But there are in fact costs all the way down the line. Paying individual teachers is a faculty cost, a university cost and a systemic cost and it gets audited. The amount of time that is spent on negotiating takes people away from other things that we really would like them to be doing. They are busy doing all of those other things. If you would give us some time, we will get that information.

CHAIR—And the saving to you of a mandated association with the employing authorities.

Prof. Trent—Yes. We will get that too.

Ms CORCORAN—I am interested in the selection of students—particularly school leavers but perhaps older ones as well. I guess the bulk of your students come in based on their—

Ms Lewis—On their TER; their tertiary entrance—

Prof. Trent—No. We are about fifty-fifty at the present moment. This university has 60 per cent mature age students. Only 40 per cent come in from school.

Ms CORCORAN—But the majority of the 40 per cent would come in on their TER?

Prof. Trent—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—I am interested in how we choose who are going to train as teachers, who are going to be educated as teachers. Is this the best way of choosing people? I notice that you interview people from rural areas who do not get the TER result.

Prof. Trent—As I think we have gone through, we have a strong commitment to special entry in a whole range of ways. We have bonus points for rural and remote because we recognise that, when they are in year 12, their choice of subjects, for example, may disadvantage them because they have to do something and that is all that is offered at the school. The university as a whole has bonus points for rural and remote. We have special entry for Indigenous students, because we would like to get as much of a mix as possible.

But, having said that, we are also of the belief that teaching is an intellectual activity as well as all the other things that it is. We have been through a process with a couple of research things for the university as a whole in looking at other ways that you might admit students to university. Interviews are obviously out. With the numbers that we are dealing with, we simply could not do it. Nobody has yet suggested to us another system that is transparent and accountable et cetera.

Ms CORCORAN—So you are reasonably comfortable with what you do?

Prof. Trent—Yes, we are—particularly since we are getting stunning students. They are absolutely stunning.

Ms Lewis—You will meet some of them in a moment. Also, we have fairly low attrition rates. I think you will see in our data that we do not tend to lose our students. You always lose some—people do not always make the right choices—but I think that, on the whole, we are able to maintain a good level of people continuing to stay through the course and in the profession. I think that also speaks a lot of the process of selecting them. They select themselves, really.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will certainly be contacting you if we need further information—and I think that we will be contacting you. We would appreciate it if you could provide those details to us as quickly as possible.

[10.18 am]

BROADLEY, Ms Kylie

DYTE, Ms Jacquelyn Anne

GREATBANKS, Mrs Hazel Jane

HOWLETT, Mrs Sandra

KING, Mrs Terri Anne

MURPHY, Miss Alanna

PYMAN, Mrs Louise

CHAIR—I want to thank the students from Flinders University for appearing before the committee today. We really appreciate your taking time out of your study break to come and join us, because it is an important inquiry. We have been travelling around the country, and we have heard from academics, students, a range of interested community groups and professional groups. It is an important hearing, and it is great that you are able to be part of it. These proceedings are formal proceedings of the parliament, so bear that in mind with any comments you care to make. When the *Hansard* record has been completed, the evidence you have given will be available to you. I will start with a fairly general question, if anyone would care to take it. What do you like about the course? What do you think could be a little better?

Miss Murphy—What I love about this course in particular is that we have been given very strong intellectual training to prepare us as teachers. I feel really confident that I can interpret and understand the place of education within a broader social context. I do feel, though, that this is because I have questioned and I have made time to speak with a lot of my teachers in their own time. I think we could have a lot more time in class with teachers and with each other to nut out a lot of the complexities of education. I feel that I got that only because I sought it. I must say that the staff have been very willing to give up their own time to help me to come to terms with a lot of the complexities of education.

Mrs Pyman—I am doing my honours thesis on social justice this year, which is the last year of my degree. I came in as a postgraduate, so I have done the last two years of the degree.

CHAIR—What did you do before?

Mrs Pyman—I did a Bachelor of Arts from 1992 to 1995. I then went out and worked in retail and hospitality. I travelled overseas with my husband and, in the three years that I did the two-year course, I have also had a child. So I have done a few things. That, in a sense, led me to education but social justice is the main reason that I am here. I will be going to Yalata next year to teach in Indigenous lands. Social justice is a very strong reason that I want to be a teacher, and that has been supported very strongly by the lecturers and by the course here at Flinders. As

Alanna said, the intellectual engagement has been very important. The concept of teacher training being something that prepares us to make unit plans and to use behaviour management in the classroom is not enough. I agree with Alanna about the social complexities of education, and I think social context is a really important part—understanding where our kids come from in our classrooms, the different experiences that they bring with them to the classroom and the way that they construct education.

Mrs Greatbanks—I think one of the strengths of the course has been the social context and the COMP 3 unit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. That has been absolutely invaluable. As you would know, I am from England and I have very little experience with the Indigenous cultures and ways of life over here. So, certainly for me, and I think for a lot of the other Australian students, it has been absolutely invaluable and a very strong part of the course.

Mrs King—I agree with the social justice side. I am only in third year, not fourth year, and I also entered as a postgraduate with a science degree. I personally have a passion for social justice, but I think it is amazing that this course overtly states it. It probably has a lot to do with Flinders University's stance on a lot of things, and I am really enjoying that. I originally applied to get into the Diploma of Education, which was for one year, and I am really glad that I did not get in. A lot of people applied even though they had a chemistry degree or honours or a PhD. However, because I have only a basic degree and I did well, I did not get into the DipEd and I got into this course. Now that I have completed eight months of it, I am very glad. Having done a placement or two in all of the subjects, teaching is just amazing. It just amazes me how many pulses teachers have their fingers on at any one time, and I do not think that you could do it in a year.

Mrs Dyte—I am an undergraduate third-year student. The subjects prior to the last two years of the course also support the social justice side of things, which the university as a whole seems to have a strong focus on. It is not just the education subjects in the last two years of the course. The first two years subjects—which are mainly our choice subjects—also have that same focus, which is really good. It follows through.

Mr SAWFORD—I suppose it is about balancing the intellectual challenge of the courses you are doing and classroom management. People can take a single view of an intellectual capacity in terms of synthesising all the information they have and using that as a strategy but forgetting totally that you need to analyse. People can take a very collaborative view of education without acknowledging that there is competition out there in the world and you cannot just push it away and hide it, because it is out there. People have good insights and people have intuition that there is a spirit and a soul of education, and that intuition allows you to flow, but you need insights that are more reflective—a bit more wisdom involved in all of it.

There are organisational skills in teaching, but there are presentation skills. So there is this and there is that and there is all in between. On the question of analysis/synthesis, collaboration/competition, presentation/organisation, insight/intuition, intellectual component/classroom management, what do you think the balance is like here at Flinders?

Mrs Pyman—I think the one really important thing about Flinders is the amount of time you actually get to spend in schools as well as the time you spend at university. Obviously, the first two years of the course are there to help you develop subject area skills, but in the second two

years there are three different practicums that are afforded: one is purely for observation, to make sure that you have chosen the right career, more than anything, and to give you an opportunity to see a range of things; for the next two there is a six-week practicum and an eight-week practicum, so you actually get to go out into classrooms, using the network of people around you, particularly teachers themselves. There seems to be a very good balance between the intellectual capacity of the course and the topics that we study as well as the practical experiences. There are a lot of fantastic teachers that we have all worked with, who give great reports and offer excellent constructive criticism. We are then supported by university supervisors who come and help us as well. So I think that the balance has been very well afforded by Flinders.

Mrs Dyte—Even with the education within the university, when you are not out on practicum, you are taught a lot about a lot of different learning styles and a lot of different teaching styles, and the pros and cons of those learning and teaching styles as well. So you can work out where you fit in and where you believe the students fit in. There is a lot of focus on the student teachers actually working out what their beliefs are, as far as they are concerned and as far as the students are concerned. I think that encompasses what you have said.

Mr SAWFORD—That leads me to another question. What would you call a progressive or a traditional teacher? How would you describe them?

Mrs Pyman—Either progressive or traditional?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, describe either. Or you might describe a third option—a good teacher!

Mrs Howlett—My view of a traditional teacher is probably someone who saw themselves in a traditional teachers college gaining a qualification, going out and teaching and probably not really continuing on the learning path. This is going back a long time, probably. For teachers these days I think it is a lifelong learning situation, where you can never stop. With the amount of information that is out there for school students, you can never actually equip them to learn everything; you have to equip them to think and to critically analyse what is out there. That is the most amazing thing about being here: we are learning critical thinking skills ourselves. So just learning the literacy and the numeracy to go out there is not enough; you have to teach the kids on an ongoing basis and look at our careers. Every year we are probably going to want to continue to learn something—to get out there and do another course, to find out what is going on and what the latest thing in education is. That is my view of what is the difference between a traditional and a progressive teacher these days.

Miss Murphy—I would agree with that. I feel confident that the School of Education has provided me with a very sound understanding of ways to practise the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the classroom. More importantly, I think I have been trained with the skills of critical literacy to effectively evaluate the resources that I might use in the classroom and evaluate whether or not they are going to be suitable for use with this particular group of students. No two students are going to be the same, so every single group of students you come across are going to be different with different needs. I feel that training in critical literacy has been really important in knowing what are appropriate resources to select. That is one of the things we have to get across as teachers: making choices. There is a huge amount of resources

available for us to utilise in the classroom and it comes down to a choice you make as a teacher. And you need to make a good one, in the best interests of your students.

Mrs Broadley—I agree with Alanna: a number of choices and resources are available to us. As Alanna has said, our literacy skills and ability to analyse things critically have really helped with selecting the resources to use in the classroom. What will probably make us quite progressive teachers is that we look at resources available and choose whether to use particular ones.

Mrs Pyman—I think the most important thing about this course is that it has made us very aware that teaching is a very political activity. It does not occur in a neutral environment. We have a lot of social influence and social power and we must be careful how we use them, because we are not apolitical in any sense.

Miss Murphy—I also feel it is important that we have been given an understanding of the history of education, how education intersects with the rest of society and how we, as teachers, can drive positive social change through our acts as educators.

Mrs Greatbanks—Comparing traditional teachers with progressive teachers, the traditional view perhaps is that—I was a teacher in England, but I have had to do this course because my qualification was not recognised here—you teach people to go out and join the work force to fulfil a certain role in society. The progressive view perhaps is that you educate people to become active members of society who can contribute more than just performing a certain role. Maybe that is the way I see it.

Mrs Dyte—In addition, traditionally, special needs students were not in the classes and these days they are. I think that has to change your teaching practices and your focus on teaching. You have to adapt to a broader range of students. Traditionally there was a set curriculum you had to teach and the students had to fit that curriculum, whereas these days I think it is more the case that the teacher has to make the curriculum fit the individual student.

Miss Murphy—I would agree with that. At this School of Education, we have been educated to expect difference in our classroom but not necessarily to deal with difference. We have not learned to deal with it, but we expect it.

Ms CORCORAN—I am interested in your experiences in your practicums in the classroom. Have most of you already been out and done practicums?

Mrs Greatbanks—Yes.

Mrs Pyman—Yes.

Mrs Dyte—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—I am interested in how you found a school to go to, where you were told to go to in order to find your own places, how you were treated in the schools and any comments you have about your practicums.

Mrs Dyte—We are given a list of schools available and select 10 of them in order of our preference. Special consideration is given to people's circumstances such as where they have kids and so on. Then the placement office goes about trying to fit us into the schools we would like to go to. All up, it does a marvellous job at it—it really does. With our fourth year prac, we were just given the whole list. The prac office has no knowledge at this stage as to which schools are available, which makes it a little more difficult; we are still putting down the 10, but we do not know whether they are available. For the first two pracs, they put down the list of schools that were available and then let us know which school they had got us into.

Ms CORCORAN—Once you got to the school, what was your reception? How did you feel there?

Mrs Dyte—Very good and very supportive. I was in a class with a teacher who had a very different teaching style to the one I use and that was a bit difficult. But it was still really supportive; the principal and office staff were supportive. I visited other classrooms and those teachers welcomed me. For a first prac, I learned so much. I went out there terrified and came away with a completely different point of view as to what it was like in the classroom. Yes, I have been fine with it. It has been great.

Mrs Broadley—The schools that are willing to have you are very welcoming. Like Jacquelyn said, everyone from the office staff to librarians welcomed us and made us welcome in any class that we wanted to go into. If we wanted to join in a class in the library, for example, we were welcome in there and our views were welcomed as well. As Jacquelyn said, the teacher I worked with had a different teaching style from the one I would use, but it showed me that that is not the way I would like to teach. But through that practicum I also learnt a great deal about behaviour management—probably far more about behaviour management than actual teaching. I think that will help me a lot when I actually get into my own class.

Mrs Pyman—I went on three very different practicums. My first practicum was with a newly arrived program class. The children were all refugees from other countries, which was a fascinating experience. I also went to the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara lands for my second practicum, which was afforded through this university. It was a program that was offered in about May of the year that I went. There were eight of us who went, and we were all placed at different schools across the lands. We were very well supported when we were there by Flinders University. My third practicum was at a Hills high school where I taught for eight weeks and was supported to the point where I felt like a staff member. There was almost no division between me and the staff members. I found it to be a really amazing experience.

All of those choices were made possible by two amazing women who work in the practicum office here, who just spend all day on the phone trying to get us into high schools. For the third practicum that I was at, there were eight student teachers within the high school—and it was quite a small high school. So I think that showed their commitment to teacher education and making sure that teachers come through with a good amount of experience in the schools. So the practicum experiences have been fantastic.

Mrs King—I do not know if I am the only secondary person here.

Mrs Greatbanks—No, I am secondary.

Mrs King—That is right. I think it is a bit different for people going into secondary because you are teaching a number of different subjects so you are working with more than one teacher. That is good because you get to see a range but it also means you kind of have to negotiate a bit. Yesterday, I went into the school that I will be having a practicum in in three weeks time to organise things. If you want to do something, you have to talk with them. They have not necessarily read the book that Flinders has given them about the placements. They definitely have it. So you just have to tiptoe around and try to organise what you hope will be a really good practicum experience. This one is looking like it will be.

My first experience—this is my second one coming up—was fantastic. It was an elite private school. They had probably about eight teachers in as well. Straight off, the principal said, ‘We are committed to the health of the profession; we want to be able to have you guys in.’ I thought that was fantastic. The practicum went pretty well. I had teachers whose style was probably very much like my style will end up being and others whose style was not. The first one, in third year, was only a four-week placement—you do a four-week, a six-week and an eight-week placement over the two years—with two weeks observation and two weeks having a go at teaching. You have not done a lot of things. It is only this semester that we have done curriculum and assessment and the really nitty-gritty stuff. We had not done that yet. So I think the school was a bit surprised. They did not really know where I was coming from, because I was not asking the questions that I probably should have been. But they were happy and they gave me a great report. They realised that it was my first placement. So they seemed reasonably cluey. I had told them that this was my first placement and talked with them about it. However, they were probably a bit surprised that I was not asking the right questions. But now I have realised, having done the subjects. This practicum is going to be totally different. What has been happening has been good.

Mrs Howlett—My first prac was in a primary school, in a year 6/7 class, and that was a positive experience. My second prac is in a year 4/5 class. I went and met the teacher last week, and she made it quite clear that she was not intending to have a student this year and has been pushed into it. So I have a six-week prac coming up with someone who would probably rather not have me in the classroom. That is where I am at at the moment.

Mrs King—I had a similar thing happen. When I was at my first practicum, one of the teachers in year 11 chemistry was not willing to let me teach her students. She was quite protective and she was not really consulted about having me. The other teachers were all fine. I got to observe her lessons and she included me by giving me some things to assess. She had assessed them and then she got me to assess some of them and we compared our marks. So she did help me, but she really was quite protective.

Mrs Howlett—I think there needs to be a little bit more incentive for teachers to have students in the class. The teacher that I am going to be with was most concerned about a boy in the class who has Asperger’s syndrome and how he is going to cope with my impact, as an incoming person to the class who he is not used to. I know that the two ladies in the prac office work extremely hard trying to get us places and they are battling uphill. I think teachers get \$11 pay a week to have a student in the classroom, and maybe there needs to be more incentive to have us in there.

Miss Murphy—On my final teaching prac I had the opportunity to implement my own teaching plan for an integrated unit of English and SOSE, which was great. It was a really successful program. I had support from the whole school and I actually put a lot of our learning from the School of Education into practice. I had members of the community come in and speak to the students. I had every student—it was a year 7/8 composite class—go out and do one day of volunteering in the community. It was a really successful program. I was in a school where they valued social justice and a progressive style of education, so it was really good.

My previous school was an independent, private school and had a very different attitude to education. But that was still a very good learning experience. I think that sometimes it is just as important for us as student teachers to be out of our comfort zone, as well as in our comfort zone, because there is just as much if not more opportunity for learning when we are outside our comfort zone.

I think the amount of time we have in schools is totally sufficient. I do not think we would gain anything more as students by spending any more time in schools. A lot of the time you are just toeing the line, fitting in with what is at the school already and imitating what already goes on. I was very lucky that I had the chance to implement my own style, but I would not say as an education student that I wish we had more pracs. I think that we have had sufficient time in schools.

Mrs King—In each of the three semesters, coming up to half of each semester is spent on practicum. We do a block of learning, then have a practicum, then a block of learning, then a practicum. It was quite a change from a science degree, where you do subjects for a whole semester. It is change, change, change from term to term. But they are quite long blocks. They are not one day a week for a while. I have not done one of those, but I do not think they would be as useful as being there for four, six and eight weeks.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I am a bit curious about Louise and Alanna's comments relating to social justice. You said something which really struck me: that schools are not apolitical and that schools are places where you can have great influence and change society. I have not heard that for a while, in the sense that you are actually canvassing that in your future lives as career teachers you see yourselves as agents of social change. You did not say—although you probably do feel it—that you felt your primary function would be to help young people to learn and to achieve their potential.

The fact that you did not mention that just rings an alarm bell for me. What is it about the Flinders education course that has fostered that, which I think is a fairly strong theme coming through from all or most of you? What is it about the Flinders course which propels you in that direction, and how appropriate do you think it is to see yourself in that light? Do you see why people like us, or people like me, perhaps just think, 'Gee, where's that coming from'?

Mrs Pyman—I think that there are a number of progressive lecturers at Flinders University. They do certainly try to offer a variety of perspectives on education, but social justice is certainly something that is considered very important at this university. A number of perspectives on social justice are presented. There are certain papers and essays which you are asked to write which ask you to locate yourself within, for example, the conservative, the liberal-progressive or the social position. One comment made in one of my tutorials was, 'Is Flinders University a

socialist training camp?’ to which the answer was no. But we are being asked to consider how political teaching actually is and the fact that the majority of teachers are white, middle-class and—as is probably evident here—female. That is not suggesting that all teachers are white and middle class, but a prevailing number of them are.

The course asks us to interrogate ideas of what that brings to the classroom with us and asks: if the children we are teaching are not white and middle class, what happens? If we are unaware of the values and beliefs that we bring, how indicative and representative is that for kids? So, if children are marginalised—for example, Indigenous children, who have been marginalised in education since its conception—how are we just maintaining the status quo if we do not ask ourselves? We have been asked to be critical of ourselves all the way through. Self-reflexivity has been very strongly pushed by the course. There is a lot of journal writing, a lot of questioning of how and why we have come to certain understandings of education, and we are being asked to do that as we consider ourselves as teachers, all the way along.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—That is fine. I do not think many people would have much difficulty with that. But my question was more reflecting on your comment that you see your role as a teacher as an agent of social change—changing the society, not reflecting on your own.

Miss Murphy—I would argue that in a classroom, when you are acting as an agent of positive social change, you have the students in your classroom engaged in real-life learning, real-life activities. When you have students, say, writing letters to the editor of the local *Messenger* paper about an issue that they believe in, that is teaching them to be agents of positive social change but it is also fostering the development of literacy. When kids are writing about something they care about, they are more likely to take it seriously and put value on that. So, in saying that we view ourselves as agents of positive social change, we are also saying that we see ourselves as empowering the students in our classrooms to engage in real-life activities. That, in my experience, is when very good learning occurs. When kids can see a real purpose for what they are doing, they will value it and they will learn. So, fundamental to anything we do here is the learning of our students. We put that first, no matter what. That is why we are here, because we believe in learning and we value learning.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It is just that you did not mention that.

Miss Murphy—It is just a given.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—But also you have said ‘positive social change’. That is a value judgment.

Mrs Pyman—Yes.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—You are saying that the social change you are seeking is positive, but the parents of some of your future students may not see it that way. Don’t you think that they would take umbrage at you directing your teaching in that way?

Mrs Pyman—Yes.

Miss Murphy—Yes.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—And you are okay with that?

Mrs Pyman—Yes.

Miss Murphy—Yes.

Mrs Pyman—I think the question we have to ask ourselves is: are we prepared to maintain the status quo? We are aware that we place ourselves on the margins in some particular areas of education by saying to some parents who are very happy with the way that education has progressed that we are willing to change things a little bit. We are aware that this is not going to happen quickly and that we do have to work within the communities of teachers that we work within, and we are also prepared to support the ethos of the schools that we work within. But we are also committed to asking children to be critical, to asking them to question things around them and to asking them to make contributions. Of course, that is value laden.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It is.

Mrs Pyman—Alanna and I will obviously both bring our values to the classroom, but we will have to make sure that we continue to ask ourselves: are we just pushing our own agendas in the classroom, or are we asking children to create their own and try and make some decisions that they feel really strongly about?

Miss Murphy—On my final prac I encouraged every one of the 58 year 7 and 8 students I had to go out and do one day or two days of volunteering in the community, such as volunteering for Meals on Wheels or child-care centres, cleaning up rubbish and a variety of things. I would say that that is encouraging my students to create positive social change or to make a difference. I had an extremely positive response from all of the parents. They thought it was wonderful that their kids were getting out there and doing something real. Being an agent of positive social change does not necessarily have to mean that we are back to the protest era and we are putting words in the mouths of our students. All of the kids had the opportunity to choose what sort of volunteering they wanted to do. They loved it, the parents loved it and the school loved it. So it does not have to be walking down the street with big banners and making them fight for things that they do not understand. That is not what we are about. We are about enabling our students to do something real and to do something that has a purpose for them and the community that the school is located within.

Mrs Dyte—Maintaining the status quo was also a political statement in itself. So it does not matter whether you support positive social change as you see it or support the status quo as you see it. It has to be acknowledged that no matter what you do it is political. I think this is what the ladies are saying—that schools are a political environment and even holding the status quo—

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—What does that mean? Why would you say that, other than the fact that politicians are always kicking around education and debating education issues? That is appropriate because that is what they are elected to do and they have a responsibility, but why do you say that schools are political places?

Mrs Dyte—Because it is socially constructed.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—What do you mean by that?

Mrs Dyte—The school environment, our whole society, is created by the people in it. It is not a given. The direction it takes is created by the people or the politicians taking that direction.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—People know that politicians are elected and that they are in a role. I am sorry to interrupt you. People know what the role of the politician is. It is very overt. Politicians talk policy. The community, with regard to their perception of teachers, would not agree, I think, with what you have just said. I do not think that parents and people in the community would be very comfortable to listen in on this conversation thinking that you as future educators see your role as political.

Mrs Dyte—But it is. That is probably the problem—that parents do not actually realise that no matter which tack we take it is influencing the students in the ways that they are thinking. Our beliefs are going to come through, which is why there is such a strong focus on us acknowledging and recognising where we are coming from and what our beliefs are so that we know what we are taking into the classroom. Whether the parents realise that or not does not change the fact that we are not moulding but influencing the way the students think just by us being there, because the teachers are such a major influence on children's lives. Especially in primary school, they spend so much time with a given teacher. I am going into a primary situation. I think it is political, I think it is socially constructed and I think that that does need to be acknowledged. I think perhaps the parents need educating on the fact that that is the way it is.

Ms CORCORAN—I think you need to define the word 'political'. It has a very broad meaning.

Mrs Dyte—We do not mean politicians; we mean the political environment of society.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I am totally clear on that. I have just heard you say that you have a role in educating parents to understand this paradigm. I think that it is probably worthwhile for all of us after today to reflect a bit more on that. I really mean that.

Mrs Greatbanks—I taught in England, and the emphasis there is very much on results. You teach the children towards exams and getting those results. I think that is still important. Everybody wants their children to do well and, as you quite rightly said, to achieve their full potential. But what I have got out of this course is that you also have to teach the children to be critical thinkers and not just accept what they are told and that they should question and not be afraid of questioning—to have that confidence. Hopefully I will have the time here in South Australia to do that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I do not think that is controversial.

Miss Murphy—When we say that schools are political, I suppose where we are coming from is that we have an understanding, through understanding the history of education, that schools are institutions. Having mass compulsory schooling is not just something that organically occurred and it is just there; it was constructed by rules in our society that say that children are institutionalised in education from five to 15. That is not something that just happened

magically; that came about because of decisions that politicians made. That is really the context whereby we are saying that education is political.

Mrs Pyman—Just to answer your question, Mr Ferguson: I do not actually believe that parents need to be educated. I have to disagree with Jacque on that. Parents bring a lot to the community of a school. I think that parents should be involved in the decisions of the schools but I think it would be very presumptuous to suggest that they should be educated. What I would suggest about the political nature of schooling is that if I come in as a white middle-class female who has not really seen any difference, I would like to think that they are not the only values that I am going to encourage children to believe, especially if I have within my classroom Indigenous children, children from other countries, children who are English as second language speakers or children who are disabled in any way.

When I speak about it being political, I suppose it comes back to the sorts of resources that you are able to choose—for example, if you only show resources that show white middle-class people or if you talk about discovery instead of invasion. There are so many things that I believe construct the political nature of schooling but, unfortunately, I do have to disagree: it does not come down to educating the parents. I believe that the schooling experience needs to be constructed by everybody within the community. We cannot assume that as teachers coming out of a four-year degree course we have all the answers—because we certainly do not.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I think that is a really good sum-up comment—hand in hand with the comment that, while the teachers might be the experts in terms of education and pedagogy, it is the parents who love the children the most.

Mrs Dyte—I would like to clarify that. All I am saying in the education of the teachers is that there should be an understanding of the political nature of the schooling. I am not saying that parents need to be educated. I do agree that parents do bring an awful lot into the school—and they should. I am a parent. All I was referring to was their understanding of the social and political influence that the teachers have over their children.

Mrs King—Another point is that I do not know that we are representative of all of our classmates. I definitely have people in some of my classes, particularly in a subject called ‘curriculum studies specialisation 2’—which basically should be called educational philosophy, but it is not called that—who are saying, ‘What is this? Let’s just get on with teaching.’ I love it because I want to understand what the philosophy behind teaching is and where I stand in that, but there are plenty of people who just say, ‘We’ve got to do this, so we will do it.’ They definitely learn from it—they are not that anti—but, for the first two lectures, they go, ‘Blah!’ So I do not know that we are totally representative of them.

Mr SAWFORD—I found your contributions this morning outstanding and varied. I think you are great advertisements for this university’s teacher education courses. While you were talking, I remembered the *Times* educational supplement, published in what I think was the most substantive longitudinal research about primary education that I have ever read. It was published in 1984. Without me defining all the things, it basically said that the quality of an educational program determines, to a large degree, the success or otherwise of children learning and that the quality of that educational program is far more important than socioeconomic background, gender, race, culture or whatever. The key people in that quality educational program were, of

course, the principals, the teachers, the parents and the children. I do not think that has changed. Whatever we might say about education, it all comes down to the quality of the educational program that you produce in consultation with your peers, your principals and your parents. That will be the determining factor of whether or not your kids succeed.

CHAIR—Thank you for taking the time to appear before the committee today. We really appreciate your passion and enthusiasm for teaching.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 am to 11.19 am

DAVIES, Associate Professor James Robert, Principal, Australian Science and Mathematics School

DARCY, Mr Brett, Manager/Principal, Belair Primary School

McGUIGAN, Mrs Kath, Deputy Principal, Cardijn College

GOODE, Mr Brian, Manager/Principal, Darlington Primary School

JACKSON, Mr Russell, Coordinator, School Improvement, Anangu Education Unit, Department of Education and Children's Services

WELLMAN, Mrs Moya, Manager/Principal, Elizabeth Grove Primary School

SCRAGG, Mr Peter, Manager/Principal, Paradise Primary School

HEPTINSTALL, Ms Kath, Assistant Principal, Seaview High School

MULRANEY, Mr James, Manager/Principal, Seaview High School

MANGAN, Mr Sean, Head of Middle School, Woodcroft College Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded in *Hansard* and a record is made available 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 a contempt of the parliament. I presume you would like to make some introductory remarks, after which we will go to the committee for questions.

Prof. Davies—Some key issues that I think would be worth raising have an emphasis on a schools perspective, certainly on the perspective of the Australian Science and Mathematics School. Much of what I am to say comes from working in that environment and with teachers there, interfacing with university and having young people in teacher education programs coming in and out of the school at the same time. So it is drawing on all of those threads.

The first thing is that there is a need to emphasise that people coming into the profession come in as professional learners as opposed to trained workers, if there is such a thing as a continuum there. The reality is—and I am often talking to the teachers in the school about this—that teachers' professional learning is the thing that is of the highest priority in their total work. It is particularly the case in the territory we are working in—that is, primarily in science and mathematics education. The disciplines involved in science in particular are changing so rapidly that we need teachers who have the ability and capacity to continue their professional learning not only in the discipline but also in the pedagogical approaches that go with it. In summary, there should be an emphasis on teacher education and lifelong learning skills to sustain them in the profession thereafter.

Part of that, I think, is to do with teachers having the capacity to be action learners and action researchers whilst in the job. I think that tells us something about the emphasis that needs to be on teacher education programs. Young people in these preservice programs need to develop a capacity to conduct inquiry and be researchers on the job in the profession as they work through. I think that is a significant foundational issue.

I think that a comment that it is necessary to make in relation to all levels of teaching of students in the outer 12 spectrum is that people who come into the profession require some high-quality education in the disciplines in which they are to teach. We need to be cognisant of that all of the time. Certainly that should be tied to pedagogical practice. I think there is some strong evidence coming out of my school and I know other schools that during the preservice educational programs the opportunity to engage in practical activity in the field through practicums and engage with students and teachers in classrooms and authentic learning situations is a really important part of the process. Our observation would be that young people gain a whole lot of confidence and expertise as well by actually doing the job with practising professionals alongside as mentors, coaches and the guides on the side.

I want to make a particular point about the learning in the discipline—the pedagogical learning and the practicum. One of the things that is becoming increasingly apparent in our work in the Australian Science and Mathematics School is that the discipline and pedagogical approaches are coming together more and more. An example is the development of an inquiry approach to teaching in sciences, which seems to be a particular way of engaging young people in learning about and doing science. So, for somebody who is learning to be a science teacher, understanding the discipline and an appropriate pedagogy that comes together seems to me to be a really important process.

You could illustrate that by saying that perhaps a predominantly inquiry based approach to teaching in English literature might not be the best pedagogical approach for that discipline. There might be a better way of doing that. What I am suggesting is that we need to be attentive to the territory where science and pedagogy come together and what the territory is, and we need to focus on that for people who are going to be science teachers, maths teachers or whatever.

The last point I want to make is that really a important emphasis should be given to looking at not only the preservice educational programs for teachers but also the in-service educational programs for teachers. The science and technology teaching area in secondary schools is extremely illustrative. In the last 30-year period, as we have an ageing teaching force, the last formal educational programs that most of our science teachers aged 45-plus had in their discipline was in their undergraduate program. In science and technology, we all know what has happened to the growth of knowledge and our expertise in those areas in the last 20 or 30 years, essentially driven by the silicon chip. As a result, we have ended up with, in a sense, a flat-line curriculum. The physics syllabuses in South Australia, in other states and in the international context as well do not look terribly different today than they did 30 years ago. They are full of foundational physics. What they do not reflect is a futures perspective about science and technology. They do not talk about photonics or laser science or a raft of new and emerging sciences.

Somehow or other, we have to find some partnerships between teacher education providers, employers, schools and teachers that sustain professional learning for teachers as they move

through their careers. We have to see that as an extension and a natural continuum for practising teachers as they move through their careers and not just rely on the foundational studies that they do pre service. I might leave it there; I will pass the baton.

CHAIR—Would anybody else care to make some comments?

Mr Mulraney—I would like to add to Jim's comments. I think what we are also looking for is people with passion who actually want to work with adolescents, as in my environment. Also, we want people who look at each child as an individual and can actually see their development as a person. It is all very well to say, 'I can come in and teach these particular subjects,' but most of the work in schools is not teaching subjects. It is educating a young person to be a better person. There are a lot of issues that they are dealing with. In my school, in the last three weeks three kids have attempted suicide. It is great to sit here and say that they are all still alive, but, when we start unpacking the issues that they are dealing with, what they are doing in terms of a subject's content is not that important to their life. Looking at giving them more meaning and actually having teacher education authorities develop people through training so that they can deal with the issues that teachers have to deal with day by day is becoming more relevant and more purposeful in terms of what we need to do.

I do not think the teaching force of the future is going to be about long-term careers, like it has been for some of us. Teachers are going to move. And they are going to move from different parts of the world. They are going to look at short-term concepts of teaching and then going somewhere else and trying something else. I am not sure that we are ready as institutions in terms of preparing people or accepting people to be able to cope with the significant change that I think is on the way.

Mr Jackson—I am responsible for working with the Anangu Education Unit within DECS. It is all of the school communities on the Anangu-Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara lands and Yalata and Oak Valley. The district has traditionally been considered hard to staff. Part of the problem is remoteness. Ten years ago, getting people out to do preservice training in those schools did not happen. There were no teaching practicums that existed in remote schools. Jim was talking about the lack of preservice training for remote and isolated schools, where you need teachers with passion, because the issues around social wellbeing are very much highlighted in remote and regional communities. You need teachers with passion, you need highly skilled teachers, and you need teachers who are socially adept and adept in their particular learning areas. But how can you expect that if they have never actually experienced it?

It is very important for a teacher-training institution to have the flexibility to actually place students. How do you get around all those issues and the issues of student supervision et cetera for which a university is highly responsible? Seven years ago our unit formed an alliance with Flinders University. We now place 18 students every year in teaching practicums. That has become a regular but costly exercise. However, the university has had the ability to do it. We have actually been able to place them, do preservice training and we can work with them. We hand-pick third years and fourth years. If we target third years we actually value-add them in their fourth year of training. We reward them for being fantastic teachers in preparation by giving them more work. We bring them in and give them special professional development in the literacy and numeracy strategies that we adopt across the district. So we have a focus on that

preservice training in coalition with the university—not expecting the university to do it all, because the universities cannot be all things for all people.

As Jim was saying, that post-placement support is absolutely critical. I do not care whether it is one of our remote schools or whether it is a school in a metropolitan area, post-placement support is critical. Teaching has become a much more complex area of work—the demands in terms of health, wellbeing, the total individual and the passion that the teacher needs to carry into that process. Without support, beginning teachers—and a few established teachers—will flounder. We dedicate an officer in our unit to support all teachers in the first year of their placement. It does not matter whether they are experienced teachers or whether they are graduate teachers, because they are working in a remote community, they need that particular support. The critical thing is having the flexibility to work with the university to have constructive, well-supervised, well-supported teaching practica in the particular context. I know it is a niche market, but I think that there are a lot of parallels that come out of our context that could be applied in the broader context across the state. I have a flowchart, if any of the panel are interested, showing how we go through that particular process with graduate teachers.

CHAIR—Just to flush that out a bit further, Russell, do you see that there is a need there to perhaps have a course which focuses on rural and remote and all the issues that go with that—just taking what you are saying a step further and maybe identifying potential students who would be willing to teach in regional and remote and having a strand that basically prepares them for those challenges?

Mr Jackson—Certainly. That is one thing that Flinders University and UniSA have done in collaboration with DECS here in South Australia already. There is a coordinator for the rural and remote program that runs at Flinders and UniSA. They do identify and target. Alan Campbell coordinates the program, and I take part in the interview panels to identify high-quality people for working in rural and remote locations. They are targeted and employed early. I would go a step further and say, rural and remote and Indigenous, because you can prepare people for rural and remote and not prepare them to work in Indigenous communities, and they are very important. The data shows that the growth in the number of Indigenous students is outstripping that of non-Indigenous students in Australia, so it will become a very critical area. In terms of social justice and social wellbeing, and health and wellbeing issues around suicide et cetera, we need committed, passionate, able, adept and thriving teachers to work in those particular contexts.

CHAIR—We have a number of principals assembled here. What would the principals' view be on some form of mandated quota of young trainee teachers being sent to schools by way of a systemic thing, rather than by individual negotiation between the university and individual schools? I am just floating an idea.

Prof. Davies—I will comment from the perspective of the ASMS. We have an agreement with the AEU and the Department of Education and Children's Services to be able to access two graduate teachers in our employment each year, on up to three-year appointments. Whilst we have had some difficulties recruiting those people—on one occasion—the people who have been with us from the start of their career, working in our environment, have made a huge impact on the whole culture and structure of the school. That impact is essentially on the nature of the current science/mathematics and general teaching force in metropolitan schools. Most of our

teaching staff in metropolitan secondary schools in particular are moving into the grandparent stage of their lives and careers—the staffroom conversation is about the grandkids. To have young, vibrant and energetic people in that context, adding to the cultural mix of the staff of the school and the school itself, is of huge value.

CHAIR—So, as principals you would welcome that?

Mrs Wellman—I am from the Elizabeth Grove Primary School. I have a hard to staff school, as well. I find that some teachers come and will not stay. I feel that a good model would be—I do not know how it would work—that we attach a few teachers to the school so my teachers can act as mentors. The attached teachers can actually learn how these schools with disadvantage and poverty work. We also have models at the school where we employ social workers. We have students coming from different faculties—OT et cetera—and it breaks down the barrier. I listen to the students when they are filling in their packages at the end of the year and there are myths about lots of schools. They say, ‘I won’t go there.’ If you get them out to your schools, support them, teach them and show them that there is support there then it changes their minds. Very early, before the department sends them out, you have sorted out the kids who are going to stay. We have five or six people a year appointed who will not come.

Mr Scragg—I am from Paradise Primary School. It is interesting to listen to everyone’s perspective. The one thing we all agree on is that everybody wants good quality teachers. My students have a specific need for teachers who are skilled in behaviour management, literacy and numeracy. People want people who are committed. The whole belief is about doing the very best we can to get the people who care out into the schools. Right now my guess is that students get concerned about career options. Where is it predictable that they can go to to get a job with the skills and interests that they have? Look at the Anangu lands—what a fantastic opportunity for people to get a broad perspective to bring back to the metropolitan area. Yet we do not have many of our students who get out there and have that level of experience. If students go out to Elizabeth Grove and those areas out there, the training and development opportunities are fantastic, their management skills are highly advanced and they bring those back. Everybody is looking for the same thing: highly skilled and highly caring teachers who are prepared to do some work.

All schools need a good balance. We are entering the granny stage. It is fantastic to have that level of experience but we also need that injection of enthusiasm and youth. Schools that have all youth have attributes that are terrific but they lose that balance. It is getting that balance and getting that career path. When students go out for their final practicums they develop their skill base but they also get ready for employment. So they take fewer risks. Why would they put themselves on the line if they are going to get a bad report because they have gone down on something? They miss a job opportunity or it appears that they have ineffective experience.

CHAIR—Does anyone else want to say something on that one?

Mr Mangan—I would pick up on those points in the sense that I feel for young people entering the profession. They perhaps need to see that there is a career pathway for them. Quite often, they might do five or six years in a difficult environment—there could be a lot of wear and tear on them—and they may depart the profession. Then we have lost quality people. I just feel that, perhaps, as part of their training there needs to be some sections where we look at a career

pathway. Are you interested in becoming an educational leader? You are one in the sense of being a classroom teacher but, in terms of managing staff as well, what sort of career paths are there for you? I think those incentives are needed, because some staff also feel that financially they may not be as rewarded as they could be for the efforts they put in. Also, professional development opportunities may be those rewards, in order for people to advance in their careers.

The other point I would make is that I have been impressed by the number of universities clearly trying to work with schools to try to match recent trends in education, such as middle schooling. I know that at Flinders University there is a degree specifically set up for teachers to work in the middle school, where the needs of adolescents are vastly difficult from those in the senior school. I think universities are working with schools in matching needs. I think pastoral care is one of them. We know that there is a growing mental health problem in the community. We know that, if we can help young people become more resilient in schools, we have a better chance of preventing mental health issues when they are adults. I would support Jim. I would like to see universities also incorporating this element of emotional wellbeing for young people in their courses.

CHAIR—People in the back row can feel free to make a comment. We do have a roving mic available. If you want to add into the debate, please do so. It seems that everyone is happy, so we will go to further questions.

Mr SAWFORD—We are at the stage of the inquiry where we have been to Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory, and we are in South Australia this week. We go to Western Australia next month and Tasmania the following month, then we will go to New South Wales. Then we will go back for revisits. Trends are starting to come out of the public hearings that we have had. One of them was a point that Russell Jackson alluded to. It seems to me that teacher education needs a very strong relationship between the employing authority, the universities and the schools. In the visits we have had so far, I cannot say we have had one example where that trinity has operated. There have been very strong relationships between universities and schools, and there has been the odd one with an employing authority involved. It seems to me that, if you are going to have a successful teacher education course, you have to have all three players in there. It seems to me that one of the players is absent, either by design or for some other reason. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Jackson—I will pick up on that, because in fact we do have that trinity—whether it be holy or unholy, I do not know.

Mr SAWFORD—In your area!

Mr Jackson—We do have that trinity. I work in the schools. A third of my working life is actually working in school communities. I work very closely with principals and other staff. We have a very supportive organisation, which is why our average teacher placement has moved in 10 years from the teacher staying for one year to the point at which, now, three years is the average and it is moving towards four years, and we have some teachers staying for five, which I think is almost enough in a remote community. You need to move on for your own professional development.

The supportive relationship between the university as a teaching preparer and the employing authority—and I do the recruitment and the staffing for our schools and then I am charged with supporting graduates and indeed all teachers in their first year of appointment—is very strong. Without it, we would not keep our staff; nor would they be thriving as opposed to surviving.

Mr SAWFORD—What about in metropolitan schools? I hear some nods go the other way.

Mr Scragg—It is not the case. The personnel in the central office in the staffing section care about schools. The quality of the relationship there is terrific. But the role is very different. The role in some sectors is very targeted to get high-quality people into those positions before we lose them. We are losing a lot of good quality people to the private system. For us in most metropolitan schools—in particular, in the primary school settings—there is very little flexibility. The majority of teachers wanting to work want to work in the schools that we operate and therefore we are obliged to follow the system, which means that we do not always get the best fit for the job that we have described.

Mr SAWFORD—What would you change?

Mr Scragg—I think we have a model to apply to all sectors in the public education system.

Mr Mulraney—Flinders has a very big and expanding mentoring program with schools in the southern suburbs. That means that the relationship between the schools and university is getting stronger and stronger. It seems to me that, if I use that network, I then influence the system—I know that this person matches this vacancy because I have already met them and been working with them from the university environment. A lot more of that has to start to happen. Also, we have to start sharing information. If I come across a fantastic science person, rather than keeping it to myself and thinking, ‘How can I work out a way,’ if Jim is looking for that person I have to share the information to make sure that the networking that we do really well actually brings the third part in.

Mr Darcy—One of the things that has happened with the student teachers during their practicum—and I do not know whether it is by accident or it is happening deliberately—is that former principals are coming back into the university sector and working as the supervisors for student teachers. I think their role has been absolutely invaluable because they have been able to give a principal’s perspective on career paths, pedagogy and how to go through a successful practicum. They can train those people up, give them their eight-week block and make those sessions much more beneficial for them. What it does, of course, is bring in that link with DECS, because you are bringing DECS experience into the university sector. So the university people understand what is happening at the school level and that connection is there. I would support what you are saying, but I think it needs to be stronger. The universities really need to have a stronger connection to the system.

There was one thing I was going to say earlier but we got sidetracked. James was talking about teaching the individual rather than the subject. Jim talked about the value of the practicum. One of the things we are finding from the primary perspective, where they are not subject specialists—they are actually teaching across a range of areas—is that they do not have a huge curriculum knowledge. They are finding that during their first few weeks at school they are actually learning what SACSA is. They do not have the huge background.

I would suggest, from the people I have talked to prior to coming today, that universities spend a lot of time getting student teachers to understand the whole curriculum out there. There is a range of curricula at international standards right around the world. We do not think they have a great knowledge of how you put a curriculum together—you just stand in front of the kids. When you are starting your practicum you are trying to learn how you are as a teacher. First of all, you have to know what you are going to teach. It is very hard to know how you are going to teach if you do not know what you are going to teach, particularly when you are not a subject specialist in a primary setting.

Mr SAWFORD—Perhaps while we are talking about this subject, I will ask another question. There was one statistic that really concerned me a couple of years ago. A Commonwealth department came and gave us a briefing on a whole range of matters. One of the statistics was that 25 years ago we had 100,000 kids in this country doing pure mathematics at universities. We now have fewer than 16,000. That was a couple of years ago. That is a dramatic change. If you look at China, China last year graduated 1,100,000 engineers and 10,000 lawyers. I think our ratio is around the other way, which might explain something about the China phenomenon.

What I am asking is: has that happened in terms of mathematics and science? Jim, you said that basically physics has not changed in 30 years. A lot of teachers that we have spoken to have simply said that the rigour in maths and science is no longer there, and that students' interest has dropped off and they have moved out. That has been a common observation made by teachers to this inquiry and to this committee for a large number of years. Those figures are worrying: 100,000 and 16,000. Where are we going to get our engineers, our builders and people who can analyse? Look at the media these days. I do not think you can see one person in the Canberra press gallery that could analyse anything. It is all comment. They call it analysis, but it is actually comment. Most of the people who come into the parliament these days have a synthesised education. They would not know analytical skills if they fell over them. This is a problem because it results in a lack of balance.

We were talking earlier this morning about the balance between subject and basic classroom management, and about scholarship and research. There is always a need for balance and it seems in some ways that a lot of balance has gone missing in the last several years. People within the community are responding to it, whether they are articulating it or not, by voting with their feet. Peter made a comment about the shift to private schools being part of that. The balance between scholarship and research, between analysis and synthesis, and between pure mathematics and science has dropped off. That is not in the national interest. Teacher education has to address this issue. Do you think it is? If it is not—and figures suggest that it is not—what should we be doing about it?

Prof. Davies—The figures you quote are absolutely accurate and have caused alarm bells to ring all over the place. It goes to the very core of the reasons that the Australian Science and Mathematics School exists and was initiated out of Flinders University. It is a tangible example of the education system and the university getting together to work towards a new way of doing things. So that goes to your previous question.

To focus on the teacher education issue, I was looking at some stuff this morning out of the US on the issue of engaging young women in sciences, particularly computer sciences. There seems to be a couple of reasonably consistent messages. One is that there is clear evidence that

young people in our schools are increasingly looking for opportunities to engage in learning that is authentic, that is real, and that is going to touch their futures. Notions about pure mathematics and theoretical physics or similar examples do not match the real world view of young people. That is not to say that we cannot engage them in some mathematics that might be a bit more applied or authentic for them but which does have rigour. That can be achieved. But I think it is about this flat-line curriculum. We need to have a look at where students' heads are at—where they see their futures as being—and try to get teachers who can pick up authentic community based and industry based applications in their programs and develop curricula in and around what young people see as their futures. There are virtually no jobs in theoretical physics in Australia. There are predicted to be 20,000 jobs in South Australia in nanotechnology in the next 10 to 15 years.

What does that tell us about teacher education? I think it says we have to start to engage in those programs with the leading edge sciences and technologies. I think this university is having a real go at that. I think it says something about how we engage people who are in teacher education programs, and indeed teachers in the profession, in realistic opportunities to extend their learning in authentic situations as well. Industry placements for teachers, community based and industry placements in learning in preservice programs help us in that general direction. To get back to your question about rigour, I reckon the touchstone might be that somehow or other in those conversations we have to continue to engage the pure mathematicians in the process and get them to help us keep making the connections to rigorous but authentic and applied mathematics, for example.

Mr SAWFORD—We need people to think. When you observe a lot of the business community, the media community or the political community, you sometimes see an appalling lack of leadership and ability to think through the complexities of an issue. The lack of balance is what I see as a great worry.

Prof. Davies—I think one of the issues that that raises for me is that traditional schooling, and therefore traditional teacher education, has focused on the disciplines. I know I spoke earlier about having knowledge in the disciplines. What you are talking about is increasingly being talked about in schools. James alluded to it earlier. Is it that we ought to have more emphasis on developing young people's capabilities in all sorts of processing of learning and processing of knowledge, such as the ability to solve problems, the ability to analyse and synthesise, the ability to be creative and innovative and so on?

Mr SAWFORD—Don't you need both?

Prof. Davies—I think so. That suggests stepping back from our traditional design and development of curriculum and syllabus and so on, and particularly at the senior end of the schooling years, to have a look at the warp and weft of the curriculum in those terms.

Mrs McGuigan—I am a physics teacher. It has been really interesting today to hear the number of times that physics has been mentioned. I will make a couple of comments. I think the fact that fewer students are doing pure mathematics and physics is due to the explosion in other careers, the amount of choice that students have. I have come from my physics class today. There are nine students in that physics class out of a year 12 cohort of about 100, so that puts that in perspective a bit. I struggle every year to get a viable class. Much of it comes down to me

being forceful, showing that physics as a subject at school is also something that is used for when they go on to study at university for whatever career they might have. There has been a large explosion in careers. You said that physics teaching has not changed in 30 years. As a physics teacher I take a little bit of offence at that.

Mr SAWFORD—I took that from Jim.

Mrs McGuigan—Jim has heard me before. I have taught in Scotland, New South Wales and South Australia. If we are only talking about teaching from a textbook then maybe you say that it has not changed. But, Jim, the fundamental laws of physics have not changed. No-one has changed them. Today is the anniversary of Einstein's publication of $E=mc^2$. Today I found out on the internet that it is the International Year of Physics. It is all about teachers engaging with their students and telling them what is going on in the world. It is not right to say that a lot of teachers are not doing that. I think they are. I am involved in a physics chat line. My students all laugh at that. People ask questions and we respond. That is here in South Australia, through SACSA. I think there are a lot of things going on.

I would worry about rigour. I do think that comes down to the way the schools are structured. I think that the middle school concept is good, but we need senior teachers who have that academic background and academic rigour. We also need teachers with passion who are really interested in not only the subject but also young people. I do not get offended when they do not all go off and study physics at university. I get excited today when they make their SATAC preferences and they have everything from health science to finance to commerce to choose from. Nobody has considered being a politician yet, but you never know. So I feel quite confident there.

I also think that we should be targeting mature people who have been in the workplace for a number of years, are probably in a science area and then want to come back into teaching. I would like to see what we are going to do there. I think the government has really got to support them in some way, through scholarships or something like that, because nobody is going to support a family or whatever on—I do not know what they would support them on!

Mr Jackson—Can I just make one more point on that, on mathematics. Ten years ago I was setting up a middle school, and what we discovered was that a third of 94 students at the time had already decided that they were not able to do mathematics. A third! And they are 11-, 12- and 13-year-olds. So we cannot actually afford to wait until we get to secondary level or tertiary level, because what we have got to find are the critical learning keys. We were talking with that group of students about being not low competence but low confidence. That is a really critical issue. What we have got to find are the learning keys and the teachers prepared to find those learning keys that will turn around the low-confidence group so that they see themselves as mathematicians. Because if we have lost a third of that sample—and that was over a five- to six-year period—before they even get to secondary school, imagine what the attrition rate is through secondary school. It has got to be done at an early stage in the child's development.

Mr Darcy—Just going back to your question of balance: a critical issue for emerging teachers, and even for very experienced ones, is getting a balance between explicit teaching and the learning to learn component. And, with the crowdedness of our curriculum these days and the emphasis on SACE scores, TERs and so on, it is a difficult thing. Where do you go and how

do you get that knowledge? As an emerging teacher coming straight in, new to the profession, it is very difficult. I want to add that the media bashing of teachers who get very confused about assessment reporting and about the rights of parents is a minefield for people who want to find their way clear. We talk about inquiry based approaches to learning and giving children opportunities to work within their own curiosities and their own parameters. Then you chuck in explicit teaching and emphasis on spelling mistakes and so on. It makes it really hard for people to actually find the balance to suit all the parties concerned.

Mr SAWFORD—If you have got too much you have to toss something out.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to change direction; I feel a little bit embarrassed about asking very pragmatic questions after that discussion, but never mind. I have two questions. Firstly, I am from Victoria, and in Victoria school principals choose their own staff. They interview and appoint them themselves. I keep forgetting it does not happen in other states—and I am assuming it does not happen here in South Australia. So I am interested in whether that is something you would like to do here. I do not quite know why it has developed that way in Victoria and not in other places, but that is something that is different.

Secondly, getting back to Luke's question about students doing their practicums, we have had a discussion here this morning and in other places. Is there an advantage in each school being obliged to take student teachers—not necessarily for pay, but just as part of what a school does—and is there room for that sort of mandatory taking on of student teachers? They are two different questions that actually can be linked, when you think about it.

Mrs Wellman—Can I comment on your first one, about choosing staff. I do get a reasonable amount of choice of who I get, but nobody wants to apply—partly because of the media and partly because of the myth that we cannot do it. That is why I think we have to address it a lot earlier than when we need staff, through the universities, through having a closer link with kids who might be willing to have a go in these hard schools and through being linked to them for a long time before they actually make the decision, because to come in is just too confronting and it is too hard to relearn a lot of things that have been in their past but are different. They are confronted by different kids, different social welfare issues—things that they have never seen in their lives—and so they will not apply to come. All the choice in the world does not make a scrap of difference to me.

Ms CORCORAN—If through the university course you had students doing their pracs at your school, would that make a difference?

Mrs Wellman—I would love them to be associated with my school. I do not mind if they go elsewhere to do pracs but I think the kids need a base to come to to ask the questions that they are too embarrassed to ask—because they think they should know the answers—when they go out on practicums. The comment the younger teachers have made to me is that they like it when they go with the more inexperienced teachers because they are actually in tune with what they need to know, whereas the older ones—and, as we have said, the profile is quite old—because they have been doing it so long, sometimes forget what it is that they need to know. When I say they can ask questions—I am talking about the new teachers—they also say, 'We do not know what we do not know, so we do not know what to ask.'

I have had the experience of a daughter going back to do teaching as a postgraduate here at Flinders and it came home to me that she needed a mentor. She needed to come home to mum to ask the questions that she thought she should know the answers to. Even though they are not that old, school has changed so much that they do not even relate their schooling to the schooling that happens in our primary systems. That is a comment that I wanted to make about how they feel about it.

Mr Goode—I would reinforce what Moya has said there. I come from a difficult school. It is difficult to staff. I have had a number of teachers who have come in and who have not lasted the distance. One of the things that we find with young teachers in particular is that they do not have the necessary practical experience to come into some of those difficult schools. Being able to be mentored in a school over their years at college, a bit like an internship, I guess, would give them a lot of the basic understanding of what it is like to work in any school, but particularly in difficult schools.

One of the problems we have with people when they come out of college is that they very rarely get a full-time position. They do not go into a classroom situation. When I came out of college, I went straight into a class and it was a completely different environment. What they end up doing is temporary relief work. That is nothing like taking your own class, because you cannot establish patterns of management—behaviour management, curriculum management or whatever—in that situation. You are really in a situation where many students will try and take advantage of you as the teacher and make things really difficult. You therefore revert to a very closed sort of style, if you like. You do not develop those skills. That has to be addressed in some way.

Ms CORCORAN—Are they choosing to take temporary work?

Mr Goode—They cannot get a job.

Ms CORCORAN—Right.

Mr Goode—Most young teachers, unless they go out into the country, will not get a full-time position. They will not get one in the metropolitan area. We were mentioning school choice a minute ago. In school choice, you still have the employable teachers at the bottom of the selection process. People who have the more experience are above them in being chosen for schools, so they do not get that opportunity.

CHAIR—Are you saying that that tendency for beginning teachers to be lumped into that different dynamic of temporary rather than permanent teaching is going to have a material adverse effect on the quality of teachers? Do you think it is a material factor or only a minor factor?

Mr Goode—It is a major factor. What happens with some of those people is that they experience the TRT round for a year or whatever and they say, 'Hang on, teaching is not for me,' because of how difficult it is to walk into a class and control it and all that. If they had the opportunity to go out into either a mentoring situation or into a class, they would get a different perspective on the whole teaching thing.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to go back to the point you made about there not being jobs around for first-year arts students. I know that a sample of one is a very small sample, but one of my daughters finished teaching and wanted to teach part time. This was in Victoria, where individual principals choose staff within their budget. Under their budget, ideally, they have a mix of older teachers and younger teachers, who cost less. My daughter found that she could not get a job, because she was not prepared to go full time. So I have had a different experience, based I admit on a sample of one. Do you think that was because Victoria has a different system?

Mrs Wellman—I think our union has a fairly strong view on that around the equity issues. You can employ a particular teacher because you know them. There might be 100 teachers out there who could do the job just as well, but because you do not know them they do not get a job. So that is another issue, a bigger issue, than when you start to employ teachers.

Ms CORCORAN—The point I am making is the direct opposite of the point Brian made before about there not being jobs for people their first year out. That is, if you are in your first year out and do not want to work full time there are no jobs. That is the little experience I have had. Is that not typical?

Prof. Davies—I reckon there is a raft of bits that come into play here in all sorts of ways. The big picture is that people who are recent graduates from teacher education programs find themselves looking for employment and cobbling it together in a casualised sort of environment. It is what comes with that that is potentially materially damaging. The example that readily comes to mind is that a number of schools will have one-term or two-term vacancies because experienced teachers are on long service leave, accouchement leave or parenting leave of some sort or other. Those people have permanent placements in those schools so temporary replacements are needed for them. The schools' expectation is that they will get like for like. What they get is a young person, a recent graduate. That person gets thrown into this awful tension. They have to jump in and take over this or that class for one term. The expectation that the school has of them is to replace a certain teacher. That denies that young person the opportunity to nurture and foster their development in a process that is sensible and useful to their ongoing development. So it is a huge difficulty, and its complexity is not just to do with the issues of part-time and full-time work. There are a raft of factors that come into play.

CHAIR—Peter, do you want to make a comment?

Mr Scragg—In regard to the process, as Jim and Brian have both alluded to, student teachers coming out into the work force looking to gain employment find that it is purely casual in the metropolitan area, unless they go into a specialised field or a specialised set of schools—for example, the schools in the Pachi Road area, which, again, are the hard to staff schools. In that way, people can get permanency. Outside of that, the majority of people get into this very casual pool of teachers, where there is a high level of discouragement, a high level of confusion of roles and enormous amounts of pressure for them to perform. In some cases it has been terrific—they have developed all these wonderful skills. But a lot of people seek options where there are clear paths of employment.

In most other fields that people pursue when they have a qualification or degree there is a clear line of employment. In education, people sit in a temporary pool. Come the Christmas holidays, they are unemployed and sit there for six weeks wondering what is going to happen

and where their next pay cheque is coming from. Schools cannot adequately prepare those people for the jobs that may turn up in January, because the reality is that we do not know what jobs will be available. There are a lot of permanent teachers who are not placed by then. Therefore they have to be placed before any appointments occur for casual employment. So, come the first day of term, we see what vacancies we have available in our school. We may get permanents that are matched inappropriately to a vacancy, but because they are permanent they have to be put into it. If we are lucky, we have people on side that we know about who will fill that vacancy, and we try to get them in as best we can. There is a high level of frustration right across the board. Going back to Rod's point, right now the relationships between the people doing the employing and allocating of appropriate staff in the schools and universities are disjointed. Here in South Australia that relationship is well intended, but disjointed.

Prof. Davies—There is an inbuilt double bind here for young people. In South Australia, in the Department of Education and Children's Services, for people to be able to apply for a permanent job through School Choice or any other process they have to be already in employment in the department in a casual situation. They have to do a TRT day on the day the advertisement appears to be eligible to apply, so they are in a double bind. They cannot sit outside and take a full-time job as a shop assistant or whatever and be able to apply. It is a real difficulty for them if you look at it from their perspective.

Mr Jackson—Our executive director, human resources, in South Australia came from Victoria. We are about to move, under the latest enterprise bargaining agreement, towards a process whereby schools will begin to select their own staff. The nexus around that is potentially that, as has been alluded to before, for a variety of reasons, some of which I agree with and some of which I have difficulty with, permanent members of staff have to have priority over employable members of staff—those people who are graduates or who do not have a job.

A very frustrated, very talented 37-year-old woman recently came and had an interview with me, because we will not appoint staff without several interviews. She has a Bachelor of Education. She has worked for three years. All she can pick up is contract positions. She became so frustrated that she went back to university to get a social work degree. She has been working as a social worker with Corrections, where she has been working a lot with Aboriginal adolescents. That led her to come back to education, which led her back to me. In her interview on Friday afternoon she said she is fed up to the back teeth with only getting contracts with Education. She felt it was deleterious to her teaching skills in general because she was getting a term contract here and a term contract there, so there was no continuity either for her as a developing professional or for the students.

She said, 'My love is education. I want to work in education. I have an education degree and a social work degree. If you can guarantee me a permanent job, I will give up my permanent job with community and youth services and I will work with you guys if you want me.' In the multilateral bids in South Australia we missed out on social workers attached to schools. It was seventh heaven, so she will get a permanent job next year. It is our ability to be flexible within that structure that allows that sort of thing to happen. It is important that, across the system, we develop that sort of flexibility.

Ms Heptinstall—I work with a lot of the student teachers who come in. I will pick up on the point about schools being mandated to take student teachers. This year we have some 20 student

teachers coming through the school. We had a block group of about 11 coming through together who developed a wonderful collegiate group. We also have a number of students who are doing what we call a mentoring program, which James alluded to earlier. They work alongside students and develop those relationship skills that we need teachers to have when they come into the school. We say to them: 'Find out about the school, find out how it operates, find out what is happening in the background, follow a teacher and take on a teacher as a mentor.'

My major problem is getting the staff who have the time to do it. We believe it is exceptionally important for us to train the teachers, because we are grandmothers or grandfathers. We have some highly talented young people coming through and we have some wonderfully experienced teachers. If we can get them together it is wonderful. But, as we age, the time that it takes to have a student teacher can be daunting for some people. We are committed to taking on as many as we can, but I find it difficult getting the teachers to say, 'Yes, I'll take a second one.' Teachers have come back to me and said, 'That was a wonderful experience. I'll do it again.' That is good. It is balanced out with that. That needs to be factored into any sort of program so that we can do the apprenticeship, the mentoring and getting the preservice teachers ready to take on the work that we have been talking about in the conversation today.

CHAIR—It has been a very interesting discussion. We will have to leave it there. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of the evidence that you have given us. A copy of that will be ultimately posted on our web site. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 12.20 pm to 1.48 pm

HALSEY, Mr Robert John, Executive Officer, Rural Education Forum Australia

CHAIR—I welcome the representative from REFA. 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. 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 you wish to make a statement in relation to your submission?

Mr Halsey—Yes, I do.

CHAIR—I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Halsey—Thank you very much indeed for making this time available to engage with the issues that REFA think are particularly important. Before I start, I just want to underpin the submission we have made by saying that we acknowledge the support of the government in our endeavours in rural education and also we recognise that there are many outstanding things happening in rural and remote education. There are also quite a number of outstanding things happening in teacher education. Notwithstanding those, we also think that significantly more work needs to be done.

I have made available for the committee the completed copy of the recent mapping project that we undertook, which maps preservice country teaching in Australia. The reason I have done that is because some of the submission relies on data from that. At the time of writing the submission not all of the data was in, so I have simply updated that. It is on our public web site and it is also available to you in hard copy form.

Our position is that, from the perspective of the individual, the family group, the community group and the nation as a whole, high-quality, relevant education is absolutely essential for Australians living in rural and remote Australia. I use the word 'Australians' in a collective and inclusive sense. It is particularly important when you take a medium- to long-term view of what the nation wants to become, of what the nation is currently, and the kinds of contexts that it finds itself in, particularly in our region and in a more globalised context. You have probably heard it from many sources, but the position we are starting from is the primacy of quality education.

The origin of REFA, as you probably know from our submission, is the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry, which, like I mentioned in a few of my introductory remarks, found that there is some very exciting stuff happening in rural and remote education but that, taken as a whole, there is quite a bit of underachievement and underprovisioning occurring. The inquiry did identify quite a range of complex issues that need to be dealt with. It is a rather interesting report because it has some very global type recommendations, as well as some which are of a highly specific nature. In many ways the HREOC inquiry frames both REFA's modus operandi and our rationale for existing and also guides the kind of submission that we have made to the inquiry.

I want to leave with you a number of thoughts. One of those is that the preparation for teachers for rural and remote Australia requires a differentiated approach to their preparation for city contexts. It is extremely hard to generalise context because we have places like Tamworth, Mount Gambier and Meekatharra, but we also have many small places, as you know—thousands of them. I will not elaborate on them but, to put a few on the record, there is Birdsville, Augathella, Blackall and places like that, right around the nation. It is very hard generalising, but what we typically find is that teachers living and working in country areas live in a context of what one could describe as high surveillance and low anonymity. That brings particular pressures to bear on the life of a teacher—and, indeed, a leader—in a rural community. By high surveillance and low anonymity, fundamentally what I mean is that everybody knows who you are and there is nowhere to hide.

I am not going to give you a seminar on leading and managing rural and remote education, which is what I teach at the university, but it is a fundamental fact of life. The preparation for teachers for rural and remote areas has to have a focus that deals with context as well as a focus on knowledge and skills and the other professional dispositions and attributes that you require of a teacher. It is because of the unique mix of the community, professional and private dimensions that, from a REFA perspective, a much more explicit treatment of the contextual issues that face rural and remote teachers, as well as the skill and knowledge base, needs to be injected into teacher preparation courses.

The mapping survey work that we did around Australia was fundamentally trying to get a significant handle on what is happening in preservice teacher placements in country areas. While it did not explicitly focus on what exactly is happening in rural and remote education preparation in teacher education courses, enough has come through—and certainly enough has come through the REFA networks—to say that the scene is patchy in some universities and, not unexpectedly, more so in the regional universities, but not exclusively. There is more of an explicit focus on preparing teachers for rural and remote contexts. However, taken overall and given the changing nature of the demographics in rural areas, the changing approaches to career structures, the changing demands being driven by things like ICT and changes to industry bases, production and distribution of wealth, the way in which teachers are prepared for rural and remote contexts and the kind of education and experiences they receive prior to graduation in particular and in their early years as graduates, from the perspective of REFA, some significant changes need to occur.

In our submission to you, we acknowledge we have been selective in addressing the terms of reference and we have also put in a few hard edges in terms of time frames and percentages of content and some explicit things about philosophical approaches and resourcing. We have also put in the submission some thinking that we are happy to elaborate on, which, given some of the complexities of rural and remote areas and some of the challenges of attracting and retaining quality staff, are some approaches to address the issue. While they are not entirely new and not entirely innovative—they have been around for a while—they have never really been implemented with a great deal of effort, energy and commitment.

They are things like tapping into the resource base of home based tutors who for many years have worked and tutored their children in remote and isolated situations. They have a long working history in education and we could see how, for example, they could form a small but strategic pool of potential teachers. There are things like looking into rural communities where

there are people with different skill bases who might like a career change—some of this work is happening but not enough of it—and trying to think through how to manage the transition from being an accountant to a teacher of economics and small business. There are those kinds of things we think are worth having a look at in terms of broadening the recruitment pool into the teacher preparation arena and decentralising it and delivering it in different ways. We think those kinds of things are of particular importance.

We have also underscored this in the submission by making reference the HREOC report itself. There are 72 recommendations in that report and a number of them specifically speak to Indigenous education issues—for instance, work to do with AEWs, the specific training of teachers and finding that delicate balance between educating students in their own homeland context and moving to other environments, and so on—and I am sure that you have heard things about that. From the Rural Education Forum Australia's perspective, we also think that, in terms of preparing teachers for a rural and remote context, it is timely to provide a greater focus on Indigenous education.

Finally, what is required in terms of rural and remote education for the preparation of the professionals for the educational sphere is not unlike what is required for many other areas. If you look into health services, allied health services, criminal justice, the accounting professions, local government, and many of the private areas, they share a lot of things in common in both training and then attracting and retaining staff. One of the key members of the Rural Education Forum is the National Rural Health Alliance, and members of the committee are probably aware that over the last 10 to 15 years Health has done a lot of work in rural and remote medicine. There is still a continuing agenda of work that needs to be done.

One thing that seems to have been achieved in the preparation of their professionals for working in rural and remote contexts is that they have been able to dramatically escalate the status and profile of rural and remote medicine in the academy and in the training institutions. You can now go to a number of universities, including this one, where there is a full professor with a GP background with some specialisation for rural medicine. You can go to other universities where there are associate professors and professors who carry the label 'rural medicine' or its equivalent. As we have worked with the National Rural Health Alliance, which is the peak body, and the National Rural Health Network, which is the undergraduate medico-allied health professionals nurses group, we have witnessed that there is cascading confidence into that young cohort coming through and, indeed, others. There are some scholarships in there and some carrots, if you like, of a not insignificant kind, but there is much more of a pride and confidence about being a health services professional being prepared to work in a rural and remote context.

If you flip over into education, as a generalisation—and there are always going to be exceptions—if you say to a young beginning teacher, 'Where did you get your job?' and the person says, 'I got it in a country school,' the almost understated statement is: 'So you could not get a job in the city.' If you are a principal in a country school and you are trying to get back into the city, no education department will say this—and I speak as someone who spent, like one of the members of the committee, many years in the bureaucracy and have not long been out of it—but there is a kind of discounting that goes on sometimes. They say, 'So you were in the country. Well, it is not as complex as the city.' Our argument is that there is a unique degree of complexity and challenge in rural and remote locations—if I had to go for a one-liner—

underpinned by the issue of high surveillance and low anonymity and, indeed, the overall reduced skill base, which is less than the equivalent you might find in the city, is simply due to less experience and in some instances less well qualified staff that you are working with.

What we would want to argue is that there should be a focus on taking actions in the academy, in professional development, in employment strategies and so on that in fact contribute to a reversal of that status situation. While not exactly paralleling what is happening in health and medicine, certainly we could take some good lessons and some hard lessons from the health and medicine area in particular. We could look at what can be done to address that diminished status—if you can put it that way, or that diminished profile—that seems to characterise rural and remote education, with notable exceptions.

CHAIR—I might start with a section which I think was of interest to most members of the committee. You said that there seems to be a widespread practice of central university administrations creaming off significant percentages of funds intended for practicum overheads et cetera. We heard evidence earlier that the teaching course does not present an opportunity to be a cash cow for other courses. I would be interested in you elaborating on that statement.

Mr Halsey—I will mention one of the things that we have identified as a follow-on body of research. The REFA council met just last week in Port Augusta for its annual roundtable meeting, where we engaged with the locals as well as with the council per se. They have strongly endorsed the recommendations. The final recommendation of the report is that we do a further body of research to try and get the exact dimensions of what is going on with funding, particularly for practicums and the preparation of teachers for rural and remote areas.

Anecdotally I can say two things to you. First, we have had one brief conversation with the federal minister, who made it pretty clear in a one-liner to us that funding is provided to the universities for practicums or for rural placements. We do not argue with that; we understand funding is provided. We do not argue that it is made as a lump sum allocation out of the Commonwealth votes, allocations, tranches of money or whatever the right word is. What we are not at all clear about is where that money ends up.

In fact from the research that I undertook with the universities offering teacher education programs—and 23 of the 46 responded—the information that came through about clarity about budgets, their sources, what that money is used for and how it is allocated was pretty fuzzy. The most specific university was actually this university, Flinders. The person who runs the placement program replied that they know exactly how much they get and how much is allocated for rural education. To the other extreme, one university responded, ‘We’re in deficit and we don’t have any money and I don’t know where the money comes from.’ I do not know what the vice-chancellor would have thought about that, but, anyhow, that is what came in on the reply.

The second bit of anecdotal information is that when I went and talked to the Council of Deans of Education about REFA’s mapping of preservice country placement project and I made a point about budgets, what I got was a kind of collective ripple around the room among many of them which said, ‘Yes, we understand the funds come in, but we are not at all sure that it always gets through to the schools of education or the deans of education on allocation.’

What we know for certain from a student perspective is that the cost of a preservice country placement is a major inhibitor. It is a major issue and it is a major inhibitor. The cost is generated by some obvious things, like double accommodation, like deferred income from a part-time job, like travel, like some additional living costs. Unless we find ways of dealing with that, it seems to me that the writing is on the wall that there is going to continue to be a sense of struggle—not for everybody but for a significant number—particularly given the changing cohort of the population of people coming in to be educated for teaching.

When you look into the area of health, while I cannot give you a whole lot of specifics, the impression I get pretty clearly and pretty strongly is that the preservice placement support, through scholarships and allocations, is of a much more significant nature in the health area, particularly in relation to doctors. I know they work in a high-status profession and it is life and death, whereas education is not seen in that context, but what seems to have been achieved is that the funds go directly into the rural medicine programs. They somehow have managed to avoid being caught up in what I will call the overhead bureaucracy of universities, and they are therefore able to preserve the quantum and apparently direct it much more specifically.

CHAIR—On the figures that Flinders gave to us, they advised us that the Commonwealth provided \$494,721 to fund practicum. Their payments to teachers alone were \$583,668. Their advice to us was that their total cost of practicum was \$895,668. In the case of Flinders there was clearly a significant deficit for them to run practicum, so it would appear unlikely that they are going to be in a position to skim any off. We are very interested in this notion. The issue of where the funds are going is something that is very important to the committee. What you are saying is at odds with the information that Flinders have given us.

Mr Halsey—I said in the comments to you on the question that of all the universities that answered the question of, fundamentally, the sources of budget—‘What is it?’—Flinders was the most specific. The rest responded with a combination of vagueness, ‘don’t know’, ‘yes, money comes in’, ‘we get some or a bit out of PCAP if we are in Queensland’ and so on. It was not very specific at all. There was then significant discussion with both the reference group for the research, which was made up of a combination of Deans of Education representatives, systems personnel people, DEST—Department of Education, Science and Training—from Canberra and so on. The conclusion I came to was—given the complexity surrounding cost from the perspectives of the provider of education, the supervision, the design, development and delivery of courses, as I have said, the field supervision, the cost of students to get into those placements and the cost of the actual supervision at the school end—it is not a very transparent area of funding allocation or utilisation.

What we do know is that, of the data that came in, 40,000 teacher placements annually—it is 39,800 or something, but let me use round figures—of somewhere between four and 60 days are organised by the 23 responding universities, which is over three-quarters of a million days. In round figures, about 9,000 of those are rural. If you look at the ideal of 20 days duration for a placement that we have in the proposal, in terms of each block of 20 days for an individual I could quickly justify for you on a desktop calculation \$2,000 per 20 days from the individual student perspective in terms of income forgone, transport, accommodation, living and other things, but we do not have the specifics on that. It can vary significantly. Some have higher, some have lower. That is another reason we think the costing research is so important to do from both the student perspective as well as from others.

CHAIR—Just on those figures, though, basically Flinders’s practicum is underfunded by nearly 50 per cent.

Mr Halsey—Exactly. You have got two dimensions to it in broad terms. You have got underfunding and you have got, to put it at its best, ambiguity of where the funding is going, how the funding is being used and how it finally makes its way through to students and providers of support. I think we did say in our submission as well that we understand that there are justifiable overheads. We would not argue that schools of education do not benefit from being part of a university infrastructure and so on. But the thing that seems to be coming through is that the amount of funds explicitly available to support practicums and the cost generated by those is at the very least inadequate to meet the task.

Ms CORCORAN—I am very sympathetic to the problems of students being out in regional and rural areas and all that sort of stuff, but I am a little concerned about the mixed message I am getting about this particular funding issue. I do not want to harp on it for too long, but you make the statement in your submission that anecdotally there seem to be a widespread practice of creaming off of funds. I am trying to find out the basis that you or whoever wrote the statement had for making it. You have talked about the survey where a number of the respondents were unclear. There is a big step from respondents being unclear to anecdotal evidence of creaming off. Can you tell me where you got the anecdotal evidence?

Mr Halsey—Sure. That evidence comes from two sources, mainly. There was discussion among the REFA council from their networks. The REFA membership group is diverse. Members include the Deans of Education, the Independent Education Union, the AEU, the Country Women’s Association, the National Rural Health Alliance et cetera. It was the collective experience. In retrospect, ‘creaming off’ was not the right term. It comes off the top. I think I put it in quotes. It is coming off the top before it filters down into the schools of education. Funds are being taken off the top.

Ms CORCORAN—So we should not use judgmental language. Your statement means, in effect, that not all the funds that are allocated for practicums actually end up being used for practicums.

Mr Halsey—Correct.

Ms CORCORAN—It seems to me to be a fairly big jump between that statement and the statement that you made earlier about the confusion or lack of knowledge of some of the respondents—but you have answered that question because it comes out of the REFA group, rather than anything else. There is a difference between what universities do with funds and that notion of whether the actual physical quantity is enough. That is probably more the point.

Mr Halsey—I do not want to get tangled up in this, because I know we have finite time. But you have the issue of the sufficiency of the funds to meet the need, you have the issue of being unclear about the source of the funds and what the actual quantum that we might ideally have, and you have the issue of how much is legitimate in terms of overhead and how it should come through. I know when I was at the Deans of Education meeting in October 2004 that one of the presenters there said—and I can virtually remember the quote—something like this: ‘If what I understand to be happening in teacher education—in terms of what was happening to the money

coming in specifically for teacher development and teacher practicum—was happening in medicine, there would be a hue and cry.’ I remember that. I did not put it in the REFA submission, but I certainly wrote it down when I was there.

I then went back and tried to get the evidence of that, and some individual deans said quite explicitly—and I do not want to name any—in meetings things like, ‘That’s interesting, because I am not aware of X.’ You could then argue whether that is a reflection of some under effort by particular deans, so I did not want to chase it too far. From the perspective of the REFA council and its submission in terms of this inquiry, the resourcing for teacher education and the resourcing for practicums in particular is in fact an important area that we need to focus on.

Mr SAWFORD—It would seem that the whole funding exercise—and this has been a relatively consistent message—is non-specific. People cannot define it. It is very poor to go to the government and expect it to give more to an area which cannot be explained except by some institutions.

Mr Halsey—Exactly.

Mr SAWFORD—I have a more specific question. How many people who come from remote and rural areas are studying at teacher education faculties in South Australia? Do we know that?

Mr Halsey—I do not know that specifically. Just yesterday in this very room we had a symposium involving people from various states and territories, including South Australia, and that question was asked. The response came back as, ‘To the best of my knowledge, there is no aggregated database within the university system which will actually pull that information out for us.’ Program by program they may know, but in terms of an overall aggregated figure, it is very hard to get hold of that.

Mr SAWFORD—It should not be too hard to do, though, surely?

Mr Halsey—I would tend to agree with you. When I started to press it, people wanted to start going down the definitional track of what constitutes a country student. Is it their residential address? Is it the last school they attended? When you are actually trying to chase down that data and get a very hard number on it, you have to go through some of that definitional work so there is consistency in the outcome.

It is an increasingly important thing to get some data on, because of the growing evidence that those who are most willing to go to the country come from the country. While we do not disagree with that evidence, which comes from various research documents and projects and initiatives and so on, part of the thinking of REFA is that you cannot rely on that as the only way of staffing and replenishing and refreshing the professional areas in rural Australia because it is a diminishing pool.

It is also arguably a bit divisive in the sense that it is not country and city; it is one nation—excuse the pun. Attracting and retaining teachers to rural and remote areas is a nation-building exercise, so some cross-fertilisation is needed. The short answer to your question is that I do not have that information at my fingertips. The information we do have with some degree of reliability is the number of placements that do take place in rural and remote areas.

Mr SAWFORD—That is one argument. You have explained pretty fully how we prepare people for rural and remote placements. But I would have thought that you needed to go back a step. We are probably a third or a quarter of the way through this inquiry and I get the impression that people involved in teacher education are metropolitan, middle class and female. That is increasing. I would have thought it would be in the interests of this country certainly that we get people from disadvantaged backgrounds. I do not see a lot of evidence of that. We should get people from Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. I do see some evidence of that, but I have some questions about their longevity. In terms of provincial, remote and rural areas, I do not see much evidence of them at all. We cannot call out the numbers. I think we have a problem, because if you cannot call the numbers it means that you do not know. If you do not know, it means that you are not doing it. What is your view? I suppose I am talking about selection. We have a free market approach to people nominating to do teaching, but I would have thought that we are in a system and a system ought to cover the free market—I do not have a problem with that—and also people from disadvantaged backgrounds. I do not see a great deal of evidence that it does. There are odd little examples. What is your view of what we ought to be doing about that?

Mr Halsey—I think it is probably encapsulated on the top of page 3 of the submission. We say that teaching needs a major infusion of fresh ideas and thinking that is available from wisdom, knowledge and experience gained by living and working in occupations outside of the profession and in other areas. We go on to say that the selection criteria should have specific reference to rural and remote living, occupation, experience, designated quotas, total annual cohorts and so on. I think we say something about Indigenous education as well. The point we are trying to make, and I use a specific rural and remote education lens, is that there is a wealth of experience out there which somehow seems to be being excluded—I do not know if that is too strong a word—or denied or not shown or not facilitated with the opportunity to engage in the teaching profession or, indeed, in the educational environment.

I will give you a quick example. I recently took a group of educators from rural New Mexico—they are trying to wrestle with not dissimilar issues to the ones we have in Australia—through the mid-north of South Australia over to the Eyre Peninsula and back again. When we were at a couple of the schools what they were staggered to learn about was the facility that is available in South Australia and I think elsewhere around Australia to bring into the school education context people from the community who have different experiences entirely. What triggered it was that someone said, ‘The Australian champion shearer just lives out on a station nearby and we have him come in here to teach the students about shearing.’ This is a major part of the rural backbone and there is a huge shortage et cetera. All of the lights went on—they said, ‘How do you do that?’ We mentioned the idea of the hourly paid instructor thing and all that sort of stuff.

What it opens up is a bigger issue of how you broaden the education environment or milieu, if you like, or teaching context with a broader range of backgrounds, personalities and dispositions to life et cetera. I think I mentioned in the introduction the business about the home school tutor. Typically they are mostly mothers—I have to admit that—and they live on isolated stations. They can sometimes be station owners’ or station managers’ partners or wives. I recognise that. But you also have quite a range of professional or semiprofessional people or Indigenous leaders or community members who have a huge store of wisdom and understanding with very complex dynamics that they live in. It seems to me that, if we could look at broadening the selection

criteria and recognising different learning and if we can recognise that for particular contexts and bring that into the pool of teaching preparation then new possibilities for improvements would result.

Mr SAWFORD—What we are hearing around Australia is that there is significant growth in the number of mature age people from various occupational backgrounds going into teaching. That was significant even in the small sample of Flinders students this morning. So, ironically, I would imagine that they are all, again, metropolitan, middle-class and female. There is nothing wrong with any of those categories. But if they are exclusive and do not include country people or people from disadvantaged areas then I think it is a great disappointment. And it is a great disappointment that we cannot name the figures, because if we cannot it means that we are not doing anything about it. Or it means that what we are doing about it is lip-service, because if we cannot provide the data then we are giving a very clear signal that we are not serious about it.

Mr Halsey—I can give you one specific example. Port Pirie is about two hours drive north of here. It is a lead-smelting area, a regional city of about 8,000 people. Two or three years ago I was involved in some discussions about trying to use a combination of TAFE and local delivery to retain people changing careers in that local area. What seemed to come out of that—and it may have been more successful than I am aware of—was the need to maintain to some degree those people's income streams, because they had commitments. There was also the business of answering certain questions. Where is the nearest place for tertiary access? How do you deliver it online? Are we going to recognise what TAFE do? Are they a degree granting institution? What kind of credit do you give for the work that they have done? Some of that work has been done through MCEETYA and the Australian qualifications framework and so on.

Coming down to the level of individuals living in small or regional communities and trying to deliver programs in situ or nearby so that there is not total disruption and disturbance to their life patterns, but so they can make the transition into new careers, such as teaching, has so far proved particularly complex. Part of the argument that we try to make it in our submission very briefly is that, given that a significant amount of money—and I cannot give you the exact figures but it would not be all that hard to get them from the states—that is pumped into incentives to get teachers to go from where they would rather be to somewhere where they less want to be, such as in the 'country', it would be worth thinking about a scheme which uses some of that funding to educate in situ people who are prepared to live in the mid north, Port Augusta, Eyre Peninsula, the back of Bourke or wherever. You would then not have so many of the incentive or relocation issues dominating thinking, and you would have some benefits that might offset what you would otherwise pay in incentives. Of course, that would have to be balanced with any local prejudices that might swirl around when someone tried to make the transition from being the accountant or whatever it is through to being the economics teacher. So there is some complexity.

CHAIR—Thank you, John, for appearing before the committee. We may contact you if we need further information. The secretariat will provide you with a transcript of your evidence, which will also be placed on the committee web site.

[2.24 pm]

DENHOLM, Mr Julian, Principal, Concordia College, Lutheran Education Australia

VOLK, Mr Noel, Convenor, Teacher Education Working Party, Lutheran Education Australia

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives from Lutheran Education Australia. I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard and a record of them made available through the parliamentary web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these 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 you wish to make a statement in relation to your submission or some introductory remarks?

Mr Volk—Yes. For the sake of this meeting we have three points that we would like to give emphasis to. The first of these is school participation. We hear from our colleagues in various schools that it is becoming increasingly difficult—I am sure you have heard this before—to engage schools in the business of supervising teachers in training, in their practicums. I would like to speak briefly about that and about faculty resourcing, then Julian will talk about course provision.

Without some effective change to the current support for teachers in training, the system will be in real trouble. There are a variety of problems. One is the fact that schools are not making themselves available. The second is that within some schools the feedback that we are getting from young teachers is that they have not been provided with particularly good mentors. If there is only a limited pool then inevitably that is going to happen. It certainly is happening. It seems to us inappropriate that young teachers who are about to embark on their career are in the presence of people who are a bit tired, a bit disillusioned, a bit world weary and who are not presenting them with any sort of stimulating learning environment.

As I have indicated in the submission, I am wondering whether or not it is possible for schools to be supported financially in a different way. You have probably heard that the sort of financial support that teachers get who are supervising teachers in training in practicums is peanuts. It is almost a disincentive. Why bother? It is just not worth it. I wonder whether or not it is possible for some targeted funding to go to schools to be deployed by the administration for selected people on their staff who have a great track record in teaching, who are stimulating, are still alive and who still have something to offer young teachers. It is a matter of not putting money in their pockets but rather giving them time so that this money might be deployed in a way that enables the school to reduce their teaching load by a fraction. It is substituted by the responsibility for teachers in training. That is the first point.

The second point—and you have heard this one before too—is that we have had a lot of feedback from faculty members indicating that they believe that in the deployment of funds to universities teacher education is not a priority. I have quoted in the submission some instances which illustrate this. The sense that we get is that, to some extent, the amount of money that goes

or does not go to teacher education is driven by the market. For instance, if tourism and hospitality are very popular then funding goes to the staffing and resourcing of areas of learning such as those. The effect is that teacher education seems to be significantly underresourced.

I will illustrate one consequence of this. I am working as a sort of mentor to the head at a school. I also take over the supervision of the students who come into the school to do their practicums. There seems to be a new tier of supervision, which is undertaken not by the people who are teaching the theory but by retired heads, some of whom are good and some of whom are a bit weary and are not necessarily the best models to engage in the supervision, feedback and encouragement of young teachers. I am wondering whether or not it might be possible for the funding to be targeted, with appropriate accountability, so that it is used for the purpose of resourcing teacher education and it is tied with accountability requirements. They are my two points. We can move on now to talk about course provision.

Mr Denholm—The one I would like to talk about is recommendation 5 from the report that was handed to you, which is in relation to the course provision. One of the areas which is happening nationally, I believe, and certainly in South Australia and in my previous schools in Western Australia, is middle schools. What we are finding is that there still seems to be a demarcation in teacher training—those who are training secondary and those who are training primary. We are finding it very difficult to find teachers who are capable of teaching within middle schools with the understanding of both the philosophy and the subject knowledge to do that. I think it is perhaps time that our universities address some of those issues because the educational climate and environment is very different but we are still operating in a very archaic system. ‘Archaic’ is probably a bit strong, but certainly it is an older system. We are now seeking teachers who can move between year levels, schools and also across subject bases. I would strongly recommend that universities address that.

CHAIR—Does this university offer a middle school group?

Mr Denholm—Yes, it does.

CHAIR—I am interested in the funding side. Section 7.1 of your submission states:

One interviewee described education as belonging to a zone in which programs are regarded as fillers—as ‘add-ons’ to the more highly valued courses.

Do you feel that funds are being skimmed from the education faculty and diverted elsewhere?

Mr Volk—That is the overwhelming sense we get from talking to our relevant people in Queensland as well as in South Australia.

Ms CORCORAN—Can you define ‘relevant people’?

Mr Volk—They are faculty members or people who have moved out of education into other positions.

Ms CORCORAN—So they are academics—people from universities?

Mr Volk—Yes.

CHAIR—It is a very interesting question, because we have heard evidence this morning from Flinders, for instance, that the cost of teaching is such that basically it is such an expensive course to deliver that there is little scope to skim anything off because of the lack of resources. Yet we have this other argument, which we have heard from other sources, that teaching is basically a cash cow which finances other areas of the university. We are having a bit of difficulty putting our finger on that in a factual sense.

Mr Volk—We are not in a position to add too many other comments to this because you would really need to be very close to the budgeting process and, obviously, we are not. What we say is anecdotal and has to be taken for what it is worth. I was doing some other work which brought me into contact with one area of teacher education and it was very clear in that instance that there was simply not enough staff. The person who was teaching maths education, as I indicated in our submission, could not take a sabbatical because there was no-one else to take over her responsibilities. She is dinky-di about that and she is also a very good educator, making a significant contribution there. So somewhere along the line there has been some slippage. One view from an ex-member of faculty from the University of Queensland is that, in the deployment of funds at the beginning of an academic or financial year, education suffers in comparison with more popular course areas.

CHAIR—Just to try to put a bit more meat on the bones, do you see that as coming out through higher student to staff ratios and the greater use of casual staff?

Mr Volk—Yes.

CHAIR—Are there any other areas where you see that happening?

Mr Volk—No. That is the most important one. I would like to follow through for a moment on the use of casual staff. Remember that I referred to the supervision of teachers in training by people who are no longer engaged in education and not involved in delivering the theory. When you think that one through, there is a real problem there. Young teachers are saying, ‘We had the sense that our lecturers were not aware of the realities. They teach theory—and the theory is all very well and good—as long as you don’t trace the link between that theory and what actually happens in the classroom.’ I would have thought that it would be very difficult to make your theory relevant if you are not aware of the context. I think there is a sort of contextual vacuum in the minds of some of the people responsible for delivering the theory of education.

Mr SAWFORD—Practicums: it seems to me that people put forward arguments about how this could work more effectively by improving the status of the mentoring or supervising teacher, the money and the time. You have used time. I would have thought it was all three and that, basically, the best supervising teachers will have status for what they have done—

Mr Volk—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—They will get a financial reward. It may only be small, but there will be a financial reward. It may be in their pay structure. And they will get time, because often these people are the busiest people in the school and have other responsibilities. Maybe the increasing

unwillingness, even of many teachers who are able to take on supervising teaching, is for that reason. They are just flat out. Maybe the profession is too old and it is tired; maybe there is a whole range of reasons. What is your comment on the idea that, if you were to try to do something of a serious nature about supervising teachers, you would have to cater for those three categories: status, time and money?

Mr Denholm—Most teachers, particularly the ones you would recommend as supervising teachers for student teachers, are generally the ones who are, as you said, the busiest, because they are generally very engaged in the learning of students. So not only are they involved in the teaching side but they are generally involved in a lot of extracurricular activities, counselling, pastoral care and so on. The issue of money is not as critical as the issue of time. These teachers are working long hours and we are actually asking them to take on additional burdens in terms of filling out reports and meeting with those student teachers. They are finding it difficult and are actually saying ‘no’ now, whereas before they would just simply continually increase their loads. So, out of the three categories that you mentioned—status, money and time—I think time is the most critical.

I would also like to see some form of accreditation for teachers who have been supervising teachers—or a status, so that there is a way of actually making sure that the teachers who are being the mentors or examples to these young teachers are, in fact, our best practitioners. I think there should be something done to give them that form of either accreditation or status to go with it.

Mr SAWFORD—Off the record, when you talk to teachers—and I do—they use all three. On the record, they are very conscious of talking about status and they are very conscious of talking about money, but privately they all acknowledge that those two are just as important as the other one. I sometimes wonder whether teachers are their own worst enemy in not saying what they actually mean.

Can I go back to your recommendations. Thank you for your submission; I think it is well written and it brings up some thoughts. In terms of recommendation 1, we are actually going to do something about that. We are conscious of all those other inquiries and we have asked our secretary to get all the recommendations of all those inquiries and put them in some sort of order. Towards the end of this year we are probably going to stay a day or two in Canberra and go through all of that. We recognise that that is a problem.

I have to say that I am bemused by all of this ‘teacher training’ and ‘teacher education’ terminology. I think it is all a bit precious. I hear people saying this, and then they use the words ‘teacher training’ and ‘teacher education’ interchangeably. I ask doctors, ‘Where did you study?’ and they say, ‘I trained at so and so.’ I think, sometimes, we are too defensive about this teacher training. In some ways, I would prefer that you let it go through to the keeper. Sometimes I think that whether you talk about teacher education or teacher training is irrelevant. I think it is all in the eye of the beholder and how you define it. You can define teacher training in very educational terms, if I can say that, and you can define teacher education in very training terms. It does not necessarily follow that one follows the other.

Mr Volk—It is just the problem that the vocabulary of education and everything else changes, doesn’t it? It seems to us that it might have been better if the words had not been used as it sort

of spread out amongst the profession, because they look at them and say, 'Yeah, they're out of date.'

Mr SAWFORD—But they use it themselves. You can look at the transcripts of all the people who passionately push forward teacher education, and they use the term 'teacher training'. I just find that a bit of nonsense. The teacher education review: what are you arguing about every three years? I would have thought that a good teacher education program would have, built into it, a review mechanism. So what are you trying to get at in a national review? What do you mean by that?

Mr Volk—Starting with the issue of funding and accountability, it would be good if it were possible, for instance, to target funding and to define accountability and outcomes. One of them might be that the money is made available on the basis that there is a review on a regular basis. The Commonwealth may be able to direct the terms of the review. That is a way of ensuring that, like in the rest of the world, there is a regular cyclical review of analysis and improvement.

Mr SAWFORD—Sometimes in situations where you have these sorts of triennial reviews people spend the third year trying to justify their funding for the next three years—that is all they do. That seems a wasteful exercise. I understand what you are saying and I think one of the messages that we are getting is that the funding is not defined. That is part of the weakness of the faculties in our universities when trying to argue for more money. If they cannot define it themselves, how the devil are they going to forward arguments to convince government to increase it? If you are saying that then that is a very good point to make. If you are just saying there should be a triennial review I think people in teaching would be horrified. That is what they will do. As often happens to people in welfare and health—they can do that now.

In recommendation 5 you talk about school-university partnerships. What about the employing authority, which in your case is Lutheran Education Australia? What role and responsibility does your administration have? I would have thought it was a trinity rather than a partnership.

Mr Volk—In your thinking, what is the third part of the trinity?

Mr SAWFORD—The employing authority. I would have thought that a good teacher education course would be where the employing authority, the university and the school play a significant role.

Mr Denholm—We agree with you. In our circumstance the schools are the employing authorities. Although we operate under the banner of Lutheran Education Australia we are each our own employing authority.

Mr SAWFORD—You pick all your own staff. The principal has that right?

Mr Denholm—Yes. So I would agree with you. If other systems involve three then the partnership needs to be the three. For us it is the two.

CHAIR—Would you have a problem mandating schools to accept a certain number of trainee teachers each year?

Mr Volk—Yes. There is a certain tension in our network of schools. We graduate about 60 young teachers each year from three universities in Queensland and two in South Australia. We find that we are not able to place all of those teachers because heads will argue that they have specific needs and that there is not a match between a particular candidate and their needs. There is a bit of slippage there. It is not bad but it is sufficient for us to express our concern to the heads. Basically that is Mr Denholm's responsibility.

Mr Denholm—It is.

Ms CORCORAN—I will ask that question in a different way. Sometimes we get ourselves tangled up a bit. The bigger question that we have asked other people today is: is there a place in the education 'big system' for every school being obliged to take on X number of student teachers?

Mr Denholm—As a principal, I would not have a problem with being allocated student teachers to my school. The only proviso I would have is that I would want to ensure that I had teachers whom I could match to our needs. That is a critical factor.

Ms CORCORAN—In principle there is no problem with every school being obliged to take on X number of students, depending on their size or whatever, with the rider that it has to fit with your needs. For instance, if you did not teach PE you would not want a PE teacher.

Mr Denholm—That is right. What would be the point of having an Indonesian teacher put in your school if you are teaching German?

Ms CORCORAN—That rider aside, you would have no problems with the principle of it.

Mr Denholm—No, I would actually encourage it. Student teachers also bring in a lot of new ideas, which we benefit from.

Mr Volk—Does the question presuppose that the other things have been put in place? You would require all schools to accept some initial teacher education people on the basis that the grounds of resistance have already been cleared up. Is that right?

Ms CORCORAN—That is right—in an ideal world. I was trying to separate out the two sorts. We have heard evidence from some people who actually argue that schools should not be rewarded or compensated for taking on student teachers because all schools should be interested in the profession renewing itself. People come from a lot of different points of view. I am just interested in testing this theory—forget about the housekeeping side of it for a minute and just look at it from the point of view of the principle. I am getting a response that says that in principle you agree with it, with a few riders.

Mr SAWFORD—In paragraph 3.5 of your submission you take on the challenge of future education. You say that schooling is taking place with a background where the culture the students are immersed in is more attractive than the schooling, that there is a decreasing interest in learning for its own sake and that there is uncritical use of personal relevance. Then you go on to brain research and its implications for the future. There are a few pearls there. Would you like to expand on those?

Mr Volk—Which one?

Mr SAWFORD—All of them.

Mr Volk—It is not irrelevant to say that all students come into the classroom with a cultural mindset—they are not living in a vacuum. One of the challenges that teachers face is motivating students. For several hours a day they have one-to-one amusement through their computers or TV. They have a similar sort of influence. Teachers say that in some ways in order to at least get students over the first hurdle they need to use strategies that are rather like the ones that they have outside the classroom—zapping them, getting them engaged. It depends on how it is balanced. All of us have used tricks. I was an English teacher and there is always a resistance to poetry. We used to teach poetry through Bob Dylan, the Seekers and all the others, but only as a starting point to get them engaged. Then we would start pursuing the language and the deeper questions. We take that into account, but it should not dominate the rest of the learning unit.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the point about the brain research and its implication that how students learn will radically change the classroom of the future?

Mr Denholm—We, as educators in the classrooms, are learning much more about how students actually learn now. Certainly, what I know about how students learn has changed dramatically from my teacher training days through this institution here, and it is constantly evolving. Through reading people like John Joseph, who has been doing a lot of work on how the brain works, and also through working with students we are finding out how to engage students more. One of our hopes is that through university courses for student teachers or teachers, teachers are being engaged in that style of research and learning so that as they come in they will strengthen that understanding within our own school base.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you referring to the research at Harvard where they are making CAT scans of male and female students' brains while giving them mathematical, scientific, cultural and humanities style propositions to resolve? It destroys a few reputations, doesn't it? What is your comment on that? That is what I thought you were leading to. That does have some significant implications for how we teach boys and how we teach girls, and which girl and which boy.

Mr Denholm—We are now at a stage where we are learning more and researching more than we have done previously as educators through different professional associations like AHISSA. I hope that the universities are keeping up with the research and that that is coming through to our student teachers.

Mr Volk—Do you remember brain sex coming out about 16 years ago—the Moire Jessel research? A journalist and a neuroscientist collaborated and produced this book which indicates that there are morphological differences between the male and female brain and they have implications for the language which you teach, and other things. That met enormous resistance, and it still does. I float it every now and again. The liberal feminists, for instance, do not like it because it has implications. What it did was cut a swathe through this idea that gender differences are culturally derived. The brain research says that that is only half true.

Mr SAWFORD—Or not true at all.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we have further questions. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence and a copy of the transcript will be placed on our web site.

Proceedings suspended from 2.51 pm to 3.06 pm

MAUGER, Ms Sandra Anne, Convenor, Human Resources Portfolio, Executive Member, South Australian Primary Principals Association

O'BRIEN, Ms Glynys, President, South Australian Primary Principals Association

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is 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 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. Do you wish to make a statement in relation to your submission or do you care to make some introductory remarks?

Ms O'Brien—I would like to make some introductory remarks, thank you. I just want to place the context of what we call SAPPA in front of the group. We are the group of primary education leaders encompassing principals, deputy principals and assistant principals. We have 650 members and we are involved in 470 primary school sites across the state. We represent pretty much most of the government school primary leaders in the state. Our brief is to promote, support and influence primary education and the leadership of primary education in the state.

I want to pick up on some of the elements of our submission and on two foci in particular. One is what we believe is the importance of the increased use of the school as a location for teacher education as well as the university—and the emphasis there is on the increased use of the school. We know that they are used already but what we are looking at is their increased use for practicums, for internship programs, as well as for induction and probation during the process of teacher education.

The second focus is the acknowledgment of the changed knowledge about teaching that we believe is quite critical to the way that programs need to be focused in the future, particularly in relation to the cognition and learning areas where we know there is more information than we have ever had before. We believe that needs to take a greater part in the education of teachers and in the wellbeing of students, particularly in the area of counselling, mental health et cetera. Those areas are becoming increasingly the domain of schools, whereas in the past they have been community and parent domains. Those two elements of our submission are ones that I want to highlight. I know that Sandra has a couple of points that she wants to make about that, so I invite her to do that now.

Ms Mauger—Certainly we are very keen to pick up from our submission and to highlight the importance of training teachers and having the opportunity to experience teaching and learning in a range of settings. Certainly primary schools can be very different and very divergent. In terms of preparation, our submission reflects our commitment to offering training teachers the opportunity to experience practicums in a range of primary settings where teachers are working with students, their families and communities. That is a particularly important issue for us that actually reflects the cultural diversity, the linguistic diversity and the socioeconomic diversity of South Australia.

We are also very conscious now of the opportunity for universities to link far more explicitly with schools and the nature of the provision of practicum and that more equal partnerships be formed between schools and the university to work collaboratively in the training of teachers. We are particularly concerned with the notion of pedagogy methodology, the range and scope of curriculum and the multiskilling that training teachers now need to bring into our profession, particularly around the notion of educating the whole child. We would like to bring those particular points to the committee's attention.

CHAIR—We will go to questions now. Certainly something that we have discussed during the day is the possibility of mandating. Let me go back a step. The universities have a great deal of difficulty in placing trainee teachers in schools. It takes a lot of resources for them to bring the schools and the trainee teachers together. Would you concur with the thought of perhaps mandating some number of students or a proportion of places per year in schools so that that streamlines the process and saves a lot of mucking around by the university?

Ms O'Brien—We have certainly talked about that as an association. One of the lines that we would follow would be that we think it is a professional responsibility to take responsibility for some of this training. So, whilst anything that is mandated gets an immediately anxious reaction, we actually think that that is probably not a bad way to go, as long as some resourcing is tied to that, because, as you know, schools are being asked to take on more and more without the resourcing. We would agree with you, but with resourcing.

CHAIR—Sure. The other thing that you refer to in your submission is improving the length and quality of the practicum. With regard to the length of practicum, we have heard evidence from a number of sources—some research based and also from students here this morning—that they felt that the length of practicum was about right and that they did not see any need for more practicum in schools. Do you want to expand on your reasons for wanting a longer practicum?

Ms O'Brien—Many of our schools do not actually receive new graduates because of, I guess, the huge group of my generation who are still holding most of the positions, but those that do will say that the graduates come to them with very little practicum experience. I reckon that in some cases it is about six weeks; in others it is a bit more than that. So that is why we want some increase in the length of time and, I guess, a mandated expectation of how long a practicum or a series of practicums should be, so that there is an amount of time that student teachers are expected to be in schools.

Mr SAWFORD—I will give you just a bit of background. We are probably about a third of the way through this inquiry. We have been to Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory and now we are here. I think we will be in Western Australia next month, in Tasmania the month after that and in New South Wales probably before the end of the year. Because there have been about 80-odd inquiries into teacher education in the last 20-odd years, we have asked the secretariat to put all the recommendations of all those inquiries together so that we can spend some time in Canberra on that.

I will fire some scatter-shot questions, if I may. I think that what we are all looking for is some signals, some sorts of keys, as to what we ought to further develop and what we ought to drop off. We are at the stage of the inquiry where we are starting to make decisions about where we are going to go and which people we need to call back to reinterview and perhaps put some more

specific things on the table. Every university in Australia does teacher education. Is that a good thing?

Ms O'Brien—That is a political hot potato.

Mr SAWFORD—Some seem to do it very well and some do not.

Ms O'Brien—Yes. Personally, I would say that if we are looking at rationalising programs then we need to have a look at capital cities and decide, out of the number of universities, where the focus should be and, probably, which ones do those programs the best.

Mr SAWFORD—There seems to be an imbalance between scholarship and research within the teacher education courses. In some there seems to be a balance; in others it is all research and no scholarship. In some it is scholarship with little research. What is your view on that?

Ms Mauger—For us, the balance around recognising the high relevance of the nature of theory in use and theory in practice is incredibly important. That is, the notion around training teachers to have a very strong theory base but to have seen it in use in their practicums, the notion of exploring what they have learnt in university in terms of intellectual rigour, and the notion of what that looks like in the way that they implement that in their training programs. Again, we are seeing that being very different and inconsistent depending on the institution. That has certainly been the experience in South Australia.

Mr SAWFORD—Without naming institutions, what are some of the differences you have found?

Ms Mauger—Depending on pathways through scholarship, there may well be opportunities for students to engage in further work—say, honours or masters—at the expense of practicum. So we may well have a graduate coming out who has not had any practicum for two or three years, because they have entered that pathway.

Mr SAWFORD—Another impression we have got as a committee is that many of the people who are attracted to teacher education are middle class, metropolitan and female. The irony is that there is an increasing trend in each state of mature age people coming to it after having another job. In the long term that is probably a very healthy sign for the profession, but it worries me. It seems, based on the information we are getting, that we are not getting a lot of people from disadvantaged backgrounds into teacher ed. We do not seem to be getting a lot of people from country areas into teacher ed. And, specifically, according to John Halsey, who was here earlier, in terms of rural and remote people we are probably getting even fewer. One cannot even name the figures. That is a bit of a worry. Does SAPP have a view about that?

Ms O'Brien—It is certainly an issue that we have addressed and talked about at length, and you are quite right about it. The issue, which we talk about in our submission, is related to looking at different pathways into teaching and making it easier, particularly for remote country people, to access the education that they need and require to be able to go into teacher programs. What that might look like I am not sure, but we think there needs to be a real investigation of some different pathways so that we can recruit people from those areas.

Mr SAWFORD—There has been a lot of talk about partnerships between universities and schools. There does not seem to be a lot of information about what I think should have been the third element in a trinity—that is, the employing authority. Would you like to make any comments about the employing authority?

Ms O'Brien—Do you mean in providing pathways?

Mr SAWFORD—I mean in working far more cooperatively with schools and universities. I get the impression that around Australia it is a rare occurrence.

Ms O'Brien—You are right. In South Australia probably the highlight for us would be what happens with the Anangu schools.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, we had Russell Jackson here this morning.

Ms O'Brien—Yes. Obviously that is a very important program. I was on the lands about two months ago and the principals there were talking very appreciatively of the staff they are receiving through that program. Maybe we need to expand that so that there is a program for other parts of South Australia or Australia that are similarly targeted.

Mr SAWFORD—When we talk about practicums, on the record a lot of people use the argument that time is very important. If they were given time, that is more important than status or money. Off the record, they give almost equal attention to status, time and money. People think that, if you are going to be supervising and doing it properly, you need status, remuneration of some sort and time. Then someone this morning—I think it was Faith Trent, a professor here—said that basically the practicum needs a systemic change. I think that was the phrase she used. It needs a systemic change rather than just being organised on an individual basis, probably more along the lines of what Luke was heading towards. She was not suggesting mandating it. What is your view about the systemic approach to practicum? What weight would you give to status, time and money? I know that teachers are polite about money and status, but off the record they are not.

Ms O'Brien—Whilst what you say is true, I still believe that, for most teachers, time is the issue. In my former school, certainly teachers were willing to accept having student teachers, but they needed the time to be able to spend some quality time with them. The pay that they got was minimal. That certainly was not a driving factor in what they were doing. The driving factor for them was taking some responsibility for the profession.

Mr SAWFORD—What about the status? Sometimes it is actually nice to be recognised that you have some teaching skill. You may even have worked with other people with equivalently high teaching skills and that may also have brought you to the attention of very high performing principals. The higher the bar is, the more effectively you tend to work.

Ms O'Brien—In South Australia we have a couple of categories of teacher. The AST1 teachers who are moving into AST2 are certainly the sorts of people that I used to target to accept student teachers. You are right—knowing that you are considered a quality professional because you have had student teachers placed in your care and in your classroom was a factor for many staff.

Mr SAWFORD—I will sneak in one last question. Here we have the Australian School of Science and Mathematics, which I think is a wonderful innovation for South Australia and particularly for Flinders. What is your view about teaching laboratory schools like that? Would you extend them?

Ms Mauger—It is the old demonstration school model, isn't it!

Ms O'Brien—The demonstration schools were certainly successful in their time. I think probably one of the issues is the tall poppy stuff. That certainly was an issue when the maths and science school was established. But because of its success and profile and also the quality of the work, without impacting negatively on many of the other schools, I think it has been useful as an example.

Mr SAWFORD—Should we seriously be looking at recommending something like that?

Ms Mauger—I think there are some issues there around the difference and diversity of schools in that way. In all of the schools that I have worked, I have always welcomed training teachers into them. But I was very careful in the selection of teachers to supervise them. They came into our school to learn the best practice that was available in the school.

Mr SAWFORD—But that does not always happen—you and I both know that.

Ms Mauger—No, it does not. However, I think that in establishing lighthouse or demonstration schools SAPPA has established a very clear focus on the notion of difference and diversity and of training teachers working in a variety of settings so that they are actually learning in schools that are very highly skilled in some areas and still learning themselves in others. I think that there is a lot of merit in that.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about the training provider Tabor College in South Australia. I do not know anything about that. Can you give me a thumbnail—

Ms O'Brien—It is a single college that takes on student teachers and provides a much more effective practicum program than we think the universities do.

Ms CORCORAN—So it is a teacher education college?

Ms O'Brien—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—And it works with a number of schools—

Ms O'Brien—Yes, and they specifically target schools that take their students year after year. It is a much more focused program.

Ms CORCORAN—Do you have any idea how much more classroom time those students have?

Ms O'Brien—I think it is at least double, but I am not sure.

Ms CORCORAN—We should find out.

Ms O'Brien—Yes. It certainly has been highlighted to us. In forming our submission we went out to all our members and then received all of their information and Tabor College came up quite regularly as a place that principals appreciated graduates being a part of because of the increased knowledge about the practical nature of teaching.

CHAIR—Are their graduates sought after by these principals?

Ms O'Brien—Yes.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The little I know of Tabor College is that it is a Christian theological college and it has branched out into teaching. Are they placing students in independent schools as well or in the public sector?

Ms O'Brien—I think that it must be both.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—So even in the public schools that they are working with there is that longer term relationship formed—

Ms O'Brien—Yes. I am only representing government schools so the information has come from government school principals, but I do know that they place students in independent schools as well.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—My only question was around your comment in the submission that talked about student teachers or preservice teachers being placed under the supervision of more experienced teachers and teachers who are recognised as expert or particularly competent teachers. That is a really sound suggestion. How would that look? How would you suggest the mechanics that could make that work? How would you suggest that those teachers were identified? They are probably going to be the busy teachers, if they are ASTs, so how would you recommend this committee could form a view on allowing them the time to be supervisors?

Ms O'Brien—Principals in schools know who they are but, as Rod has pointed out, what happens is that universities place a lot of pressure on schools to place the students, for obvious reasons. As we have acknowledged, one of the things that happens is that some students do not get necessarily one of those high-level professional teachers, and that is because of pressure more than anything else. Certainly, picking up on AST1s or providing some sort of resource to schools where you specifically asked it to be targeted towards people who would have the prerequisites, whatever those prerequisites were, for taking on student teachers, I think would be a useful way to go. But we would need to be explicit about them.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—We have a small dilemma, because, without wanting to speak for the committee, I think that we are coming around to the view that there needs to be a greater participation of the system in supporting the placement of student teachers, whereby it is almost mandated or sanctioned that certain schools will take certain numbers. But of course a corollary of that might be that it is less a case of the schools that are enthusiastic about having student

teachers getting them. So if we were to go down that route, how might we get around that small dilemma in terms of making sure that the enthusiasm and the passion are still there?

Ms O'Brien—While you were out of the room we talked about mandating—that the system took it on and that every school had some responsibility for professional learning for teacher education. That may be a way to go. We acknowledged that was a possibility and that there was a professional responsibility on us all to be a part of that, but I did add that I thought that resourcing of any program needed to be essential. Whilst we can debate what areas the resourcing can be in, certainly time is a major factor for people.

Ms Mauger—It is one we need to explore carefully in that those teachers who are recognised by their colleagues and by their supervisors and principals are the ones who are taking on significant workload in schools because of the nature of their expertise and their credibility. I am finding—and certainly colleagues in the primary schools will comment—that it is harder now to entice those teachers who hold credibility as advanced skills teachers to take on yet another challenge without us being able to scaffold them around the nature of the practical programs. Currently I have eight training teachers in the school. The assistant principal in our setting is responsible for that program. I have a number of advanced skills teachers on the staff. All of the advanced skills teachers have training teachers in a complex setting. Certainly there is leadership, professional learning, and connections with university and a range of scaffolding needs to take place to support these students well.

Ms O'Brien—One of the things we talked about in our submission was linking individual students to particular schools for a longer period of time so that they just do not go in for their whatever number of weeks practicum but they are linked to that school for, say, a year. They take part in staff meetings and professional development activities and a range of things so that they are not necessarily the responsibility of one teacher in that time, but they would have a link with someone within the school who would make sure they were aware of those, and then they would have some credit or accreditation for them back in their own course. That is a way, I guess, of lightening the burden on the number of teachers within the school.

CHAIR—Expanding on that a little further, do you see that, as part of, perhaps, a mandated regime, those practical teachers could basically become a resource to the school?

Ms O'Brien—Absolutely.

Ms Mauger—Certainly.

CHAIR—As part of the payback, if you like, we could support the teachers in their role.

Ms O'Brien—There could be a support for teachers and for students in all sorts of ways. Just off the top of my head, physical education programs, for example—but as long as there was some credit for the student teachers in all of that. Nobody wants to be used. They would want to get some recognition for what they were doing.

Ms CORCORAN—I am not trying to be a smartie here, but I do not understand one of your recommendations on page 5. I am not too sure whether there is a typo in there or not. It is the second of the two on that page: 'The trainees are competent educators of literacy, numeracy,'

etcetera. Do you mean trainees? Do you mean trainers? If you mean trainees, does it mean that student teachers do not go into schools until they have a certain level of competency? I was a bit perplexed by that one.

Ms O'Brien—Yes, I can see why. No—we did mean trainees. But what we were talking about is that that is what they would become—competent educators of literacy, numeracy, and technological implications.

Ms CORCORAN—Trainees being what I am calling student teachers.

Ms O'Brien—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—What is the point of the recommendations? Is that not why they are there?

Ms O'Brien—Absolutely, but because literacy and numeracy have such a high profile at the moment we specifically wanted to acknowledge that element of their training. Also, there are large numbers of graduates who are coming out without the technological applications in learning. They are quite competent users of email et cetera but not in terms of how you work with children in those areas.

Ms CORCORAN—So is the recommendation that through this training at school they become competent—

Ms O'Brien—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—or that they have a level of competence before they even go into the schools?

Ms O'Brien—I guess both. Part of their training would encompass that.

Ms CORCORAN—Before they go into schools as student teachers, I mean.

Ms O'Brien—Yes. It would be twofold: those areas need to have specific focus within their training programs but also they would have a specific focus within their practicums.

Mr SAWFORD—You use the terms 'teacher training' and 'teacher education' interchangeably, which I think is refreshingly good.

Ms O'Brien—Yes, I know. Sorry.

CHAIR—We are on your side.

Mr SAWFORD—Maybe it is the pensioner age I am at. Some institutions take great exception to the term 'teacher training'.

Ms O'Brien—Yes, I know.

Mr SAWFORD—I have to be honest: I find that they are being precious about it. In actual fact the real guts of it is how you define teacher training and how you define teacher education. I see some teacher education, when you define it and get the framework, as being teacher training. Then I see that teacher training, when you analyse the framework, is probably more teacher education. Why do we have this silly debate? That is one question. I want to ask a question about professional development as well.

Ms O'Brien—I reckon the debate came in when the words 'training' and 'development' and the content of those programs replaced what we in my generation of teachers called 'professional development'. That was when training in occupational health and safety and all the management type processes became paramount in schools. There was quite a shift from the kind of professional learning that you did. I reckon that that is where the preciousness came into the debate, and it has spilled into every use of training and education.

Mr SAWFORD—I think we are all surprised at the strength of the argument when they are actually just a couple of words. The other issue is professional development. It seems to me that teachers who are out there in the field still need professional development, although there do not seem to be a lot of financial or other incentives from the employing authority for them to do it. What is SAPPA's view about ongoing professional development, particularly for graduates, maybe in their induction year? Do you have a view about that?

Ms O'Brien—Very much so. We have been concerned for some time about the increasing lack of professional development opportunities for teachers, apart from within their own school. There is very little that is available to them free. As you probably know, no professional development release time is given to teachers unless it is part of a specific grant program that is provided, and then that is quite rare. So there is not much professional development. Therefore, when the opportunity comes up for time for that to happen, very often what happens in that time is the mandated stuff like occupational health and safety, mandatory reporting and those kinds of things—which are all essential too. So, yes, it is an ongoing concern for SAPPA in particular.

Ms Mauger—I am thinking about the nature of ongoing professional development. We even call it 'professional learning' as well, so we find ourselves using a range of language to describe it. Now it is increasingly falling to schools, within their own resources, to continue a very high level of professional learning for staff and to access it from other sites and other schools rather than systemically.

Certainly we now operate in a local environment and in a global budget environment. So if I am looking at particular programs across the school, I need to consider the cost of releasing a teacher from their classroom duties. So as well as any training or development costs there is a significant additional resourcing cost. Particularly in our system—in terms of this conversation about our submission—there is a notion of maintaining very high order learning for teachers around the nature of their work, pedagogy, and methodology, and their theories and use, so that teachers can provide strong learning for training teachers when they come into the school. So a particular focus on those areas and domains of continuing development is certainly something of concern.

Mr SAWFORD—In a school of, say, between 200 and 300, how much non-contact time would a teacher get? Today, would they get any?

Ms Mauger—They would get 150 minutes a week. That is what happens in my school.

Ms O'Brien—It is mandatory.

Mr SAWFORD—So they have a choice. If they had bigger class sizes they could get more time and specialise—if they made that decision?

Ms Mauger—It is possible.

Mr SAWFORD—It would come at a cost?

Ms O'Brien—Yes.

Ms Mauger—The staff itself would have to make that decision.

Mr SAWFORD—Everything comes at a cost?

Ms O'Brien—Absolutely.

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of us looking for clues about what we ought to be recommending about professional development and supervising teachers, I think Mr Ferguson is right—there are some trends in the way we are starting to think. One trend is that there needs to be a systemic look at the whole damn thing. Is the staffing formula so limiting, particularly in the smaller schools where there is simply not the opportunity to effectively do professional development or to supervise teaching, because there are so few teachers doing so many things that every additional thing just pushes everyone over the edge? You get an unwillingness in schools; they want to do it but it is all too hard so they just put the shutters up.

Ms O'Brien—I think we would say, 'Yes.'

Mr SAWFORD—We have to make a recommendation in the form of money or in another form. There needs to be a beginning point. There might be an end point too, but we know what the end point is. Where would you begin if you were devising a systemic approach to doing something positive about practicums, supervising teachers and professional development? Where would you start?

Ms O'Brien—I think there are two areas where you could start. One is to adjust the staffing formula—and if you were going to mandate that across all schools that would be a fairly easy thing to do. The second way of doing it—

Mr SAWFORD—Can you specify it—because we will have to? Would it be 0.2 per hundred kids or 0.1 per hundred kids?

Ms O'Brien—I have not thought about that. I would like to think about that.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you come back to us, maybe later?

Ms O'Brien—Yes. In South Australia something has happened this year in that we have an early years literacy program where, for the very first time in a long time, teaching staff have been provided with three release days in a year. It sounds so minimal but it has had a huge impact on morale, professional development and willingness to engage in much more rigour about the teaching of literacy because for the first time the system has provided three days to every staff member to get stuck into it.

Mr SAWFORD—Does that mean that the whole school can go off for those three days and do a conference?

Ms O'Brien—The whole junior primary part of the school can do that—it is only the early years. The cost is enormous, as you can imagine, because those classes needed to be covered. The recognition by teachers of the cost and the accountability for that has been enormously beneficial to literacy in general and to the system as well.

Mr SAWFORD—Sandra, do you wish to add anything? It seems to me that we need to do something about the staffing formula. We require some justification for it as well. Is it 0.1 teacher for every 100 kids? Is it 0.2? What is it? We need a quantity. I think you are right. If we do not change this we are just deluding ourselves. We all understand that the status quo does not work, or works in a limited way. So, to change the status quo, we have to effect change in those things that are under pressure, and that takes time.

Ms O'Brien—The figure of 0.1 teacher per 100 kids is minimal. That is half a day. And that is for all the teachers of 100 kids.

Mr SAWFORD—It might be 0.2. I do not know.

Ms O'Brien—That is the problem, I guess. Basing it on enrolments—

Mr SAWFORD—But with the staffing formula we would have to.

Ms O'Brien—Yes, that is right.

Mr SAWFORD—I understand what you are saying, but with the staffing formula we would have to quantify it.

Ms O'Brien—Yes, we would.

Ms Mauger—The premise that we work from is to ask: how many students from universities would come into a school? How would they be matched to supervising teachers within a school setting? What is the size and complexity of the school? What are all those factors? Therefore, what is the time needed to supervise the student as well as the ongoing professional development of those staff? It may well not be that all staff are involved in the program. It may be that a school of a certain size—and I am thinking off the top of my head—would be asked to accommodate a number of students over a period of time and resourced for that number of students. So perhaps it could be linked with the number of training teachers rather than the number of children in the school.

Ms O'Brien—That would be easier.

Ms Mauger—We need to explore that a bit as an alternative to just affecting the whole nature of staffing, because all teachers would not necessarily be involved in the particular training of teachers coming from universities.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I ask that you provide answers to the questions you have taken on notice as quickly as possible. We will contact you if we need any further information. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence and a transcript of it will be placed on our web site.

[3.56 pm]

TEASDALE-SMITH, Ms Wendy, Vice-President, South Australian Secondary Principals Association

WEBSTER, Mr Graeme Philip, Vice-President (Deputy Principals/Assistant Principals), South Australian Secondary Principals Association

CHAIR—I now call witnesses from the South Australian Secondary Principals Association. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and the record is made available to the public through the parliament's web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that these proceedings are proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading information is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Do you wish to make an opening statement or some introductory remarks?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Yes. I have already spoken to you before, with my national hat on, so I thought I would talk through some issues from a more local, state perspective. Graeme will add to that from his perspective as well. Then we will basically open up. In between last time and this time you obviously will have spoken to a number of other people, so you might have some follow-up questions.

After we had undertaken our national research into beginning teachers, where we went specifically to those who were in the first three years of their teaching careers, what we did on a state level—because we obviously already had that national data—was actually survey principals. It was a very low-key kind of survey, which basically involved using our chat list to email all of our principals who are members—which is nearly all of them for secondary—to ask them what they thought about issues related to teacher education based on the terms of reference of this committee.

I got back a number of responses, most of which were from country principals, which I also encouraged because those principals are the ones who are dealing with the most graduates. Whereas someone like me will deal with two or three a year, a country principal can have most of the staff they get in any one given year in their first year of teaching.

So the major points that were made, to start off with the more positive ones, was that they were very impressed with the overall calibre and quality of the graduates who came out and started teaching. They were particularly impressed by their commitment and enthusiasm and their dedication to teaching. They were also very pleased that they had not just approached teaching, or chosen to take teaching as a career, because it looked like it might be one in which they could get a job, but that there was a true commitment and belief in the importance of actually teaching. They were particularly keen about that.

Principals who were from schools that were more popular or city based schools, and therefore had mostly permanent teachers already in place—the average age of staff in a school like mine would be 45, for example—talked about young graduates being a breath of fresh air to their

school communities, reminding us of the reality of what it is like in the first few years of teaching, with some of the questions they ask or the problems they experienced.

There was certainly that feeling. That bipolar nature of the teaching force is quite an issue, both for this state and for the country, in that we will be in the same position in another 50 years time. We are not actually looking at recruits coming out at a gradual age so you have many teachers across different ages; we are looking at a whole cohort of around 40 to 45 who will all retire over the next 10 years. Once again we will get that bell curve effect happening, which is not a good model.

As to the survey results, there was a strong leaning towards issues important to country principals, which is not surprising, given the nature of those that responded. A number spoke about really liking the project run out of here by Allen Campbell—I think I spoke to you about that with my national hat on—which involved taking teachers for block periods of time into country, rural and isolated locations and thereby giving those teachers experience of the reality of living and working in a rural or isolated location. Both the students and the schools that they were going to had a clear idea of what it was like. Principals felt that that was an excellent model in that it gave them a much higher calibre of teacher who was much more prepared for the reality of teaching and working in a country location. They very much wanted that extended.

Different areas did it differently and some schools within areas did it differently to others, but principals liked the try-before-you-buy model with graduates. That worked for both sides. Depending on the model that was used—some did it regionally—they would bring out graduates and have them stay for several weeks in the country location. They got to have look at them and the graduates got to have look at what that particular location was like to live in. Particularly in the country that business about it not being just a job but a lifestyle is true, because it is something you are in all the time. There was the idea of regions doing graduates' weeks. They would have a whole scenario of things, some almost like induction and training and development so that the people were more prepared for the reality of working in that location if that arose.

There were a number of concerns from country principals that, because of the teacher shortage, the department was prepared to make anybody willing to go to a country location a permanent teacher straightaway. They greatly bemoaned this, saying they ended up with managing poor performance or teachers in their first year of teaching totally unsuited to it who would come to great grief in their first few months of teaching—or teachers who were clearly never, according to their teaching reports, going to be able to manage the realities of teaching. Whilst principals understood why the department was doing that to get people placed, they still felt that it was not a good model, because they ended up dealing with the reality at the other end. That happened more in areas of greater need.

Principals were also frustrated by the fact that teachers would come into country locations without mandatory requirements. They were frustrated that universities did not give teachers all that was required. We need our teachers to have basic care, mandatory reporting—I do not know what else we have got to train them up for, Graeme. They need to get those to be able to teach. A person would get all the way to a country location, get settled for a week or two and then often have to come back to the city—and depending where that was, sometimes it was a long way away—to then spend time gaining those requirements. There was a cost involved in getting these people trained in what was mandatory. Principals were very frustrated that that was not supplied

either by the department before they got there or that it was not embedded into university courses before they came. That just seemed frustrating and silly to most principals that responded.

They also echoed what has been stated as applying countrywide—that far too many graduates were ill-prepared for the realities of student behaviour management when they come out to a country school, or any school for that matter. They felt more work needed to be done on that. As you know, that is certainly what graduate teachers are saying as well.

The other issue was about the complexity of today's classrooms. Beginning teachers also said this. The reality of the classroom is the diverse backgrounds that students come from, learning difficulties, sometimes not having English and all the rest of it. What you could get in any one class was quite diverse. Usually the training of teachers had not prepared them for that. Whether you ever get prepared for that, I am not sure, but the reality is that some graduate teachers had a simplistic idea of what a classroom might be like. If you have experienced some of the classes in my school you would not have a realistic picture of what it might be like in some other locations.

A number of beginning teachers were also talking about going into other careers and leaving teaching very early in their careers, due to having some pretty difficult circumstances and just feeling that it was all too hard, was a big mess, and going on from there.

The other issue was around particular skills and abilities. IT-savvy teachers are needed across all subject areas in secondary; they are not just the skills of IT teachers. The reality of classrooms is that we need to have teachers trained to be IT-savvy. A VET background is also something that is required in all schools these days, but that is not usually what graduates are coming out of university with. They are not prepared for that kind of thing.

The other thing that Graeme and I were talking about before, which came through from our research, was the pressure on schools across the country to improve retention rates. There is no question that that is what we are trying to do as a country. That means in practice a whole lot of 15-, 16-, 17- and 18-year-olds who do not particularly want to be at a school with a traditional academic curriculum. We struggle to be able to offer what the students need in a traditional school setting. There certainly were issues of how you engage these young people and how you develop a curriculum that is not based on the traditional model to make sure that they are achieving while at school and not just staying so the retention numbers are better.

The other thing that came across really strongly from the country principals, which is linked to that idea of preparing graduates for the reality of living and working in a country location, is that some came to grief because they had not realised that they were living in a fishbowl in a country location—that they were on duty 24/7. They come out with some of the activities they might get away with in a city location that they do not get away with and live down once they are placed in a country location. Once that is out and about in a country community, you never live it down. It does not matter if you are there 30 years later. If graduates did not spend time in the country before in practice teaching, they were not going to be prepared for that reality. Therefore, more teachers needed to do their teaching experience in country locations if that is where they were going to be placed.

Some of the other things to come through, more from city schools, included the success of evolving partnerships in some parts of South Australia between universities and schools. While some of them are at a pretty early stage, partnerships are about people from schools sitting down with university lecturers and department heads and talking about the nature of teacher training and how to make sure people are prepared for teaching.

As Graeme and I were discussing, I am certainly not the most competent person in my school to talk to a graduate teacher about how to manage kids. I am still doing that, but it is not what I am doing all the time. I do not have a full teaching load like other teachers do. There are a whole lot of people in my school far more qualified to talk about how to manage year 9s in the last lesson on a Friday. They are the ones who should be spending time talking to training teachers, not people who have never done that or people like me who have not done that for a while now. That was the most strongly agreed to statement by both beginning teachers and country principals—city principals for that matter as well. Graeme, do you want to add to that?

Mr Webster—The information that Wendy has given you has largely been based on research that has been done with principals and teachers, but mainly with principals. So it is the experience of a lot of people. I would like to just change the strategy for a minute and talk a little bit more about my own experience as an assistant principal and deputy principal—particularly as an assistant principal in my previous school, where I was responsible for placing student teachers into classrooms with other teachers. I also had a student teacher myself.

First of all, my experience was that there were many good young people coming through. There is no doubt about it. While there are many corners to have a look at and probe here and see how we can improve things, there are lots of good people coming through. I had experience with those, and the teachers and the schools I was at at that time did have that good experience. So much so I would say that in my own curriculum area, which was music, I am very happy to say to you that I honestly believe the standard of musician coming out as a music teacher today is significantly higher than it was when I began 25 years ago. They are better, more equipped technical practitioners of music and I believe, with the right people, they go on to be very good music teachers. I will not fiddle in too many other areas, but I am absolutely delighted. Actually, a tech studies teacher came to mind. There are good young teachers coming through.

Mr SAWFORD—How was that teacher trained?

Mr Webster—The tech studies teacher? He was a young tradesman who came to Flinders University and had done a quick course and was still getting help. Graham Cutting, who was the teacher in our school in charge of tech studies, was contributing to that teacher training program.

Mr SAWFORD—They don't do vocational training at this university?

Mr Webster—It wasn't vocational training in the sense of the formal accredited courses, but it was a technology teacher training course for a person who had trade training. We were going for about four or five years, and this would not be very hard to track down. We could track that one down for you. I want to talk about the complexity of the classrooms and the challenges. Wendy did stress that life in the classroom can be fairly difficult and fairly tricky. Some of the things these people will face when they walk into classrooms are as follows. It is increasingly likely that they will have international students in the classroom. That means that in my school

right now in the year 10 classroom you might easily have four or five international students that come from three or four different countries. So you have students who might have been in Australia for a few weeks through to 25 weeks, or something like that, before they arrive in your hands. It might be a few weeks if they have come on a business visa and they have moved into your catchment zone, as it were, and enrolled directly into your school. Or it could be more than 20 weeks if they have already done a preliminary course in English, an intensive course in English, before they have come to you. But in that classroom you could easily have three, four, five international students.

You could easily have a range of students with disabilities. In my particular school that might mean you have one or two people whose disabilities are largely physical but they are wheelchair bound, or something like that. They might have mild cerebral palsy or something like that. So this is part of the complexity that these teachers will face. There are behavioural issues. It is hard to criticise kids for their behavioural issues. Their life today has many different pressures on it and very many circumstances in their families. People have all sorts of skills in being parents and other obligations to fulfil, but the upshot of it all is I think there are increased behavioural issues in classrooms in part because of the general lifestyle that we all tend to lead. These young people have to come to terms with that.

Many kids in school have jobs, and many kids have a time—say, four o'clock in suburban schools—when they have a commitment to an employer. Lots of things follow from that. They want to get out of the school. They have other things to talk about, other concerns et cetera. They have stories to swap. They have money to spend. So the fact that many students in a classroom of 15- and 16-year-old kids will be part-time workers has an impact and does present a very real challenge to teachers.

There is a broader kind of literacy that these kids have at their fingertips today. By that I mean I would not want to sit here and say that they are not as good at the English language, with written and spoken English, as they were in the past, but they are more skilled with a bigger range of texts than students were 10 or 20 years ago. There is no question about it. The students have different reasoning skills, different thinking patterns and like to take their learning in different ways, and in amongst it all there are some challenges there. I am absolutely certain that the range of literacy skills is greater. I do not want to be drawn into suggesting that it is not as deep as it used to be in writing or reading, because I could not assert that.

The final one is the social life of the kids. You only have to sit down and watch the television that the students watch and compare it with the television that was watched 10 years ago and the television that was watched 20 years ago to get some understanding of the very great shift in social culture that our students are living in and have been in probably since they were eight or nine, choosing their own TV programs and watching whatever they like. All this has a significant impact on the construction of the student. Over the years, they come with a very different social life to what some of us might have expected they would have and which our schooling system is not necessarily hugely geared up to manage them in. Again, I do not want to go too far and wide there, but at the same time I do want to insist that the kids have a social life and social expectations which in themselves are significantly challenging and which can, from time to time, bring about behaviours in the classroom which these kids think are normal, because that is how they saw it sorted out on TV last week. This is a real challenge for people who are new to the game.

In my experience of young teachers, they had very high expectations of themselves. They wanted to do well. They wanted to show you that they were ready for the job and they were going to have a red-hot go at it. That was very good, but sometimes their strategies were adventurous and perhaps did not work as well as they anticipated they would. If they had had more conservative strategies in delivering their content then it might easily have been the case that some other things might not have gone astray in the classroom during their lessons. So their desire to be modern, strong teachers is not eroded, but it can lead them into traps where you need other skills as well, such as the skill to spot the distractions that the kids are perhaps moving into. So I think there are things that flow from the fact that these people have been given an insight into various ways of inquiry training and all sorts of other very good teaching strategies, which are nevertheless strategies which you will use better when you are more experienced than on the first day when you walk into a classroom or shortly after you walk into a classroom. That is a comment I want to offer without putting an evaluation on it.

Then they get into the cycle of learning on the run, which is very challenging because they become exhausted. It is hard work in schools. There is no question about it. It is hard work in the classroom. Over time, over six months or eight months, they hit the wall just like all teachers have as they have been working and doing their teaching. That is something they are perhaps not prepared for, and it is something that we in the profession have to catch up with them on and talk them through on the job, over a year or so, when they go into their first years of employment.

The other comment I would like to make is that there are many teachers in schools who really look forward to helping to rebuild the profession. There are many teachers in schools who believe they know a lot about teaching, and they would genuinely like to play a role in helping young people to become good teachers. I think the profession has a very good mind towards taking on board people who have done their introductory training. Teachers want to work with people so that we can have a good, strong profession.

CHAIR—I will start with the suggestion we have been tossing around during the day: how would your organisation consider the thought of having some form of mandating or allocation of trainee teachers to schools in a more systemic way, rather than there just being an individual negotiation between unis and a range of schools—trying to basically short cut the huge amount of resources that the unis have to put into trying to place people?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Is that because they are saying that they cannot place people?

CHAIR—They are saying that it is difficult and it takes a lot of time.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Just to step back before I answer what you asked: we would question that. We would say that there are lots of schools that do not get approached. That is certainly my experience. For example, my current school, which is just up the road from here, is approached all the time, and we regularly have prac teachers with us. When I was at Parafield Gardens, I never got approached. I think it is slightly tied up with where the lecturer wants to visit, how close it is to their home, whether it works and whether a relationship has been established. I suspect that our schools would say that they were not all approached et cetera. We have these conversations and people say: ‘Have you had anyone? I haven’t had anyone for years.’ So, firstly, I question that.

Secondly, speaking without any particular authority, in a sense, I do not think we would have a particular problem with it. In the end, teachers do it because of their own goodwill. There are some monetary things. If, say, I have to take five teachers, and I insist that somebody has to have them and look after them, they will not really do it very well. That is the only other side that I would see as problematic. I would also see, I believe, that as a profession we have the responsibility, morally and ethnically, to train the next group of people that are going to teach in our schools. So I would say yes and no to that. Graeme, do you have a view on that?

Mr Webster—Generally speaking, an organised way of placing student teachers into practicums or their first year of real experience would be thought through carefully but accepted.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—It is also about whom you got and when. So there would be some negotiation—we might get a phone call. In a smaller school particularly, it might be an issue. They would want to place a prac teacher and make sure that they have year 12 chemistry. A smaller school might say, ‘We just don’t have anyone,’ or that the person they have is not very good and they do not want to put the person with them or that they are already managing poor performances. There are other issues—a person’s mother has just died or whatever—that would make it problematic. As a rule, as long as there was some leeway within that, that would be fair and reasonable.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to fire some questions scatter shot. Should all universities have teacher education faculties?

Mr Webster—Why not?

Mr SAWFORD—They do it very differently. Some are very enthusiastic about it; some are not. Some seem to have a very sound balance between scholarship and research; others are very much one way or the other.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I have not thought about this question before, so I am answering off the top of my head. My vague understanding of universities is that they rate themselves, and the research ones get to be at the top of some sort of hierarchy, and then it goes down from there. Is that right; is that your understanding?

Mr SAWFORD—We are told on this inquiry that they regard education faculties as cash cows.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Yes. Our understanding through the Australian Secondary Principals Association is that the money given by the federal government to fund teacher education does not actually get there. That is one of the things we are told.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a point that has been raised.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Hierarchically or status-wise it is not the highest in the universities. Perhaps it should be the responsibility of all universities. The other part I would like to talk through is: which bit of teacher education and why? At the moment, it is not such an issue, I believe, to have universities do primary education teaching, for example, because it is cheaper.

Who is training technical studies teachers and home economics teachers now? They are not being trained.

Mr SAWFORD—No-one is.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—That is right. It would not just be about them all doing teacher training. It would be about the sort of teacher training, why and how and how that was funded appropriately. Unless we start making or ensuring that home economics teachers and technical studies teachers are trained, we are going to be in big trouble. Somehow or other we have to do something that is mandatory around that.

Mr Webster—The other point is that universities themselves are not in the one street. Having said that, I can think of one that is in the same street as another. Just imagine 18-year-old students who are considering being teachers and they live in the southern suburbs, say 15 kilometres south of here, and the only way they can get teacher training is by going to Adelaide. Those people, who might end up being excellent teachers, may well choose something else, because the course is not accessible to them. I do not know how many students that would capture, but it strikes me that delivering a range of courses across the whole community is a good idea. Should universities do it? Let us assume they are doing it well. I am not saying that they are doing it well. But, to answer that question, if they do the job well, why should they be stopped from doing it?

Mr SAWFORD—The relationship between schools, universities and employing authorities. We hear a considerable amount of evidence about very strong relationships between individual schools, and sometimes clusters of schools, and particular universities. We have not heard any great evidence thus far of a strong relationship with an employing authority. What is your view in terms of that trinity? Would it be an advantage for those three groups to work far more effectively together?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Yes, absolutely. That is our understanding of what would happen in this state. I think there are some excellent examples of some clusters and relationships between some universities. In terms of the employment, which is with DECS, my understanding is that it is not an occasion where all of us sit around the one table and talk about what needs to happen. I think that some system whereby that is enforced—I am not quite sure how that would look yet—is really crucial to moving things along.

I hear through other sources that the issues around teachers being inappropriately placed and that sort of thing is actually about the recruitment and the placement, not just about the training. It is part of a whole package, so why wouldn't those people come together? It seems crucial to me.

Mr Webster—The answer to the question is different depending on whether you are thinking of the employer as the public education system or whether it is another education system. I would ask you to consider a statement that says there are other education systems that have a close link to the training of teachers and there is much more dialogue and a much smoother transition of students from those particular training institutions into those particular employers.

Mr SAWFORD—That tends to be the 10 per cent of schools that employ their own teachers privately. But there is a Catholic system, there is a Christian system and there is a Lutheran system—you can deal with systems, even though some of those may employ individuals otherwise.

On the labour market for teachers, it seems to me that a lot of the people who go into teacher education are middle class, metropolitan and female—not that there is anything wrong with any of those three categories. But there does not seem to be a great deal of evidence of deliberate campaigning to get people from rural and remote areas. We asked some people today involved in rural and remote areas. They could not even tell us the numbers of people who are involved, Australia or state wide. We do not seem to have any figures about people who come from disadvantaged areas. We have some information about Indigenous people, but we do not have a lot of information about the longevity of those people in the teaching profession

Do you think we should be balancing up a free market, in terms of people nominating to go into particular courses, and the needs of the system, in terms of needing people from different backgrounds? There is difficulty in staffing rural and remote schools. There is difficulty in staffing provincial and regional schools. There is difficulty in staffing, as we heard this morning, schools that are regarded as disadvantaged or in some pretty tough areas. Do we need to do something as a system about that?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I think we do. I think at the moment we are probably moving away from that more than ever. It is interesting.

Mr SAWFORD—Why do you think that is? That is the impression I get too, but I am not sure whether it is true.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I was recently having a conversation that was interesting that, as a system in this state, we are now talking about principals being able to select staff. They are going to give us that option when we are in such a severe teaching shortage. They did not give us that option when we were not. I think it is actually about what is easiest. In schools we are encouraged to make sure our students are prepared for what is a skills shortage in this state. But my understanding is that the universities and the system in general are not ensuring that we are having teachers that are coming out and filling our skills shortages in terms of teaching—languages is a very good example of that. There is a real mismatch between those. It goes back to your previous question that, until there is some sort of trinity arrangement around that, it will not be addressed.

Mr SAWFORD—What would you do?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—At that kind of a level?

Mr SAWFORD—In terms of a recommendation that we as a committee might consider.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I think we have to have some imperative that we produce the teachers we need—I am not sure how that works but, at the federal level, universities have to have a quota of X number of teachers coming into languages, maths and sciences or whatever—

otherwise, I think universities will continue to do the cheaper courses, because it is beneficial to them, particularly when they see education on the bottom of some hierarchy.

Mr SAWFORD—Going back to tech studies and home economics, I am very fearful about what will happen when those 45-year-old teachers—in fact, I reckon they are older than that; I reckon they are 55—retire. In a previous study, it seemed that most of those tech teachers were going to retire in the next five years.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—That is right.

Mr SAWFORD—What happens when they go? In your introduction you spoke about kids who do not want to be at school. I cannot imagine a secondary school without an effective vocational training program, yet we know that the majority of secondary schools around Australia do not have effective vocational training—it is growing, but it has almost reached the point where it cannot expand any more. Where do you get all the new people for the system? As Graeme indicated, you can take people out of the trades, but that is a limiting way. What happens in five years time, when those people retire?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I think it is already happening now. Particularly in some country locations, tech studies is no longer on the curriculum. I think you will find that there are places that are not teaching the full curriculum because they cannot find a teacher.

Mr SAWFORD—That will destroy the retention rates even more.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—It is a vicious circle around what you do with that, and we struggle now. It is simply not that easy to make someone teach tech studies if they are from that background—if they are not good with a bandsaw we would rather they did not teach the children. It is not that easy to make someone do that. Other countries do some things around accelerated credentialling and quicker ways to ensure that we address the teacher shortage in a shorter time during that time. Otherwise, it effectively takes five years to address that. And there are some people—there is now a chef in my school who is teaching home economics and he is doing a quick course around that. Whenever I have had conversations at a department level, either here or nationally, there has still been denial around the reality of teacher shortages, which is one of the reasons why the teachers association started doing our own research and getting our own figures. I talk to people in personnel and they will say there is no shortage. They will look at things and say, ‘There’s a home ec teacher who lives in Cardinia whom we cannot place, and therefore we have more home ec teachers than we need.’ Do you know what I mean? It is a straight-out numbers game.

Mr SAWFORD—That sounds like a contradiction of information we have got today that graduates from this university have to go interstate or overseas because they cannot get employment.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Because they cannot or because it is easier?

Mr SAWFORD—No. They are offered TRT days and short-term contracts. I know that part of that is because they will not go to the country or because they want metropolitan appointments. We are training a hell of a lot of teachers and a lot of them do not seem to be

getting permanent employment. We are training them and they are going interstate or overseas. There is always something attractive about doing that, and that has always happened.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I believe it is happening more than it ever happened before.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the reasons is that they can get the permanent position they want.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I think that illustrates Ms Teasdale-Smith's point that people are training in areas where there is not the demand.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I would like more depth to that data to know how much of it is anecdotal and how much of it is actual data. For some of our country schools, particularly those on the border, because of the easier and more entrepreneurial employment models in Victoria, they get pinched by Victorian schools. They pay them more, they pay for them to move and they pay for their accommodation. They have actively recruited teachers from schools right on the border. And why wouldn't you? If you are going to be paid a coordinator's salary to teach a class across the border in Victoria, why wouldn't you? So I think the active recruiting of teachers across borders—which obviously has a real impact on smaller states which have more rural and isolated locations and hard-to-teach-in places and have to try and staff schools on the land, for example, which are pretty tough going—is quite an issue.

Ms CORCORAN—Just to add to that question you asked, Rod, we got conflicting evidence this morning about that. The people who made the comment about first-year out teachers not being able to get places were in fact the group of principals we had earlier. Over lunch Michael, Luke and I were talking to Professor Faith Trent from here, and she was saying that that was not her experience with the students from here. The cherry-picking does seem to go on. So I think there is quite a mix of perceptions.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—That is why I would like the data versus the perceptions.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, that is exactly right.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Some of it is anecdotal. It is people saying, 'I know a teacher who can't get a job,' and that kind of thing. I would like to know more about that because I am just not sure that that is 100 per cent true in reality.

Ms CORCORAN—I think that is spot on too, Wendy. That is what we have to do. We are getting mixed reactions. But the question that I really wanted to ask you is about tying down anecdotal evidence. It is also about the comment you made before about money for teaching not actually getting through to the education faculties. We are getting mixed messages about that too. I am not sure about this, but it seems to me that some people are talking about the general funding that comes to a university for a particular course, some people are talking about the practicum moneys that flow through and some are not too sure what they are talking about. I do not mean that in a rude way—they are just not too sure. But I am also interested in whether you know which of those streams of moneys you are talking about. Also, you said it was anecdotal evidence, but where are you getting this evidence from? We need to track this down.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I am not sure if I can name names here, especially as it is on the record. My understanding is that it was at a national level that the information was given to Ted, who was a previous president of ASSPA, and it was from vice-chancellors who said they were not getting the money that they felt that they should get.

Ms CORCORAN—So it is within the tertiary education system.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Our information is that it was not always getting through. Our sources were university sources that said that the money comes in from the federal government to fund teacher education. My understanding particularly—I am pretty sure—is that it is the practicum component of that that was getting siphoned off and going into general revenue. I think it was a response to a conversation that was around that went: ‘Why aren’t you doing a better job?’; ‘Well, if we got our bloody money, we would.’

Ms CORCORAN—I am not asking you to name names, but you are talking about education faculty staff making that comment?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Yes, and I know that we shared that information with Brendan Nelson, who was also very interested in that bit of information that the money was not getting through, because it is supposed to be tagged.

CHAIR—To expand that out a bit further, quite obviously, if a particular fee for a course is \$1,000, to pick a figure, it would be appropriate that a proportion of that gross fee income could be applied to a whole range of overheads that the university provided. In looking at the evidence that you were provided with, had you satisfied yourself that there was a reasonable allocation of overheads that would have to come out of each training place across the university as well as the money that really could be specifically allocated to teaching once those overheads had been met?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I understand what you are saying. At different times our funding model in this state has said, ‘You’ve got X dollars for each child,’ and a parent will say, ‘Why aren’t you spending that exact amount of money on my child?’ You say, ‘I’ve still got to pay for the power and the cleaning and all those sorts of things.’ But my understanding—and it is anecdotal—is that it is the targeted money that is supposed to support the practicum and that that money was not coming through. It is second-hand information. I have not personally been told, but I know that it is supposed to be very specific, not just what would be acceptable to go into general revenue. That is my understanding of it.

Mr SAWFORD—On the issue of the balance between classroom management and subject discipline skill—scholarship and research—a lot of contrary information has been fed to us about that. Do you have a view about that? Some parts of teaching are not rocket science, you know. They never have been and never will be but, if you do not know how to do it, it is rocket science. It is the same with everything. You can put a road-planning piece of equipment in front of all of us and none of us would be able to drive it. It might take us six months to learn how to use all of its abilities, but you can be taught in a period of time. There are parts of teaching that are relatively rudimentary, and sometimes that is overlooked. There is a balance. Central Queensland University—with a great deal of criticism from some of their colleagues in Queensland—came up with very much a classroom management style of teacher education

course. The principals around that university were absolutely delighted about it. These people arrived at a school and were able to participate—

Ms Teasdale-Smith—And manage the classes.

Mr SAWFORD—at a high skill level in classroom management. The criticism of what they were doing was that maybe in terms of scholarship they needed to do much in professional development. Whether you do the apprenticeship sorts of skills first and do the scholarship afterwards, or do the scholarship first and then learn the skills—it was an argument that they were putting forward. Do you have a view about what comes first? In an ideal world, wouldn't you have both?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I think you would have both.

Mr Webster—I want to comment first of all on the rocket science part of it—

Mr SAWFORD—I knew you would!

Mr Webster—and how people might get found out.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not trying to be deliberately provocative for the sake of it.

Mr Webster—No, but you need to understand that a lot of people in their first lot of employment will get contract positions where they are filling in for somebody who is on long-service leave, who therefore might well be an experienced teacher and have a diverse load.

Mr SAWFORD—It is incredibly difficult, yes.

Mr Webster—So the person coming in new might have an English background and suddenly find they have English, SOSE, and also a junior PE or something, or an ESL instead of straight English. So you can have quite a body of discipline behind you, if you like, but it is simply inappropriate to the job that you find yourself in. I suspect some people get found out like that. In an ideal world, you will have both sets of skills. I tend to think that the thing that will bring you undone first is your ability to manage and get along with—work with, not work against—the kids in front of you. So I guess, at the end of the day, whether or not you are going to survive the first week or the first six weeks depends not on whether you have tremendous in-depth command of the subjects that you are teaching but on whether you are able to work with the students that you have, get them down to work, get them engaged and going and have the personnel skills, the personal management stuff, to keep them rolling. So I am suggesting that, if I were to put an emphasis somewhere, I would probably be listening to those people in Queensland who were pleased to have the young teachers come out into employment who had very good management skills or who had an insight into what they were looking at and were able to develop those skills on the run very quickly. I tend to think that the subject contact will drag you up to speed relatively quickly if you put your heart into it.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I did not have a clear answer for you, but I have been thinking as Graeme talked through it. I think there is a balance. The reality is that, as a beginning teacher, it is those levels of concern—there are some documents or structures around that talk about levels

of concern when you are starting any new job. Day one is about: ‘Can I find a car park? Have I got the keys to my classroom? What about the photocopying?’ It is about all those really basic sorts of things. In three months you are on top of the practicalities and then you start the next business, which is about: ‘Am I really teaching anything? I’ve got my classes under control; they’re not rioting—I haven’t been told to shove it in days, which is very good—but are my kids learning, am I engaging them in the teaching and learning process and am I developing passion and enthusiasm?’

We certainly know through the review done into maths, science and technology, which was also around teacher training, about that business about not having some subject knowledge and expertise and so on. For example, the problem with non-science teachers teaching science is that they do not end up doing practicals and the kids are not engaged in it. They do not personally have a love of teaching. Unless you have that, you are not ever going to make a good fist of it. You really have to like kids, and you have to love and believe in what you are teaching.

I did a student achievement thing with all of my staff recently. I had a whole panel of staff who get really good, consistent grades, and I got them to talk about what they did with students that made a difference. There were lots of things I noticed as commonalities, because they were right across all sorts of different subject areas. One of the things was that they truly believed in their subjects. They were doing all this jostling between them on the panel about who had the best subject—whose subject ruled. It was about passion and belief, and they engendered in kids that passion and belief. If you do not have a really strong knowledge base, you cannot get there either. You do need to come out of the university—and students have a right to know that you know something about science when you are teaching them. But you cannot teach them if they are rioting. That is the other thing. It is Yin and Yang.

Mr SAWFORD—This university seems to have a very attractive framework for a teacher education course with double degrees—BEd/Bachelor of Science et cetera. How valuable are DipEds and should we give them the flick?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—When you say the DipEd model, do you mean the model at the end?

Mr SAWFORD—The one-year model.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—Some of the feedback we had in our research said that principals do not like the model. When I have talked to universities that are doing it they have said that, unless they do that, they will not get people into their courses. What actually happens is that a student comes into a generic science degree and then they flick into teaching. That has been a strategy that they have put in.

Mr SAWFORD—What is your view of the Flinders model, which seems to cover that criticism?

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I have not had lots of students come from that.

Mr SAWFORD—I think they have only just started it this year.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—I do not know. Graeme, do you have a view?

Mr Webster—I really do not have enough experience with what they are doing right now to make a sensible comment. I could make a sensible comment in the sense that my own background was having done some teacher training then gone out of teaching. I went into the Navy as a musician. After three years I came back, finished my teacher training and went teaching. Quite honestly, I spent a fair bit of time mucking around in the last few years of my teacher training, which could have been a lot quicker. Once you have the academic skills, the right kind of person with the right kind of attitude will get motivated to teach and will learn about teaching fairly quickly. This is almost wishful thinking on my part. There are lots of people out there who have degrees. If they are the right kind of person, they will succeed after one year of teacher training. There is a lot of empty space in that, though; you have to have the right kind of person and you will only know 10 years down the track.

Mr SAWFORD—A lot of the anecdotal stuff, as Wendy said, says that it is a bit critical.

Ms Teasdale-Smith—From the national perspective, obviously since last time we spoke to you, you have come up with a whole series of questions. We would welcome coming back and re-engaging in that conversation when you have a list of other questions that we can answer more in depth.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. As questions arise, we may contact you in that regard.

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 4.47 pm