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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL
TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
Tuesday, 25 October 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 Bird, Ms Corcoran, Mr Hartsuyker and Mr Henry

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

DELLAR, Professor Graham, Dean, Faculty of Education, Language Studies and Social Work, Curtin University of Technology

GROVES, Mr Robin, Lecturer, Department of Education, Curtin University of Technology

PELLICCIONE, Dr Lina, Coordinator, Bachelor of Education (Primary), and ICT Lecturer, Curtin University of Technology

RAISON, Dr Glenda Joyce, Lecturer, Curtin University of Technology

SPARROW, Dr Robert Leonard, Head of Department and Senior Lecturer in Mathematics Education, Department of Education, Curtin University of Technology

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training inquiry into teacher education. The inquiry has examined a broad range of issues which impact on how we are preparing teachers for their complex, demanding and critical role in educating our children. It has generated considerable interest across Australia. To date, we have received over 160 submissions and we continue to receive more. We are about halfway through our schedule of public hearings, having visited Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia. We have also held several hearings in the ACT, and today is our first hearing in Western Australia.

I welcome representatives from Curtin University. May 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 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 understand that you provided a submission on your arrival today. I now invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Dr Sparrow—I will give a short presentation and, as you said, there is a written submission. I am sorry that you did not receive the submission earlier. The text of my presentation has been provided as well. I want to make a few points that the Department of Education at Curtin University would like to put before the committee. These points fall into four areas. Firstly, I would like to talk about the false notion that teaching is easy and, by implication, that educating novice teachers is also easy. Secondly, I will address the idea of teaching as a career being a journey of learning and development. Thirdly, I will examine the suggestion that more time spent in school is always better. Lastly, I will talk about the strengths, as we see them, of teacher education programs at Curtin University.

I turn first to the false notion that teaching today is easy. I think it was WB Sellar who observed that, for every person attracted to teach, there are 30 not wanting to be taught. Any member of the public meeting a group of 15-year-olds from a bottom set on Friday afternoon might actually agree with that statement.

On the other hand, 30 excited five-year-olds exploring clay and paint present quite a different challenge. These situations and others require highly knowledgeable, skilled and thoughtful teachers. The recent fashion in the media to refer to teacher education courses at university as teacher training suggests the preparation of novice teachers for the classroom is no more than the transmission of a list of skills for teaching children. The production of some sort of bag of tricks is appealing at the outset but experience of the complex area of modern classrooms soon shows its limitations, as novice teachers have nothing to turn to when they meet a situation not found in their bag. We reject the idea and suggest strongly that teaching and teacher education are complex, highly skilled, ever-challenging and ever-changing undertakings.

Teaching is a journey of learning and development. The staff at the Department of Education at Curtin University see that part of their job is to prepare novice teachers to start this journey. A major part of the preparation is to develop what we like to call thinking teachers, who are able to make informed decisions about what to teach, how to teach it, how to tailor it for children in the class and how to know if it has been effective in helping children learn. Furthermore, it is expected that novice teachers will develop habits of seeking answers to questions about their practice and their children in the particular context, with the aim of constant improvement, personal learning and professional growth. Once novice teachers leave their teacher education course at Curtin University as excellent, classroom ready, beginning teachers, they are starting the next phase of their careers and the next part of their learning to become effective teachers.

There is an idea that more time in school is always better. Novice teachers in the undergraduate program at Curtin University spend a minimum of 100 days in school. In reality, more time is spent in schools interacting with teachers and children. Our tertiary students are often required to work with children in an educational context as part of their assessed work. Others visit schools on a voluntary basis to gain extra experience with a different age group of children or to assist with a sports day or a school camp. Working with children in a real context is a vital part of learning to be an effective teacher and forms a central part of programs at Curtin University. Time in school is a complex issue and a simplistic suggestion that more time in the classroom per se will produce better teachers is questionable. Feedback from teacher education students returning from extended school placements will provide a variety of reactions, ranging from 'it was really great and I learnt a lot' to 'it was the worst experience of my life and I didn't learn anything'.

Much depends on the preparation for the time in school, the quality of the experience and the learning that is gained from it. Some tertiary students are placed with a teacher who is willing, able and competent to work with them to help them learn and to make the most of their time in school. Others are left to get on with it, with the philosophy that if they survive they will be all right. Most do survive but learn little about effective teaching, ways of managing classrooms and children's learning. More of the latter is not better. Availability of quality mentor/teachers, availability of a range of schools and availability over extended periods of time for our tertiary students are other factors that need to be attended to in the discussion. Not all schools, teachers and classrooms are the same. At Curtin University we strive to offer novice teachers a range of experiences and, in some cases, we insist on it.

We have school placements in rural and regional areas. Many novice teachers are unable to take advantage of these, even though they are most likely to be the areas that will be offering their initial teaching placements. The reality of family commitments, part-time employment and

limited finances restrict many novice teachers from gaining experience in schools that are distant from their homes.

Finally, I have some background points about teacher education at Curtin University. At Curtin University there are three undergraduate courses in teacher education: a four-year Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood, a degree in primary and a degree in secondary. There is one postgraduate course, the Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary Education). The BEd courses are four years in length, while the graduate diploma program lasts for one year. School experience is undertaken in local schools, schools in rural areas and, for a limited number of students, in Canada and Thailand as part of a study abroad package. The development of the thinking teacher and the induction into the preparation of teaching begins on the first day with the first class in the first unit. Units, apart from specialist content units, relate theory and research to practice in classrooms and all practice in classrooms is related back to theory and research.

The initial teacher education programs at Curtin University have a similar structure and are underpinned with similar ideas. This structure has four major parts: core education units, such things as how to teach, managing classrooms and behaviour management; curriculum and learning areas—how to work in particular learning areas such as mathematics, literacy and those sorts of things; electives and, for people in the secondary courses, majors and minors; and school experience. All programs are embedded with the principle of excellence in literacy and the use of information and communications technology—which, if you will excuse the jargon, we will call ICT for short.

The teaching of children with special educational needs also has a priority status within programs. For example, all courses have a mandatory unit on teaching children with special needs. The units have special needs issues integrated into them, and there are elective units in the area. Some novice teachers opt to specialise in taking a number of them to have a special educational needs theme. There is a deliberate and planned emphasis on the teaching of literacy, mathematics and ICT in the early childhood and primary courses. Here, along with 2½ mandatory units in each of literacy and mathematics, novice teachers may also opt to study in specialist pathways in teaching literacy, mathematics or ICTs. There is an underlying aim in all courses of preparing our graduates to be lifelong learners. Units throughout the courses are used to develop such skills as reflective practice, autonomous learning and participation in professional organisations and activities.

Within the department of education, novice teachers are exposed to high-quality teaching and the latest writing and research in many areas. For example, Professor Ric Lowe is an international leader in learning technologies and graphicacy and Associate Professor Heather Jenkins in the area of special educational needs, especially ADHD. Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Awards, at the university and national level, have been given in recent times to Dr Rozz Albon, Dr Sandra Frid and me. Many of the department staff have had excellent careers in schools settings. Most of the sessional staff are either teachers at present or have recent classroom experience. We welcome the chance to discuss the highly complex, intellectually demanding and wonderful world of teaching and teacher education.

CHAIR—I will start with just a very general question, without having the benefit of studying your submission at this point in time. Would you like to comment on the things you believe you

do very well at Curtin, those things that you would perhaps like to do better and the way in which additional resources would perhaps allow you to do those things you would like to do better in a better way.

Dr Sparrow—I think I have pointed to a few of the things we do well. Certainly I think we prepare our novice teachers well across a range of learning areas. For example, in the primary and early childhood courses we have work in each of those learning areas. We work extensively with primary, early childhood and secondary teachers in the area of how to work classrooms, how to organise children, how to motivate children and how to deal with children who do not want to learn, how to deal with those children who are very bright and learn quickly and easily and can become bored if we are not careful. I think we do those things well. I think we work well with schools but at the moment—and maybe Glenda will want to talk about this in a moment—we are conscious that we can do better in our work with schools. Glenda and another colleague, Yvonne Carnellor, are actually at the moment investigating different ways in which we might develop relationships with schools, how we might work more closely with schools and how our students might learn more from that school situation.

As I pointed out, it is difficult. In terms of the availability of places for our novice teachers, particularly in secondary education, there are not many. We have just managed to place our Graduate Diploma (Secondary) people into schools. It looked as though we were going to be five short at one point. So the area of work in the schools is one that I think we need to spend more time on. We need to work more from our point of view and build our relationship with schools. We have ideas for that. You talked of resources—and I think by resources we generally mean money. That is an area where I think we need to consider how we spend that money and ways in which we might be able to spend it more effectively. Glenda, do you want to talk a little about the classroom situation?

Dr Raison—I think we have a really good relationship with schools. The difficulty for us is trying to work very closely with teachers who are currently overburdened and under threat. Really, the last thing they want to do is to work on another project. They are being harassed in a way that I do not think they cope with very well, and that is fair. We are trying to be very gentle when we approach them and say, ‘We really would like to build our relationship a little more firmly.’ We have had a couple of tentative pilot programs running where we have given our cooperating teachers access to Curtin’s web CT so that, when we have students in their classroom, they can contact us directly through web CT and discuss their problems. That has been a very small pilot program. But I think time and the way teachers are rewarded or encouraged in their career path for taking students is very limited at the moment. It is becoming better because we have level 3 teachers. I think that will become better when teachers are rewarded for mentoring our students. But currently it is a very loose arrangement. Some universities pay the school for having teachers. We pay teachers some money. We are probably the only profession that is required to pay teachers to take our novice teachers on. I do not think there are any other professions that do that. So the cost burden for us is very high. We are exploring different ways, but at the moment it is really a very difficult situation with teachers in schools. They are being asked to do a lot of things at the moment.

Mr HENRY—I have just been flicking through your report quickly and I note that you have an attrition rate of between five and 10 per cent during the course. Do you have any information about what happens after people graduate? Do you have any idea of the attrition rate there? We

have evidence from others that it can be quite high after the first five or six years—as high as 50 or 60 per cent.

Dr Sparrow—I only have anecdotal evidence. Certainly the first few years of teaching are quite stressful. The reports coming back from our students going out into Western Australia say that often the teaching they have to undertake will be distant. I think someone this year has moved to Fitzroy Crossing.

Dr Raison—Our top ECE—early childhood education—graduate was rewarded with Cue.

Mr HENRY—I suppose there is a little history up there.

Dr Raison—It is a very remote teaching opportunity that not many of our students would be really willing to take as their first appointment.

Dr Sparrow—There are about three buildings in the town—old stone buildings, I think.

Dr Raison—It is north-east of Kalgoorlie.

Dr Sparrow—Taking that point on, often the novice teacher is placed in situations where the school is distant, where the school is hard to staff or where the class is hard to staff. From what I can gather, no matter how good their preparation from the university is, that first year is very difficult. My PhD thesis followed a number of first-year teachers, and there is a huge impact on them. They are spending most of their time initially trying to work the system of their new school, trying to make sure that they do a good job—which they will. They do not have time to think about the niceties of excellence in teaching; they are too busy doing all the other things. For many, it is a shock. That, I think, for many, is a reason for them to drop out. It is very stressful.

Mr HENRY—So do you think that the process that you have, with some school placements in that first semester, is valuable for your students in assessing the challenges of teaching?

Dr Sparrow—That is the reason we put them into schools as early as we can: so that they get the reality of schools. They have to move from one side of the desk to the other, if you like, and have to realise that, in order to be an effective teacher, you can be friendly but you cannot be a friend. You are now the teacher and you are responsible for what goes on here. Some of them find that difficult and decide that they are not going to continue with teaching, and I think that is a good move. I would not want to have people taking on teaching for 40 years when they absolutely hate it.

Mr HENRY—Dr Raison just spoke about mentoring. I would like to explore that a little bit more with respect to partnerships with schools. Does the university have any partnerships with schools? How would you see a structured partnership being of value? How might that work and how would a structured process for mentoring work? As part of your submission you talk about some teachers perhaps taking on a mentoring role and others not necessarily doing that. Is there some way that that can be improved, and is there a structure to achieve that?

Dr Raison—I am sure there are structures available at the moment. That is one of the things we are working through, but we do not have any funds for it, so we have nothing that we can really do apart from offering, ‘Would you like to be a partner?’

Mr HENRY—So a barrier to building partnerships would be funding?

Dr Raison—Absolutely.

Mr HENRY—Is that the only impediment?

Dr Raison—I think it is the major one.

Dr Pelliccione—To add to that, we spend a fair bit of time working with our supervisors. We have a lot of supervisors that we need to employ, and they are not part of the university. They are our partners because they are our supervisors. So we bring them in quite a few times a year. We go through the process of mentoring students. It would be wonderful if we could try and do that with our cooperating teachers as well. We have tried a few times—it is after school at four o’clock—and we get a few people, but we would need the funds to say: ‘Look, how about half a day or an hour in your day? We’ll provide a relief teacher for you. Come in, come and work with us and come and see what we’re doing. Let’s get some of your ideas.’ That would be fabulous, but we cannot do that. To strongly support what Glenda was saying, teachers out there are very stressed and are under a huge amount of pressure, and asking them to do something else is just tipping them over the edge.

Mr HENRY—Has there ever been a submission put together to seek funding for such a program?

Dr Raison—That is what we are working on at the moment, yes.

Mr HENRY—And that would go into the detail of how the relationship and the mentoring arrangement would work?

Dr Raison—Absolutely.

Dr Pelliccione—We have managed to secure \$10,000 for a small project.

Dr Raison—We have a \$10,000 grant for a pilot.

Mr HENRY—Was that through the state government?

Dr Raison—No, it was totally through the university.

Dr Sparrow—In that one we are looking at using electronic means to build relationships and contacts between our teachers, our students and our supervisors out in schools. We are trying to get over the difficulty of not being able to meet face to face by using electronic means to have those conversations.

Mr HENRY—How many students do you have in your programs for teacher education?

Mr Groves—In the secondary program we have about 100 graduate Dip. Ed. students every year and about 30 graduates in the BEd. There are about four times that with undergraduates—130 students—in the BEd, so it is quite a small program.

Dr Sparrow—The primary program would have in the region of 100 each year and the early childhood program would have in the region of 75 each year, over a four-year program.

Mr Groves—We do have some very good partnerships with schools. Armadale Senior High School is probably in your electorate; I am not sure.

Mr HENRY—It is in the electorate of Canning.

Mr Groves—Next door, is it?

Mr HENRY—Yes.

Mr Groves—We work very closely in a number of ways, but it is all voluntary and a lot of it is on top, as others have said, of the normal thing. We need to provide a variety of experiences for our students. Working closely with a school is an excellent idea, but we do not want a student going back over and over again to the extent that they do not gain a variety of experiences.

Mr HENRY—Just doing the same thing.

Mr Groves—We need to take both into account.

Mr HENRY—How do you select a school to have a relationship or partnership with?

Ms BIRD—They say yes!

Mr Groves—We have an agreement with the other universities in the city, so we are only allowed to work with some schools.

Mr HENRY—Is that based on some sort of regional characteristic?

Mr Groves—It is partly regional, but we have students who live in the north as well as here, so we need some schools up there as well, but it is mostly regional, in secondary anyway.

Dr Sparrow—We are trying to build partnerships that go beyond the ‘yes’ answer. In some cases it is about who wants the student today. We are trying to build relationships particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy teaching. In Western Australia at the moment there are what are called ‘Getting it Right’ teachers. The department put into operation a Getting it Right strategy. These are teachers who have expertise and are concentrated in the areas of teaching literacy and numeracy. We are hoping to be able to match a number of our students with those particular teachers, so they get the expert teacher in an area of need. We are trying to be more focused, but there are not a lot of those teachers around. This is where we are trying to build those relationships.

Prof. Dellar—This is part of the partnership and it is also a very special feature of the programs at Curtin. All students undertake some research as a part of their four-year professional prep program. That research is conducted in schools, in classrooms. Frequently, it is around issues that are confronting the teachers that they will work with as a part of a mentored classroom experience. Our students are partners in classroom based research with practitioners, which I think is a very important and strong feature of the prep program. But we have not been resourced well enough to be able to establish more comprehensive partnership programs, which would see not just the placement of students in schools but a reciprocal arrangement where we could also provide professional development opportunities for the staff or where the staff could involve themselves in higher studies, including graduate certificates, diplomas, masters and the like. That type of more comprehensive partnership really depends on being able to resource that effectively.

Mr HENRY—Would that relationship and mentoring and so on also include a process of assessment of the student teacher who might be in the classroom with a mentor so that there is some good, strong feedback on their performance?

Dr Sparrow—We have a lot of feedback. All our school practicums have feedback from the classroom teacher—the mentor—and a university person. The strengths and weaknesses of individual students are known to us and we try to work with the students on those particular weaknesses. For example, we had the third-year students coming back from their primary practice recently. Members of our school experience placement group analysed all of the reports coming from the classroom teachers and the university supervisors to identify the general trends of strengths and weaknesses. I took the general areas of weaknesses and worked those into assessment pieces of work for my unit in mathematics education. We are constantly looking at that feedback and incorporating it into our programs and trying to make them better.

Ms CORCORAN—Before I ask my questions I would like to tighten up some of the terminology for the sake of clarity. You talk about mentors, supervisors and cooperating teachers. I gather that supervisors are university staff who supervise novice teachers and students. I am assuming novice teachers and students are one and the same thing?

Dr Sparrow—Yes. Children in schools are called students so I have tried to differentiate.

Ms CORCORAN—I think ‘novice’ is a good idea. Tell me about cooperating teachers and mentors.

Dr Sparrow—In general we do not have mentors at the moment. A mentor is someone whose role is purely to work with the students to develop their teaching. We usually have classroom teachers. Typically there would be one or perhaps two students and one classroom teacher whose role is to work with those students to improve their teaching.

Ms CORCORAN—Is this outside the practicum?

Dr Sparrow—No, this is part of the practicum. We do not actually have mentor teachers; we are usually referring to classroom teachers.

Mr Groves—We use the term ‘cooperating teachers’ for those classroom teachers. We do not talk about mentors very much.

Ms CORCORAN—How many of your undergraduate novice teachers have come directly from school into your university and how many have come via another career as 40-year-olds?

Dr Sparrow—I do not have specific data.

Ms CORCORAN—We are not going to hold you to it.

Dr Sparrow—I can give round figures. In the early childhood primary programs we have a range. The majority would be straight from school. We would have a number of people who are returning to learning. They have probably had a family. We have a number of people who have had a different job. At the moment we have four males who are in their 40s who have had a different career and have come back in.

Mr Groves—In the BEd (Secondary) it is about fifty-fifty. About half are straight from school. In the graduate diploma ‘straight from school’ means straight from a bachelor’s degree. Probably the majority are mature age students who have had other experience.

Ms CORCORAN—Is there much difference between those two groups in the dropout rate or success rate, if I dare call it that?

Dr Raison—I do not think there is much difference. We would have more of those school leavers leaving than mature age students, who generally seem to be very committed and undergo enormous deprivation to be at university in many cases, and they hang in there.

Dr Pelliccione—Occasionally it would be the mature age students who have a semester off, whereas their younger counterparts would actually have the whole year off. Most of the time, as Glenda says, it is the mature age students who really try and hang in there.

Dr Raison—We have a very flexible approach to our students because we are only a very small faculty. So we are able to map their program to suit; if something dreadful happens, they can take some time off and then return. It is very flexible and it is a part of Lina’s job, as the primary coordinator, to help those students stay there even if they need to take a semester’s break.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about sessional staff before. Can you give me an idea of the breakdown of your faculty staff—of sessional as opposed to full time, casual and part time?

Prof. Dellar—We have 30 sessional staff but that would be the equivalent of about eight or nine full-time staff members. It was a conscious decision to employ sessionals around currency and classroom practice, particularly in what we call the C and I areas: the curriculum and instruction areas. We employ practising classroom teachers to come in and teach in those areas so that there is more currency and credibility in the eyes of the students about those curriculum areas. In the last estimate of full-time, continuing, contracted staff members in the department we were looking at about 16, so overall there is in the order of 23 to 24 staff for the whole faculty.

Ms CORCORAN—Earlier on—and I have not read your submission yet and I apologise for not having done that—

Dr Sparrow—That is my fault for not presenting it earlier.

Ms CORCORAN—Thank you for that. Very early on you talked about students coming back after having been out into schools and they described a range of experiences. You said that some students thought it was great and others came back and said they did not learn a thing. Did they give reasons for what made their experience great? And did they, perhaps, say why they did not learn a thing?

Dr Sparrow—The ones who have the better learning experience are usually the ones who say, ‘My teacher actually talked to me and we worked together, and he or she gave me feedback on my lessons. They helped me with particular issues that I raised.’ I am talking here about two extremes, so the other one that I talked about is where—in the jargon it is known as the ‘deep end’ approach—you just drop them into the classroom and if they can swim and do a good job then they will be all right. Most of those students do not like that experience because all the time they are battling. There is no-one there who they feel will support them. There is no-one saying, ‘You did that really well, but when you are looking at questioning you need to do this.’ So it is the idea of support.

The many teachers we use who are really excellent give that support, give that feedback and give the benefit of their experience to help our novice teachers coming through. They ask, ‘How do you move this group of children from this activity to the next one? You have probably talked about it in the university but how do you move this group of children, who include these different sorts of children, to this activity?’ You have to work with the teacher on the particular context, with the particular children, to bring the reality of it to their knowledge. Students who get that say they have had a good practice; the ones who do not get it, who are left to survive, really do not like it.

Ms CORCORAN—I am assuming that you would try to avoid those sort of teachers if you can.

Dr Sparrow—If we can.

Ms CORCORAN—If you can—that being the operative word.

Mr Groves—There are actually two kinds of reasons and that is the dominant one. Often the novices who are beginning do not realise that teaching in a workplace and interacting with other adults is going to be so important. That is a really important one. In the first year of the course we also have students who may have come through a particular kind of school perhaps 10 years ago and they have come back with a vision of what teaching and school is like. Then they go into a school which is quite different from that. That can be a bit of a shock, I think. If they have come through a public school and they go to a private school for the first time, or vice versa, their expectations are a bit different, maybe. That can be difficult and we provide a lot of help with that as well.

Dr Raison—I also think that it is assumed that because you can teach you can have a student in your classroom. We do not have a formal, or even a very informal, way of helping the teachers deal with students. Dealing with university students and what they need is quite a different experience from dealing with kids. I think that is an area we could certainly strengthen.

Ms BIRD—It appears to me that where this inquiry comes from is at the sharp point of movement out of professional education training into practice. We have had plenty of presentations about how beginning teachers are particularly critical of how prepared they think they are and how well they manage and to some extent we are trying to get to an understanding of what can best be done to both ensure retention of teachers in an environment where we are going to have an increasingly smaller base of people to draw from and also to ensure that their preparation is such that we get good quality teachers. Having acknowledged all that, it appears to me—and I should say that I was a Dip. Ed. secondary teacher by profession—that what I am hearing, and what universities are generally presenting to us, is that they are doing good stuff, that they are well qualified and that resourcing effective practicum, not just more practicum, is something that we should be seriously looking at.

I also get a sense—and I think that it is across many professions today—that employers expect people when they come out of training to be fully competent and able to head off into the world of work and that the old idea that a new teacher was somebody in the school whom you needed to mentor and support with a level of requirement for that to happen, is something that we have lost. I think that practicums have always been as you describe them. I did one where I had a great teacher and another one where I learnt everything I would never do as a teacher—and I do not think that was necessarily a bad experience either. I think we have explored, and you have given us a good description of, what a better resourced practicum would be to achieve good outcomes for the students. I am wondering whether you have any insight into induction of some kind for the initial periods of teaching and what we could do better there.

Prof. Dellar—The recently created Western Australian College of Teaching has in place now a process for movement from provisional registration to full registration which relies on—we do not call it mentorship—working with an experienced colleague, a registered teacher, to effectively mentor the commencing teacher through the first one, two or three years of their professional working life. I think that the process is to be applauded, because it is one that is not inspectorial but is there to try to nurture and support and help that novice teacher grow in strength and skill and professional competence.

Ms BIRD—Is that a funded thing? Who funds it?

Prof. Dellar—Registration will be funded through the requirement to register—you pay your registration dues. It is a requirement for movement from provisional to being a fully registered teacher by the college and therefore people will have to engage in it if they want to become fully registered teachers. As with the undergraduate prep programs, it is going to depend on willing teachers within the school participating in this role. It is early days yet. We wait and hope that it will be successful.

Dr Raison—I could add to that. The Professional Learning Institute has been established by the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia and that is currently devising programs and professional learning opportunities for teachers and newly graduated teachers in

that transition period, which will support the idea of WACOT. I am not sure how well funded that is. I do not know. It is very new; it has only just been set up.

Ms BIRD—There is one other thing that I wanted to tease out from what you were talking about. The other internal conflict that I am hearing about all the time is the aim—and it is a laudable one—to prepare excellent teachers; but, realistically, you are sending them out to less than optimal workplaces. I wonder whether some of what we are hearing about is unavoidable. You are trained to be a professional. The ICT stuff always strikes me. Even if you give good training on how to integrate ICT into the classroom, people may go to a classroom where there is no way they will get access to ICT. In some ways, that may be setting people up for disappointment. Do you see that dynamic? If so, how do you see it effectively managed in making sure that does not happen to beginning teachers?

Mr Groves—It is very difficult. I think we are aware of that all the time. We are aware that most of our beginning teachers, when they qualify, will go to the country, so we offer and encourage some country experience, as much as we can, but we cannot insist upon it. We try and provide a variety of school experiences for some students. As you said, an unsuccessful experience can be a good learning experience, but for others it is not. It is very much an individual thing. We take very seriously the responsibility to provide our beginning teachers with the opportunity to be at the forefront of new ways of learning, teaching, IT and everything else. At the same time, I suppose partly as a result of reflecting on the school experiences they have had, we could discuss with them that it is not always like that. I am not sure what more we could do.

Dr Pelliccione—I would like to pick up on your comments about IT, because I teach in that area. We make sure they know how to use some of the latest software and have all the generic skills, because you know that software will change so quickly. We show them how to use an electronic whiteboard, how to create WebQuest, how to create all the wonderful instructional tools and how to use digital video, but we also show them what they can do if they do not have those facilities, with some really basic software like PowerPoint, even with one laptop in the classroom. We show them both worlds. We try and make them aware of what it is really like out there, but, as Robin said, we still want them to have those skills. We want them to be able to be excited by technology, what you can do with it and how wonderful it can be to enhance learning, but we also show them what you can do if you do not have some of the high-tech stuff. You can still have the wonderful low-tech stuff.

Ms BIRD—One of the great challenges we have in education is that we have a generation who are completely focused around IT. My teenage son lives in a bedroom where there are wires everywhere. That is their world. The classroom, with a pen and paper and a desk and chair, is so far removed from their reality. I commend what you are doing; I suppose I express the level of frustration that teachers must experience just from that reality.

Dr Pelliccione—Our students are very different from many years ago—very different.

Ms CORCORAN—I have just one quick question. You talked about a special unit for novice teachers learning to teach students with special needs—I assume you mean special education needs. Are you focusing on children who struggle to learn? Do you also look at students who

gobble everything up and streak away from their classmates? Do you focus on both groups or one?

Dr Raison—Both of those.

Dr Sparrow—Both.

Dr Raison—Students who take that particular track in that area can focus. They can take units specifically designed for gifted children as well as the basic units which cover the whole range.

CHAIR—We have a range of teachers and nonteachers on this committee, and the nonteachers are in the majority.

Ms BIRD—How unusual!

CHAIR—We only have a 25 per cent representation from the teaching profession. For the benefit of those of us who are not teachers by training, could you elaborate on your course in relation to teaching children with special needs, both those who are having difficulty and those who are excelling? What sorts of things does that cover insofar as preparing a teacher to deal with those students?

Dr Sparrow—I may need help on this one. I will give you my understanding at the moment of the special education that we have. The early childhood, primary and secondary courses would all have a mandatory unit in teaching children with special educational needs. In that sense, they would look at children with learning difficulties, children with behavioural difficulties and children with disabilities and think about how they might be able to incorporate the best education they can for those particular children.

CHAIR—What techniques would you introduce to a beginning teacher to deal with those challenges?

Dr Sparrow—That is where I need the help because I am not the special ed expert.

Dr Raison—I am not a special ed expert either. The people who take those units are psychologist-teachers, so they have a background in both education and psych. Our students are given a very good overview of child development and then they look at specific things like ADHD and the sorts of things that they might need to bring into their classrooms to address those needs. For example, for ADHD, they look at behaviour modification programs and providing different opportunities for those students who are finding attention really difficult. They look at how to run short, sharp, focussed sessions and how to work with the special needs education aide. That is brought into the course because that is a huge part, particularly for children who need that one-on-one support. Those are the sorts of things that you bring in, but I do not think we focus on a particular program.

CHAIR—So you basically focus on skilling up the beginning teacher to identify the problem and then give them a toolkit to fix the problem? Would that be a summary of it?

Dr Raison—Yes. We focus on, first of all, the identification and a range of things to do and ways of assessing. I do not think we focus on any particular commercial program, for example, but we would introduce them to a range of possible programs.

Dr Pelliccione—We also provide them with a number of resources because we do not expect first year out students to go out and be able to identify this, this and that. They need to be able to recognise that there is a concern and what they can do about it. I think that is what is more important—where they go if they are concerned about a particular child.

CHAIR—At the other end of the spectrum would be the gifted child who is bored and finishes all his work in five minutes. What sorts of techniques would you pass on to the beginning teacher for that sort of child?

Dr Raison—They have a lot of practice at constructing open-ended tasks where the children can come in a different levels and extend as far as they can rather than having restricted, closed tasks, where, if you have finished them, you have finished them.

Dr Sparrow—I spoke earlier about the mathematics reports coming back from school. That was one of the areas identified that I then put into the assessment. The assessment that the third-year mathematics education people had to do was to prepare some lessons which would accommodate children who were slower at learning and children who were quicker at learning. We looked at techniques such as simplification and challenge, open-ended tasks and just changing the tasks slightly to take the more able children on a little bit further. The reality of classrooms is that you will have children who struggle with the learning, children who are in that big middle area and children who are very bright. How to accommodate that is one of the major difficulties and challenges that teachers have, so we work on that.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we require further information.

[9.58 am]

KISSANE, Mr Barry Vincent, Dean, School of Education, Murdoch University

POWELL, Ms Daphne Elizabeth (Beth), Chair, Initial Teacher Education Program, Murdoch University

SCHIBECI, Associate Professor Renato Anthony, Deputy Chair, Initial Teacher Education Program, Murdoch University

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I understand that you provided a submission this morning. I invite to make some introductory remarks in relation to that submission.

Mr Kissane—Thank you for the invitation to appear before this inquiry, which of course we were pleased to accept. Education is critical to the future of our nation, and teacher education is critical for education. So your task is of great importance and we hope that we can help you with it. We have tabled a document which is addressed to the inquiry's terms of reference. I am going to give passing attention to some of the points made, aware that the document has been tabled only this morning.

Murdoch University was founded in part on the premise that a city of Perth's size ought to have more than one university and that they ought not be clones of each other. I think it is a telling comment on the central role of education that Murdoch began with a school of education from the outset. We educate primary, secondary and now early childhood teachers in a variety of ways—internally and externally; concurrent and end-on; that is, after an undergraduate degree, both one year and two years after. We also have a significant program for developing tertiary and adult teachers, which we have not described in the submission because we are assuming that your interest is focused on the school sector. From this experience base, we expect to be able to inform you on most aspects of teacher education and to assist you in your work.

Since it began, Murdoch has accommodated a diversity of student populations. The recent growth of the Rockingham campus, south of here, and the development of enabling programs, which provide special access to university education, reflect this further. This mission raises issues for selecting students, which we address in the first two terms of reference. We believe that the range of students studying education at Murdoch is one of its great strengths. We believe that we provide a chance for them to learn from each other and to contribute to the production of a diverse teaching force, which we think is important for schools and indeed for the wider community.

Attrition is a complex issue. Murdoch programs are distinctively different from those at other universities in first year, partly because of the different intake but partly because of the design of the institution from its beginning. We have foundation units, which are interdisciplinary units

with learning skills components, that are required of all first-year students, including ours. Although we are concerned about the gradual erosion of Commonwealth funding for university education generally, we are aware that first-year experience still needs to be improved. Incidentally, the university is addressing the matter of first-year experience through a working party that reports to the academic council at the moment. As well as difficulties in making the transition from somewhere else to university study, some of the attrition from our teacher education programs reflects poor career choices and is thus of less concern. Attrition after the first few years of beginning teaching is a major issue, as I am sure you have heard around the country—although that is also complex, as we suggest in our submission.

The School of Education staff members are expected to, and indeed do, engage in significant research and professional work as well as teaching. We have a general view that they are overworked and underpaid by comparison with professionals of similar status elsewhere. As you have no doubt heard elsewhere, starting salaries for academic staff are insufficient to attract suitably qualified and experienced teachers from schools. Traditional academic award structures apply across the whole university and they do not always suit school of education staff. For example, they may serve to discourage staff from devoting considerable time to building deep relationships within schools unless the result was published research findings or research grants.

We believe we have a coherent philosophy concerned with developing graduates who are well-rounded, reflective practitioners who are capable of adapting to the changing world of professional education and contributing to its growth. We still hear people in schools talking about the ‘Murdoch difference’ in various positive ways. In fact, just yesterday I was having that kind of conversation in a primary school. This philosophy began with the design of the school of education and continues to permeate our thinking. Like others, we recognise that our graduates ought to be prepared to start a career in the classroom and that they will continue to develop as reflective practitioners over their early years of teaching. Listening to the previous conversation, questions of mentoring and how that happens are clearly important.

Your seventh term of reference reminds us of some of the complexities of teaching and the need for an intelligent balance within a teacher education program. There are always competing demands on teacher education programs, generated both internally and externally, and there always seem to us to be more suggestions regarding what to add rather than what to take away. We have regularly adjusted our programs over the years in response to various influences of these kinds, while trying to maintain opportunities for students to exercise some choice over their own individual programs. That is not an easy task. Balancing what is best handled within the school of education, what is best handled elsewhere on the campus, what is best handled in professional experience placements and what is best addressed in the early years of teaching is no easy matter, and it is always going to be subject to some form of contestation.

Relationships with schools are of key significance to teacher education programs, and that certainly includes ours. Like other schools of education, we struggle to fund and implement school experience to our satisfaction, and we continue to rely on the goodwill and professionalism of our colleagues in schools. The financial costs of school experience are significant, as I am sure you have found so far in your inquiry. The model that Murdoch started with has proved to be no longer sustainable—mostly for economic reasons. Economics aside, we need mechanisms put in place that will encourage and support the development of better partnerships between universities and schools in sustainable and mutually beneficial ways.

Too little or too much school experience is problematic, and of course under-resourced school experience is especially problematic. We hope the inquiry can recommend and bring about sustainable mechanisms for addressing the problems that we and other institutions face in this regard. This would be of lasting benefit to the nation.

Many of the problems can be interpreted as funding problems but these are not the only problems. We recognise the opportunities for learning by the students, the school and the university through the powerful agency of the school experience. We continue to hear from schools how our students and their cooperating teachers can learn a lot from each other.

We referred briefly in our submission to issues of professional learning for existing teachers, noting the significant disincentives for further study caused by the imposition of fees, and the limited expectation of career advancement as a consequence. For example, while the financial cost of earning an MBA is likely to be repaid many times over by an increased salary and job expectations it seems that this is much less likely to be the case for an MEd. We have the expertise and the interest to provide significant help for lifelong learning of teachers, and it would be of benefit to the nation if your inquiry addressed efficient and effective ways of tapping that expertise to the benefit of all concerned.

Finally, we regard the issue of the general level of funding of the university as more important than the issue of the distribution of funds within the university. The steady rise of staff-student ratios and workload expectations for staff over the past two decades have been debilitating for many of us, who by our natures want to do the best job we can of educating the next generation of teachers while at the same time contributing to the nation's research agenda and playing our part in professional activities of various kinds with schools and with teachers, including informed debate on educational issues of the day. It is disappointing that the increasing expectations of university staff in a climate of declining resources might be interpreted by some as being efficient but may instead have become debilitating and ultimately unproductive. We would welcome your questions and any discussion on these and other matters.

CHAIR—Thank you. Firstly, you talked about the need to improve the first-year experience. Could you elaborate on that statement, as to where you see those improvements occurring? Secondly—I apologise if it is in your submission, which I am yet to read—you said that the original Murdoch model is no longer sustainable; I would be interested if you could expand on the areas in which it is no longer sustainable.

Mr Kissane—Sure. On the question of the first-year experience, I guess I was speaking more generally about the university's concern with students undertaking a first year. They come from a variety of environments. Students are learning how to be students. They are engaging in academic pursuits and, in many cases, struggling with the financial aspects of being a student and with the other kinds of pressures that are on young people. Many of our students are not full time, and nurturing them through the early year is of key importance. We know that as an institution we need to focus attention on that.

The foundation units have been designed to help students to be students, to help students learn how to write, read and participate in classroom discussions, to use the library effectively and to learn from lectures—and all those kinds of things. But it requires considerable expertise at the university level, and funding, to make that work well. As an institution, we are looking at that.

We are concerned that first-year students who are undertaking external studies struggle with that. They are on their own, often away from the campus, and we need to think about ways of nurturing them better. I was not speaking only of the School of Education; I was speaking much more generally.

The institution is aware that we need to continue to work hard at making this transition which for many students is not a transition from being at the top end of their secondary school straight into a university environment but one where they have come from other walks of life. As I said, Murdoch was founded in part to provide opportunities for students who may well not normally have had those. Particularly at Rockingham, for example, many of our students are first-generation tertiary students. They are from families where no-one ever went through university. Many people did not even complete school. They require particularly kinds of help. We are aware of the problem.

With respect to the original Murdoch model, I might briefly describe the picture. We have described it briefly in our submission as well. Perhaps it is a good moment to point out two things before I do that. My two colleagues here today are both foundation members of Murdoch University and so have experienced the Murdoch approach to school experience over our lifetime as an institution. I am also mindful that the next people appearing before the inquiry are also on our staff—David Tripp has had substantial experience of the same kind for many years—and their offerings will also help flesh this out.

But the big picture is that we began with a model that located students in schools for their school experience purposes with someone who was a member of the Murdoch academic staff, usually teaching in areas that were related to what the school experience was about. We located them in a caravan on the school site for the duration of the school experience so that there was a classroom, if you like, on the school grounds where the students could work together in various ways and with the Murdoch supervisor. The entire Murdoch contingent was located in the school, engaged in various kinds of activities. It requires considerable resources to have academic staff who can devote that amount of time and to actually have the physical resources—caravans and the like—to make that work. Over time, we have changed aspects of the model, because we have always changed what we do. Beth, you would be well placed to continue fleshing out what is different about where we are now and where we used to be. It is described briefly in the submission, but I am mindful that we have only just submitted it.

Ms Powell—The school experience program allowed us to form a really close partnership with schools. I was initially one of the people who went out to schools. So half of my professional life at Murdoch was spent being what we then called tutor-supervisors. In my case I taught in the curriculum area of primary maths on campus. Then, when the students were doing their school experience based on primary maths, I was one of the people who went out to a school with a group of about 10 students. We tried to build a relationship with the school. So I would go back to two or three schools over the year on numerous occasions. I came to know the teachers well and they came to know, through me, what we were trying to do at Murdoch in terms of particular approaches to curriculum areas. I think it allowed us to create a triad between the student, the cooperating teacher and us.

One of the really interesting things that happened at an evaluation time was that we were each able to say, ‘We come from a different perspective’—not better or worse or more informed or

less informed but a different perspective. The Murdoch person had a deep professional knowledge in the particular curriculum area. The classroom teacher saw the student at work far more than we were able to, even though we were there full time, but they also understood better what was happening in their classroom and those aspects of classroom life that we were not as expert in. Then there were the students themselves who, we felt, really knew what they were learning and not learning. That combination of points of view came together to form a very strong nucleus for the learning that took place. It was really a very strong model.

Two key things have happened with that model. One is that our student numbers have become so much greater that maintaining that sort of model is very difficult. Take, for example, the number of caravans we needed. They were a wonderful resource that the teachers could come into and that we could use to go out to the classrooms. Again, I am trying to give emphasis to that partnership that occurred between the two institutions. The cost of the caravans meant that we could not increase the number in our fleet. The number of students meant that there were not enough staff members, in fact, who had this expertise to be able to go out to the schools or who could be freed from the university. We started to get in sessional supervisors, who were not as well steeped in the sorts of courses we were doing on campus. So what we might like to call the 'Murdoch way of doing things' was perhaps watered down somewhat.

Now it has spread so wide that we are relooking and saying: 'This was a really valuable thing that we were doing. It enhanced student learning. It enhanced all of our learning.' I can really warm up to this; I will stop in a second. It was about being able to look at the learning that was occurring. Each one of us, each player, learnt something. For example, from my point of view as a supervisor I could say, 'By just sitting and watching the student and working together, what have I learnt about learning?' And the teacher was able to say, 'In viewing the student, what help is the best help for this student?' We were looking at how we could support the learner but increasing our own professional knowledge about it at the same time. The teacher was learning, the supervisor was learning and the student teacher was learning about the teaching profession.

We are looking now at ways we can, even with a bigger cohort of students, perhaps do other things that are going to get that back to the strength it was at before—but we want to do it in another way. I think we still do a very good job of supervision relative to, perhaps, other colleagues for the amount of time we are prepared to put into supervision of our student teachers. Certainly the ties are not quite as strong as they were, and we want to bring them back again.

CHAIR—In your evaluation processes, what conclusions have you drawn on the relative effectiveness of where you currently are as opposed to the more intense model that you started from originally? I presume the students were coming out with superior results as a result of that more intense approach. Where were the differences in the graduates that you were producing at the time?

Ms Powell—I am going to say something that may sound arrogant. There are many wonderful models of teachers out in schools who have student teachers and who provide them with excellent ways of doing things, but there are some that do not. A supervisor being full time in the school is best able to support students in situations where they can recognise need. I guess in some ways it is being able to see that the types of work we have been doing and the approaches we have been encouraging students to take up have not always been followed through, and

sometimes they see very bad practice. We feel that we would like to strengthen the ties that link us. We would like to see the sorts of things that we do being replicated more closely in the school situation. That was falling down. In fact we sometimes heard of almost the opposite of what we were hoping to achieve. I think that is probably the area that we are most concerned about. Does that answer the question? I am not sure that it does. I might have gone astray.

CHAIR—I was really after whether you have a quantified measure, if you like, of outcomes with the intense model, as opposed to outcomes with the hybrid model—a more general model.

Ms Powell—A less intense model.

CHAIR—No doubt you are researching your own graduates as well as teacher education. Do you have some figures or an outcomes based analysis of it?

Ms Powell—I do not think we do, to be perfectly honest.

Mr Kissane—We have a sense of disappointment that we cannot create those strong bonds and that strong relationship that we have ourselves experienced. We do not have a quantitative sense of that. Those of us who have been around for a while are aware that it is a slippage—I think that would be the correct way to describe it—but we have not got numbers on it.

Ms Powell—One of the things I have just recalled is that we have a committee called Partnerships for Professional Learning, which looks at how we can better enhance the partnerships we have with schools. We set up a trial of distributed days of school experience, as against our normal block days. We had a number of teachers and principals come in to work with us in working out a way to better establish this relationship. We found that, in looking at the results of the distributed placement, they kept saying: ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we had a supervisor from the university with the students all the time? Wouldn’t it be great if a relationship was set up with the school so that the same supervisor came out to the school each time?’ What they were talking about was the model we used to have. It was quite telling.

Ms BIRD—Can I just clarify that when you talk about the distributive model you mean what they were doing one day a week at the school—through the whole semester?

Mr Kissane—No. This was a trial that we conducted through a program in the school called Partnerships for Professional Learning. Barry Down, who is going to appear before you in the next session, will be able to tell you more about the details of that. But the particular distributed placement was to work with schools and with our partners in PPL to trial alternatives to having block practices in school—to have some of the time, one day a week, in the school. I might make a brief remark about the PPL. It is interesting that it was set up to look at all kinds of relationships between us, as professionals, and schools. A good deal of the conversation in the early days of the PPL has been about the professional experience, the practicum, because that is the area that we all recognise we need to work on most strongly.

Ms BIRD—That has certainly been our experience too.

Mr HENRY—I am keen to explore a bit further the partnerships with schools. You have covered that to a fair degree. What are the real barriers to those partnerships? You have spoken about a number of areas, but could you elaborate on some of them.

Mr Kissane—One of the areas I referred to, which I will say a little more about, is the fact that partnerships take time. Regrettably, it is the case at the moment that, for people in the School of Education, time is the thing they are least likely to have. It is hard to find good quality time for members of the university and members of the school to get together—hard but not impossible. When you throw in the reward structures in the universities, which still are steeped in the traditional reward structures that perhaps best fit faculties of science—publications in refereed journals, research grants and the number of dollars involved in the research grants—there are strong imperatives to be engaged in those kinds of activities.

It is hard to find the time to do everything well. So time is a major problem. Stuart, you would be aware of this, being local. There are always difficulties for people in schools to find time to work on anything other than their teaching. Those are exaggerated at the moment. We have been in a stage of curriculum change over the past several years and will be into the next few years. So time in schools is precious as well. It is hard to find quality time that all the partners can afford to spend and work on. Those things require resources, encouragement and recognition that that is a valuable kind of professional activity.

Mr HENRY—If there is recognition that there is a value in a partnership, what do we need most to make it work?

Ms Powell—One of the things we need most is teachers who are willing to take student teachers. I am sure you have heard about this before, but probably one of the key problems is placing our students in schools with good teachers. That is for all sorts of reasons: all the work the teachers need to do, the changes they have had to adopt, make people less willing to have student teachers.

Mr HENRY—I appreciate the need in this environment for a learning teacher—or initial teacher, as you call them—to go with a practitioner who is good. But the reality in a school environment is that you have a range of people with a range of skills and expertise. So isn't it still a good learning experience to be with any teacher? I am picking up on the point you made earlier about ending up with somebody who does not have good classroom practice and does not necessarily perform well as a teacher.

Mr Kissane—It is valuable to be in the school learning things regardless of the teacher and the school. But the point is that it can be so much more valuable if the partnership works in productive ways. I was at a school last week—in fact, the reason I was at the school was to make sure that the school understood that we appreciated that they devoted some of their time to looking after our students and nurturing them. One of the teachers said to me: 'I've been really lucky. I've had really good students from you guys at Murdoch.' I told her that my impression was that people, like professional sportsmen, say they are really lucky and that it is a great deal of talent that produces that sort of luck. The kinds of people that talk about being lucky with their students are often the kinds of people that have the professional qualities to engage in the learning experience with students, and it is a beneficial partnership.

Of course, our students will learn wherever they are, but they can learn a great deal more in a productive relationship of that kind. To continue on from what Beth was saying, there are incentives in the system gradually being introduced for people in schools to recognise the importance of nurturing the next generation of teachers. Our senior teacher classifications explicitly refer to that and the level 3 teachers have expectations to be engaged in supervision of student teachers. So there is a gradual recognition that this is important work in schools. Nonetheless, it is still a struggle for busy people in schools to make that commitment to work with student teachers. Those who do, and do it well, keep doing it again and say that they are learning from it as well, which is terrific. Beth talked about the triad of all of us learning. But it is problematic when we have to struggle to find people to supervise our teachers. It is problematic in terms of what it says about our profession, but it is also problematic in practice for the students concerned.

Mr HENRY—I have just have a quick scan of your submission. I have picked up on a couple of aspects of it that I would like to talk to you about. It says under term of reference 5 ‘in similar vein, we describe professional field placement as school experience not teaching practice’. I question that. Surely that school experience is about the realities of practical teaching and classroom management. Surely that is a part of what it is about. We have had evidence from others over the course of this inquiry about the need for trainee teachers—learner or initial teachers—to be in classrooms early in the course so that they really start to have an appreciation of what to expect. But, from that particular comment, you obviously have a very different approach to that.

Mr Kissane—I am pleased you picked up on that. We have a strong view that school experience is an opportunity for students to learn, not just to practise some collection of tricks that they have learned somewhere else—like someone might practise doing the high jump. It is a much more important learning environment than the term ‘teaching practice’ suggests. But that requires the kind of milieu and opportunities that we have just been describing, with Murdoch supervisors and cooperating teachers in schools working in some kind of synchronicity so that it does in fact become an experience.

You are absolutely right: people will learn a great deal about managing the classroom, the practical day-to-day running of schools, all the relationships between staff in schools and many of the aspects of the job that are best learned and best experienced in a school rather than on a university campus. We take the term ‘school experience’—indeed, we take the term ‘teacher education’ rather than ‘teacher training’—very seriously. It might seem a bit semantic but it is an important point for us.

Mr HENRY—We have had some sensitivity over the course of the inquiry about the word ‘training’.

Mr Kissane—We are not surprised.

Mr HENRY—We are learning a little about it from your perspective. The other thing I want to raise, under term of reference 8, is where it says that, as a consequence of the changes, the relationship between Murdoch and the staff in schools is a bit more distant than presently. I think you have covered that a bit. You would like to see that changed obviously, because it is integral

to the product you are producing, if I can put it that way, that you have that sort of relationship. So what is the way forward from here?

Mr Kissane—In terms of improving that?

Mr HENRY—Developing those relationships—I am sorry, I thought I had made a note about some comments you made earlier, Mr Kissane, but in terms of the way forward.

Ms Powell—One of the working parties we have established out of the initial teacher education program is to look at just this. How can we look at it? Given the size of the group we now have, what is it we can do to bring back some of those things, but do it in a different way because we have to do it in a different way? One of the things we are doing is looking at a combination of campus units with school experience. One of our very first units is called ‘Introduction to teaching’. It has both a campus component and a school based component that work together so students are learning about nurturing the reflective, analytic practitioner. We talk a lot about what a reflective practitioner is. Students write journals and we go into the school, and it is the focus of their reflection and journal writing. We see there the link between campus theory and classroom practice. What we are now looking at doing for exiting, where students usually do an ATP for six or 10 weeks depending on the program they are in, is to encompass it in the same way as introduction encompasses the unit with the experience in school, to look at three or four units all going together so that the ties between theory and practice are tightened. We are looking at the ability to generate ways of dealing with issues that students find in schools, so we talk about the issues that have developed over the four years of the four-year BEd or the one or two years of a Dip. Ed. We say, ‘Okay, now is our chance to put all this together.’ At this moment we are trying to work out how we can best make this work so that the experience fits into the cradle of the unit development, so that those links are much more tightly made and that we work with teachers about that.

Mr HENRY—And with schools.

Ms Powell—Yes.

Mr HENRY—So giving them some buy-in to the development process would hopefully develop the sort of relationship that would be integral to success. I guess what I was looking for is what sorts of programs you are looking at doing to build that relationship.

Ms Powell—Part of our reason for doing this has come out of the feedback from schools. We do not think that students are best prepared in programming over an ATP period—the students have to do a lot of programming work. What we are looking at doing, instead of having 10 weeks straight in the schools, is having two weeks, which we are calling an ‘ATP prelim’, when they get into the schools and do things. They come back on campus for two weeks. We know the students. We have a sense of the class we are working with and we can then work together with staff members on programming, on reflection—on all sorts of things. We can work on professional issues and on special needs—that is where we are putting some of our special needs work in—and then go back into the school for six weeks implementation and then back again, involving teachers coming back into campus for another two weeks to debrief in order to evaluate where we have been so that students are at a launching pad to go out.

Mr HENRY—That would also provide a learning experience, or some learning value, to existing teachers in that school environment, would it not?

Ms Powell—That is exactly it.

Mr HENRY—That is the value adding, if you like—to create the relationship and develop an ongoing partnership.

Ms Powell—It is really very complex in terms of the three players and all the units that we want our students to partake of and learn from. But if we can weave them together and make this work—and we think we can; we are really quite excited about making this work, through all the bureaucracy that might occur around it—we think we will strengthen those ties significantly, learn a lot as we go and increase everyone's professional capacity. I think the professional capacity for learning, reflecting on where we are going and continuing to learn is really important for all players.

Mr HENRY—I have only just scanned your submission, but my concern is that it is looking a little bit bleak in terms of the relationship between you as the provider of new teachers and schools as the recipients of that benefit. Unless we work on building that relationship then I would not think you could really deliver a program in isolation.

Mr Kissane—We agree entirely. The relationship is absolutely critical. The work Beth is describing in the context of the school experience working party has as a background that we are working within a budgetary situation where we are assuming, perhaps pessimistically, that things do not seem to be getting a great deal better. If we had more substantial resources we would be thinking in different kinds of ways. So we are trying to adjust our aspirations, experience, observations and reflections in schools to the realities we find ourselves in. We would prefer, as we said earlier, that we had a situation where the close links between us and the schools were established in different kinds of ways, but it has simply been difficult to maintain those. We have the feeling that we know how to do that well, but we are not able to do it well in the environment we inhabit.

Ms CORCORAN—I have two questions. Firstly, could you give me an idea of the profile of the teaching staff in the education area at Murdoch University—sessional staff, permanent full-timers and that sort of thing?

Mr Kissane—I will do my best. I think the full-time staff number is about 31 or 32, counting some positions that we currently have advertised. I do not have a headcount for sessional staff, but there is a substantial number of sessional staff for school experience purposes. Most of our school experience is now conducted by sessional staff rather than by our own staff, as we referred to earlier. There is a good number of sessional staff involved in other kinds of campus teaching. Again, I could not put a number on it.

Ms CORCORAN—In terms of effective full-timers, are you prepared to give a rough figure? If you have 30 full-timers, do you have that many effective full-timers again, or half, in terms of sessional staff? I just need to get an idea of the picture.

Mr Kissane—I would say that it would be of the order of 20 effective full-timers, over and above the 30 full-time staff that we have. That is a wild guess. I have not done the sums yet.

Ms CORCORAN—We will not hold you to it—it is all right.

Mr Kissane—Thank you!

Ms CORCORAN—My other question is about ongoing PD. I have been listening to Beth talk in particular about the value that teachers get out of being supervisors to students. But I imagine that, in an ideal world, all teachers would engage in professional development on an ongoing basis. I am wondering if and how that happens.

Mr Kissane—I guess there are various ways in which teachers access professional development through the university. One way is through award courses. As I said in my opening remarks, and indeed in the submission, the disincentives to engage in award courses are substantial. Other kinds of PD tend to be in the context of either small projects that are run by the university offering professional development of various kinds to schools, or on an individual basis. People like myself, for example—at least in my previous profession as a mathematics teacher—spend a fair amount of time in PD of various kinds. That was not formally via the university but as part of my community service and community responsibilities. Perhaps Beth can talk about PD with respect to school experience and the direct relationship with our schools.

Ms Powell—One of the things we think of as a feature or characteristic of a Murdoch graduate is the reflective practitioner. Right from the very beginning we talk about nurturing the reflective practitioner. We say reflection is not easy to do; we have to nurture the development of it. We do so throughout the program, although we want to do it better than we are doing it. We certainly do it at the beginning and at the end, and we want to strengthen the things that go through and tie it together. Towards the end, part of that reflection is in looking at how reflective practice changes from the initial observing and thinking about it to, ‘Let’s observe and reflect in all sorts of ways and then look at the plan of action that comes out of that.’ From that plan of action we are thinking about action research. We are hoping that our graduates become the sorts of teachers who have the wherewithal to be professionally developed through action research. But it links through, so we are talking here not so much about what we do with teachers in terms of professional development but about how we are nurturing our students to become the sorts of people who are active action researchers of their own practice.

Mr Kissane—In the report, we briefly mentioned the recent initiatives within schools—the Quality Teaching Program and, more recently, the ASISTM program focusing on science, technology and mathematics. These are professional development opportunities that are located in the schools and have an ongoing nature and very much an action research kind of flavour. Many of us have been engaged in those kinds of activities in a critical friend role or in some similar designation, working with a group of people at a school over a period of time on aspects of their practice that they have generated a need for. We think that that kind of professional learning is very powerful. Those programs in particular provide opportunities that were not there previously. A lot of professional learning has been a bit one-off and most people think that, while it has a place, it is hard to imagine it will have a sustained effect on people’s professional practice. Those two programs in particular are examples of recent experiences.

CHAIR—Ms Bird?

Ms BIRD—There are two things I would like to explore with you. It was interesting when you were talking about the challenges to an education faculty in the area of research and the related issue of funding. It seemed to me that what Ms Powell was describing about the learning capacity of the university supervisor in that sort of model is, indeed, a form of legitimate professional research. The problem is that there is no funding for it as research. We have already talked about the fact that there is difficulty getting appropriate funding for it as teaching, and, from what we have heard from many universities, there is no capacity for it to be recognised as research for the purpose of funding. In terms of what the committee can recommend, a more aggressive government funded research program into that area may help alleviate some of the challenges in the research field. We keep hearing from universities, including yours, saying, ‘We get this feedback and we’ve got this general feeling, but, no, there’s not actually much hard data about which model of prac teaching works,’ and so on. It would inform that debate, but I would think it would also assist in delivering a more effective practicum. Would you comment on that?

Mr Kissane—I absolutely agree. The need to recognise as research important professional work of this kind is pressing, but we do not see evidence of that on the horizon. The research quality framework discussions that are going on seem to have a predominant view of the world—that is, the standard science and technology view of research. If they have a very strong influence on how research is viewed within universities, an inevitable consequence is going to be that within schools of education, to survive as a school of education or as an individual academic, people will need to pay attention to those strictures.

I am sure you are having similar conversations elsewhere. If your committee is able to recognise that professional research within education may have a different quality to other kinds of research and that both are important, and somehow make the incentive and support to engage in that sort of work be available at the highest levels and be recognised as such within the environments we work in, I think it would be terrific.

Prof. Schibeci—An example of that is the recently established Carrick institute, which looks at teaching and learning in the university context. If a certain proportion of funding is made available to education and research, for faculties of education, for example, we could start to get some of the evidence I think you are looking for. I got one of those grants some years ago, under what was then called the CUTSD. We looked at primary science, which is a critical area, and we developed a video for our students so that they could look at science differently, and think of science as something they could actually teach, not fear. That is an example. That was about \$30,000, which lasted a year. We got a video and a booklet that we still use some 10 years later to support what our students are doing. I think it is absolutely critical to get some specific funding targeted at that. The Australian Council of Deans of Education makes the point that if you look at the ARC, there is a tiny sliver for education funding, yet it is critical we get evidence—

Ms BIRD—You could argue that it is the foundation of our future capacity in engineering and a whole range of areas.

Prof. Schibeci—If that were supported by some particular funding, even if only in the initial years to raise awareness and get some good projects going, it would be an enormous first step—as would getting universities to recognise that as research.

Ms BIRD—Well, you could just call your caravan a ‘lab’, not a ‘classroom’.

Prof. Schibeci—Exactly.

Ms BIRD—The one thing we have not explored with you is the issue, which has come up regularly, of intake students. Do you go on a straight, result type basis, do you have any other methods and do you have any comments about the efficacy of any of those?

Mr Kissane—We have a variety of intakes. As I hinted earlier, we have students who come straight from school and we have people who are returning to or embarking on study. Coming from raising a family is common enough, but there are people from other kinds of professions who enter as mature aged students. We have students who come into the program via various enabling, special-access programs, where we support them in becoming a student. In the main, we rely on the tertiary entrance rank or equivalents to that, in the case of mature aged entry, with a supporting letter to make the case as to why they ought to be undertaking teacher education of some kind.

We think that is the most acceptable thing to do in the circumstances. We have not contemplated interviewing students, for example. In fact, the clear advice I have heard from the ACER and elsewhere is: ‘Don’t interview students. It is a highly problematic mechanism.’ We have not embarked on setting strong subject prerequisites at senior secondary school level—and we make a brief reference to this in our submission—because of the problems of the mixed group of people who we are concerned with and the exclusions that may well follow from that, which we think are unhelpful. We focus on standard entry patterns for those who come straight from school and try to find intelligent equivalents for those who do not. Does that answer your question?

Ms BIRD—Yes, it does. I suppose it becomes an issue when there are more applicants than places. Do you have more applicants than places?

Mr Kissane—Yes, we do. I have given a little bit of information along those lines at page 2 of the submission. We have substantially more applicants for places in both our bachelor of education programs and the dip ed programs—the two-year programs. So we do need to make selections and, in some cases, quite savage ones. For example, in 2005 we selected 95 applicants from the 295 first preferences for our primary dip ed. So we have a very strong applicant group and we need to have defensible mechanisms for choosing them.

In that vein—and it is not well described here—I would like to remark on why we have a two-year graduate entry program. We have had a one-year, end-on diploma in education program for both primary and secondary for quite some time. We feel—as, I am sure, many other schools of education do—that it is a very pressured year. It tends to be a very crowded year. We start a month before university begins, and students get very little time off because of all the things that need to fit into that year. We think we could do a better job if we had more time, so we have instituted just recently—which is why the numbers are quite low—a two-year program out of

which people get a bachelor of education. This eases the pace a bit and allows us to do what we think is a better job in some of our professional experience practicum areas.

We would generally prefer that the end-on model—the two-year model—be taken up by more students, because we think it is a stronger program. But the overwhelming choice at the moment—for reasons that would be unsurprising to people who have never been involved in teacher education—is that students want to do it in one year so that they can get out and start teaching. These questions obviously depend on decisions made elsewhere—and registration decisions—but the selection issues are less severe than in our other programs.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will contact you if we need further information, and the secretary will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence. A copy of the transcript will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

Proceedings suspended from 10.53 am to 11.23 am

DOWN, Professor Barry, Private capacity**TRIPP, Dr David Howard, Private capacity**

CHAIR—Welcome. Is it the wish of the committee that the submission from Professor Barry Down, together with any attachments not previously published, be accepted as evidence and authorised for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded in *Hansard* and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's web site. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

Dr Tripp—I made a personal submission to the committee.

Prof. Down—I am the City of Rockingham Chair of Education and, like David, I made a personal submission to the committee.

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and 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 invite you to make some opening remarks.

Dr Tripp—Thank you for giving us this opportunity to speak to you. I am not going to say very much. I am going to ask Barry if he will say a bit, because you have not had his submission before. I was thinking about my introductory comments and it occurred to me to say that, if thinking is a practical art, then it is closer to the art of rocket science than it is to the art of cookery. A lot of people feel that teaching is really a matter of practice. You learn as much as you can as an apprentice, you get with good teachers and then you imitate them. There are two problems with that. Firstly, if generally there is a national concern about the quality of teachers in schools, why would you hand training of the new teachers over to them? Secondly, as I have tried to point out in my submission, if teaching is done well it is an intellectual business, a scholarly business, as well as a practical business.

Obviously you are incompetent if you are not technically and practically able and skilled in the classroom. But if you never consider what it is you are doing, why you are doing it and how it could be done better, and if you do not have the intellectual skills and the academic knowledge to develop these questions and provide answers to them and communicate them to other people in the profession, you are going to have a very truncated experience in classrooms.

I also work in systems thinking, because very often I find that what people take personally into the classroom is actually due to the system in which they work. It is contextualised. Often when I am working with teachers they will say: 'I really did this very badly. I feel guilty about it.' We always work through that and ask: 'Why did it happen and what did you do? How could you have done it better?' and so on. We also say, 'What predisposed you to do that rather than something else?' And you begin to get to the system behind the event.

I do not know whether anyone else has commented to you on the history of education as a discipline, but originally, as you know, it was purely apprentices. People were monitors or assistant teachers in schools and then they were certified and became independent teachers, and so it moved on. Then it was put into colleges and universities. The university subject of education is derived from what I tend to call the parental disciplines: psychology, sociology, philosophy, statistics and so on. Those tend to be taught as those subjects, and then students are expected to learn that and apply it in school. I do not think you can do without the content of that knowledge, but it does not work if you simply ask people in one context to learn something and in another context to do something quite differently. It does not apply.

Much of the so-called research in education—it is funded as research in education—has no impact on classroom teachers, even over a very long period. There has been quite a lot written about this. The Americans have been very concerned about it. Why do things not change, even though academics know that things ought to change? If we know better ways of doing it, why do classrooms remain the same? One of the reasons is this: you do not change systems, you change the people in the systems. Unless academics are working with teachers, change does not tend to happen. Teachers are very busy people. Even the best teachers, because they are the best teachers, tend to say, ‘My practice is good and, therefore, when someone comes to tell me to do something else, I’ll think of very good reasons why I should stick to my practice, apart from the fact that it is easier because I already know it.’ If you come to teachers and say, ‘This is a better way of motivating your students,’ they are immediately cast in an under position of being told what to do by a so-called expert, and that is no way to develop a profession.

We have to listen to teachers. It is very interesting that, when I started teaching at Murdoch, I was given the task of introducing them to the research about teaching. I went through this and we had all these topics that were derived from the research. I asked them to keep a journal about how what we were learning on the research that tells us about teaching actually affected them in their classrooms. Over and over again they did not seem to be able to do it, so I decided to do it the other way around. I said, ‘Tell me what is happening in your classrooms and I will point to the research.’ I could not find the research.

We have a lot of research on, say, cheating in the schools. There is a difficulty about whether it is cheating when you copy. But how often do teachers tell people in schools to ‘copy this’—copy it and learn it, as other people’s work? They put it up on the board: ‘This is what you copy down.’ I could find an enormous amount about things like cheating and about peer learning. But there was nothing on copying when I looked. The concerns that teachers had were simply not reflected in the research, and I think that is because they came from the parental disciplines.

I was just saying to Ann at teatime that the problem with a subject like motivation is that at Murdoch we teach a number of different kinds of motivation—intrinsic, extrinsic, task oriented, goal orientated and so on—but if you talk to teachers about motivation they will often refer to motivation as ‘the motivation bit of the lesson’. They construct it differently. If you look at the notion of motivation, basically it is keeping kids on task. That is very different from the way it is construed in psychology, yet because we are teaching psychology of education we tend to teach the psychological thing. Then they get into schools and their job is keeping the children on task. The two do not necessarily connect. They can be made to connect if you mediate the two. But if school teachers do not know much about what is being taught about motivation in our university

and the lecturers who are teaching it do not know much about what is happening in the schools, the students cannot make the bridge between the two and so their learning suffers.

I am interested in ways of working with teachers as academics, and one of the best examples you have of this, government funded, was the innovative links project, in which academics were given the funding to enable them to reduce their teaching in order to work with schools. We were attached to schools for two years, like academics in residence in the schools. We were there to help them and we worked with them. There is a very impressive evaluation of that kind of process.

What I would like to talk about some time during this is a model that I have been using for that which is basically a double action research model—I am action researching and helping the teachers to action research, and we are learning from each other. I would also like to talk a bit about the way that research is funded at present in education, because I think that impacts this connection between universities and schools. I will now hand over to Barry.

Prof. Down—David and I share a similar position on what faculties of education need to be doing. We both come from a position that is very sensitive to teachers' needs and the needs of children and schools and then works back into the university, rather than the other way around. So much of our work over many years, together and individually, has been very much about thinking through ways of building school-university partnerships, which I think is a key focus of your inquiry. It is one of the ways in which we try to conceptualise how we think teacher education might move on into the 21st century.

At the front of that paper I have just circulated at late notice I have made an observation from some of Judith Sachs's work, where she says that it would be a great tragedy if we were not to use this opportunity with this review to actually reconceptualise teacher education, rather than simply going down the track of what has happened over many years and many reviews where inevitably there has been little effect. I have some examples there. There have been reviews over 20 years and nothing much has happened, either in universities or in schools. So I am suggesting that maybe this review is a chance to reverse that trend by really engaging with the question: how do we think about and conceptualise teacher education and the links between schools and universities? That would be an important issue for me.

The way we do that, as David mentioned, is through the notion of forging links between academic work and teachers' work and then bringing student teachers into that kind of learning model of reflection and action learning. For all kinds of reasons—and I suspect you have picked this up in your travels—it is very hard to bring two different cultures together: the culture of a school, which traditionally is practice orientated—'We have issues and problems and we are very busy'—with the culture of a university, which has a very different agenda. What would happen when you brought the wealth of expertise and knowledge of both of those together around the common issues or problem that is identified in the school not by university academics? That is the thing we are really passionate about. So we want to say to schools, teachers and communities: 'You identify the problems and the questions. We can come and work with you, rather than for you, around tackling issues of school retention or motivation or engaging kids that are alienated from school. Let's work with that problem and then work backwards together and into the literature.'

I think a lot of our work is about topping up teachers in their training or in their in-service teaching when they do postgraduate courses with all the parent disciplines, as David calls them. What David and I are suggesting is that to say, 'Come and do our unit in sociology, and once you have that you will be a good teacher,' may not be the case. We cite a lovely example of a teacher that I worked with who did a masters degree. She did a unit on racism and sociology and was confronted with a racist incident in her classroom. In her personal diary she wrote the comment: 'None of that sociology at university was of any use to me in dealing with this issue with this child in my class.' That is the kind of divide we need to break down. I think what David and I are suggesting in both our presentations and papers is that there are ways to move forward on that. We have demonstrated cases of good practice on how we can do that at both the in-service and preservice levels.

For me, it is about—and I have used some key words here—reconnecting schools and universities in what I call authentic ways. We often say, 'Yes, we have partnerships; yes, we have an MOU with someone,' but we do not actually change anything. The reality is that, whilst schools come forward with issues, questions and things they want done, universities are a different beast altogether in terms of getting change and innovation. So, while universities advocate for schools, teachers and principals to be changing and innovative, often they are not very good at that themselves.

That, for me, is an issue of how we actually come together around the problem and the project of local communities, schools and children and work with that. Through that collaboration, the boundaries begin to blur and we can draw on the expertise of both sectors in ways that I think are very productive. I think it is desirable to go down that track. The UK experience was quite disastrous when it tried to dump all this simply in schools. It did not work very well—for a whole lot of reasons. I think we need to find a middle way around bringing together schools and universities in some innovative ways.

Ms BIRD—A third way.

Prof. Down—A third way, if we want to use that notion. There are a few practical examples I could talk about of how I think that could be done, and we can pursue them in discussion.

CHAIR—You raised the interesting point that research has not resulted in change in the classroom. What we have seen in a range of evidence that we have received are a number of streams. You have a very different stream of information coming from the very practically oriented, principal type organisations and from the unions. The people at the coalface are presenting some themes in one area, and then we have research based people who are presenting different themes as they are coming from a different perspective. You said that research is failing to result in change in the classroom, and you noted one reason for that. Do you think we are researching the wrong things? Do you think we need to better tie research into the practical day-to-day occurrences? Why hasn't that happened? It is pretty logical to research the problems you face. Are researchers heading off on an ideological quest rather than chasing the coalface issues?

Dr Tripp—I will preface my response by saying that research traditionally looks at problems, and this constructs schools and education systems as problem areas. There is very little research into successful schools and successful teaching. There is some, but it is a very small proportion. Generally, you are funded to look at problems. I think that is okay, but you need a research

method that also provides solutions to the problems. Much research is descriptive of the problem, and then it is handed back to policy makers to say—

CHAIR—But we knew we had a problem before the research was commissioned.

Dr Tripp—Yes, but maybe you do not know the dimensions, the extent or the precise nature of the problem. So research is funded into it, and the policy makers come back. It is a cycle, but it is a very big cycle. What we are talking about is a very localised cycle. I will hand up and talk to an example of a model that I use. I developed this in the early eighties. I have modified it and I have been using it ever since. There are a few coloured ones, but some are in black and white—I do not know whether that will make a difference in terms of comprehension.

Ms BIRD—It depends on how we learn as individuals!

Dr Tripp—When we talk about collaboration and working together, there are some things that each party has to take more responsibility for than the other. Teachers are responsible for what happens in their classrooms. On the left-hand side of the page, with regard to ‘teacher’s responsibility,’ you will see they plan what happens and they implement it in their classrooms. Researchers, academics have a responsibility for performing academic research in a wider cycle, aiming to improve knowledge. It is a very generalised cycle and we have expertise in that. They can collaborate in producing data and understanding about the classroom, evaluating it and reflecting on it. Then they ‘critical friend’ each other in those two realms. One example I gave you was a case study and the other was an action research project. The examples I gave you involve me producing data by being in touch with teachers and then making trouble for them.

In the first case I made trouble for the teacher by saying, ‘You think these students are infantile because they get upset about being called names. Just look at the legal system we have for dealing with insults and misinformation that is put out publicly. It is an adult thing they are dealing with. You can view it differently and that would alter your practice with regard to these people.’ In the other case, the teacher brought me a tape he had made of his lesson and he said, ‘You’ve asked me to analyse this. We have been through the analysis, but I’m just teaching—I can’t find anything to say about it.’ Have you had time to read those? Can I just mention that last one because I think it is important.

Ms CORCORAN—I have read it; it is good.

Dr Tripp—I do not want to waste time.

Ms CORCORAN—No, that is fine.

Dr Tripp—What we are doing there is collaborating on the data production analysis. I am telling this teacher how to produce data about his classroom. He brings it back to me and we look at it together. I have that skill; we are combining our skills. I am now referring to the centre column. Then we say: ‘What does this mean? What are you going to do about it? How are you going to make an improvement as a result of this?’ The teacher will go off and do some planning and put something into action, and we produce more data on it, as the action research cycle. At the same time, I am making sense of this stuff, but I am publishing it in a more general cycle so the stuff that you have in front of you is published in books or articles. That is inductive

research, and inductive research is extremely difficult to get funded in education. It is very easy in anthropology or business anthropology. If you say, 'I'm going to look at the way in which managers make decisions,' you get funded for it. If you say, 'I want you to fund me to go and spend some time with teachers looking at how they teach,' they will ask, 'What's your theory?' You cannot get started.

I applied to one ARC several years ago and they criticised a literature review. They said, 'It is only a one-page literature review.' I said, 'But that is because there is no literature here. I want to produce some literature.' But the reviewers just saw it and said, 'This is inadequate,' because they are coming from a different framework. It is very easy to say, 'There's all this psychological information we have got about motivation and I want to fill in another bit of a picture,' and you get educational research funding. You get educational research funding for doing work on improving statistical methods. That will not help people in the classroom. What helps people in the classroom are the kinds of stories which we can produce about teaching and which we can then put out there in a public workplace amongst the profession.

The ARC—the one which did not give me any funding at all—said, 'How do we communicate teachers' stories amongst themselves?' Most principles of practice involve one-liners that we then illustrate with stories. Law is the best example. In the case of malice aforethought, people will tell stories: 'In this case, this is what happened and that was with malice aforethought, but in this case, it wasn't.' So we decide whether it is with malice aforethought by looking at the stories—the old court records—of the precedents behind it.

A principle of discipline in classrooms is that you always give the child a choice at some point. You do not say to the child, 'You will finish this,' or 'You will finish this now'; you say, 'You have really got to finish this. How can we do it? You could do this, you could do that. Have you any other suggestions?' It is a one-liner: you always give the child a choice. To understand and learn that you need examples of teachers giving the child choices and not giving choices. That constitutes the kind of research that we need in education.

My concern, then, was: how can you use the Internet? How can you put out a system so that teachers can access their problems and they can find other teachers' stories and experiences about it on a national basis? It is not being done. There are only two research bases for that kind of research in the world, and neither of them have been there very long. I thought it would be a good thing to do, but you do not get it funded. I am much more likely to get something funded about the way in which girls are more or less intrinsically or extrinsically motivated than boys. It has been done hundreds of times. That kind of thing keeps getting funded.

Ms CORCORAN—In that case, why do you go ahead and do that again—not 'you' personally, but why does it happen? I am sorry, I am jumping in here. You made the comment before about there being no connect between the research that happens and what happens in the classroom.

Dr Tripp—We have already explored one of the lack of connections, and that is that very few academics are supervising school experience in Australia these days. There is a very simple reason for that: if we employ sessional staff, it costs \$221.60 per student for a 10-day practicum; if we employ a lecturer B, level 5, it costs \$504; if you employ me, it is going to cost \$684. The \$221.60 and all the extra costs are not covered by the difference between the level 5, or whatever

it is called, and the group 11 that the government allows for the difference between the two. It is simple. If you want the universities to be corporations, they will behave as corporations—‘This is your budget. Do what you can with it.’

The other thing, of course, is that we have an increase in the number of sessional staff. Sessional staff in our university are not allowed to coordinate courses. Most academics are tied up doing course coordination and finding tutors to do all the work, because we do not have enough full-time staff to coordinate the courses. There are a whole lot of things here that are structural. That one thing about translating what we are teaching on campus—even the stuff that is highly relevant to teachers—does not get mediated in the schools as effectively as it used to when you had the same people working across both systems.

Ms CORCORAN—Are you saying that the research that is being done is not relevant to what is happening in the classroom or that the connect is not made?

Dr Tripp—Both. Research that is relevant to the classroom is often not effectively communicated to our students in a way that enables them to put it into practice in the schools. I have suggested some reasons for that.

Ms CORCORAN—In regard to that research that is being done that is not applicable to the classroom situation, why is it being done?

Ms BIRD—Promotion.

Dr Tripp—I think because of the structure of the ARC. We had much more relevant research being done when we had the old ERDC, if I can go back to the eighties.

Ms CORCORAN—But what drives a researcher to think, ‘I must go and find out about A, B and C, even though—’?

Dr Tripp—It is university concerns.

Ms CORCORAN—Is it its own little self-feeding thing? Does the researcher understand that it has no relationship to the classroom?

Dr Tripp—Yes, because researchers are becoming concerned about it. But a supertanker takes a long time to turn around. It is the same sort of thing. You have to look at the people who are actually in the positions of control over things like research budgets and so on, both in the institution and as a whole. Even when you get the teacher representatives, they tend to be chosen because they are inducted into the existing research methods and the existing research paradigm.

You will find that most researchers most of the time in most disciplines are deductive researchers: they take a theory, look at the theory and say, ‘How does this apply in the real world?’ There are very few in all the professions—almost none in education—who say, ‘Let’s look at what is happening and let’s theorise that.’ The people who are in control of it and the kinds of requirements they have—like a major literature review, like a major account of your theory and so on; those that they can understand—are a major problem.

I will give you one example. Four of my postgraduate students had their proposals knocked back by our ethics committee because they had not met the requirements of the NHMRC ethics guidelines which say that everyone has the right to withdraw from research. Take a primary school teacher doing research in their own classroom: can they really let their students withdraw if they do not like what they are doing? There are a whole lot of things that are working against this kind of research. The other thing is that it is very intensive. It is very easy to go and do a survey of 200 people, but try working with 200 people on a one-to-one basis, being with them in their classroom, talking about it afterwards and going through three or four improvement cycles! It is hugely intense and expensive. Where you used to be funded in universities to do both teaching and research, now you are funded to do teaching unless you can buy yourself out of your teaching to do research. The teaching loads we have do not enable you to do research and remain sane.

Mr HENRY—I have found your submission, Dr Tripp, quite refreshing compared to those of others, particularly since you do not seem to have an aversion to using the word ‘training’ or even ‘internship’. I think that is very good. You are somewhat at odds with some of the other academics that have given evidence, which in itself is a demonstration of the divide between universities and schools as to expressions and the way they are used. Perhaps we are seeing that reflected in Western Australia with the broad community debate about OBE and the challenges that provides our education system with. I wonder if you might comment on that in these terms. Do you see that sort of discussion and process impacting on people wanting to take up teaching as a career?

Dr Tripp—Sorry, do you mean OBE specifically or—

Mr HENRY—Yes, because it is fairly controversial. There is a great divide of opinion, particularly among school teachers, a number of whom seem to be resisting it while others are supporting it, and then there is the department of education, which obviously is the largest employer of teachers. That sort of controversy could be an impediment to people wanting to take up teaching.

Dr Tripp—Yes, I think it is as people see it as a profession that people are leaving, saying: ‘There’s too much paperwork. I can’t teach children anymore. I spend all this time planning and I am earning only \$30,000 a year for all of this.’ On the other hand, look at the way in which that kind of thing has been introduced. It is very difficult to argue against OBE as you need to know what the children have learnt. How can you proceed with anything else if you do not know what the children have learnt? When you look at the outcomes—and I know they are vague in some ways—you see they are the broad things that they need to know.

I think the problem is that—and maybe this was a conscious decision in order to force teachers to take up the OBE process—they took away the syllabuses. I can see no reason why the two do not go together. In fact, if you look at the social studies syllabus that was revised 15 years ago—during that time I initiated some of the OBE stuff—you see that we ended up with 15 high-order, one-line outcomes as to what we wanted students to know: that the way that people behave depends upon their culture. We wanted students to know that as that is useful to know in life. But underneath those things there was a syllabus that would teach them that. I think the problem, particularly in WA, is saying you chuck the syllabus out and go to OBE.

Mr HENRY—So they should be integrated?

Dr Tripp—Yes. I do not see a problem with that. I am all for OBE but the way it has been implemented has created a lot of problems for a lot of teachers.

Mr HENRY—In a way that was a bit of an aside, but I think it is the sort of thing that has a negative impact on people potentially coming into this sort of profession, because it becomes such a public discussion topic—and rightfully so, because there is a range of parents like me who have come from one experience and then see that there are new ones. I do not think we are opposed to change in education, but it is about how that is communicated.

It seems to me that often we get a department that is pushing down change rather than being more collaborative. That picks up a point that Professor Down talked about in terms of universities and schools being much more collaborative in their approach. It seems to me that universities as a service provider in providing the new student teachers for schools and schools supporting that process have to be integral to ensuring a successful outcome where we get teachers with the right attitude, the right approach and the right ability to be able to teach. In bringing those two sectors together, there must be collaboration—they must work together.

Dr Tripp—There is so much there and there are so many problems. A number of our students do not teach because they are posted to places where they cannot continue their lives in any meaningful way. There was the case of two students who were engaged and one was posted to the South Coast and one was posted to the North Coast, and one of them never taught. There are a lot of problems with respect to that sort of thing.

There is a balance between professional autonomy and professional support. With things like the syllabus, we are very supportive. If you are teaching social studies, we look to see what book we are on and we do this and we teach that and it is all very supportive. But, if you deviate from that, you are questioned as to why you are deviating and you have to make a case for it and so on. With OBE, where it says, 'These are the outcomes; do your own stuff,' they say, 'I haven't got time to reinvent the wheel. I do not have time to do this.' I think it is about those kinds of things, particularly when it comes to country students who do not feel that they are supported in the local community. They feel that they are just left out there and abandoned. For example, they may be inadequately informed about Aboriginal education and find that 60 per cent of their students are Aboriginal. There is a whole lot of stuff. Often education is presented as a problem area—whether it is to do with assaults on teachers, break-ins and fires in schools, violence and people being wrongly accused of paedophilia or things like that. There are a whole lot of problems.

Mr HENRY—I like your suggestion about a mentored internship over the first year. It certainly resonates with some other evidence we have heard about having more of a front-end practicum to allow student entrants to really assess, understand and appreciate whether they have an aptitude for teaching. A lot of the attrition rate seems to be as a result of an inability to manage students within the classroom et cetera. We have heard that the attrition rate is as high as 60 per cent after the first five years in some circumstances. Would you care to comment on that? Do you think a mentored internship would help address that attrition rate?

Prof. Down—There are a couple of things that I want to pick up on in terms of the internship. Some of the most successful experiences I have had with students have involved getting them out of universities and into internships and other places of learning. I think you are dead right that we need to rethink how we do that with schools. One of the things that I like to encourage with the placement of students is that teaching and learning involve much more than just what happens in schools these days. We know that kids learn outside of schools most of the things that they learn. For a few hours of the day, schools just happen to be an interruption for most of the things they learn.

What we tried successfully in one of my previous universities was the idea of placing students for periods of time. This is outside the normal practices, where we developed our courses around David's approach of action research. We placed them in learning situations of their choosing. People went to places like the Perth Zoo, the Rottnest Island environmental centre and a whole range of places to learn the craft of teaching, and they would use that as a case study to think about teaching and learning. I think the use of that internship model in different locations and places encourages student teachers to begin to articulate their own practice more. So I am all in favour of more internships. We do not do it, for a whole lot of reasons that you have probably been hearing—that is, funding and because universities are too big, as it seems to happen that innovative programs in universities occur where there are small groups of students.

I think there is a whole issue around large faculties where you end up having a sausage factory approach, where it is convenient to get 400 students into a one-hour lecture, divide them into a tutorial for an hour, and off they go. That is not rich learning as far as I am concerned. Rich learning is in context, in situations—whether it is at a school or in another place—and then connecting it back. So I am all in favour of the idea of internships.

The other idea that I have been doing a bit of work on and that works very well with my students is service learning. Students will identify a problem, question or issue in their local community, and that will become the focus of the work they do in my unit. This relates to some of the practices that David has talked about. It is a different way of conceptualising how we work with student teachers but also, importantly, it adds value and capacity to their communities. These students are not sitting in a university lecture theatre completely isolated but are doing things that enhance the capacity of local communities, particularly rural and regional communities. My students will pick up on an issue and work with the local newspaper, with the local shire council on a youth program or with an old people's home. There are a whole range of areas where they learn the art or craft of teaching. We then work through that and look at it. You are right. Those things are worth pursuing as part of how we might reinvent more models not only with schools but with other agencies in communities.

Mr HENRY—I wonder whether our selection process should be a little bit more targeted than it appears to be and whether, as part of that, we should have an interview process whereby we can ascertain a student's ability to become a teacher. That might create resources for doing a lot of other things rather than just having huge numbers of students in classes.

Dr Tripp—It is extremely difficult to fail a student on the grounds of personality or attitude. You cannot put that in your course. Once they are in and meet the academic requirements, they are through. It is a problem that needs addressing, but I will link it to another issue. There used to be a number of different ways in which teachers could enter the profession and leave the

profession for periods and come back to it. Most of those have gone now. I meet a number of people—you meet one or two a year—who say, ‘I would have liked to have been a teacher but I would not get into university.’ My own experience was that I did not go to university from school; I went to a teacher training college. That suited me. I was taught. Universities used to be places where independent learners learnt from people who were basically researching and doing cutting-edge stuff. But the majority of students went through a college program. That is the European, the German and the Swiss method; that is the way most people learnt.

It is extremely difficult in a university to do all the different things we are meant to do—internal and external foreign students, full fee paying students, commercial activities, bringing in money, competitive research grants and so on. You have a small faculty. In our postgraduate course we have an ED, masters by research, masters by course work, specialist streams and PhDs. You have to run all these things; it is just not possible.

Universities have become far too diverse and the pathways have closed down. The idea that teachers can enter the profession in different ways and then progress in the profession needs to be addressed. It always struck me as being odd that teachers do not seem to have a clear pathway for progression. They see it in terms of promotion: ‘I am going to be a beginning teacher, then I am going to get permanency, then I am going to be a class teacher and then maybe I will apply for a deputy principal place or something.’ They see it in terms of moving up. They do not see it in terms of what they are learning, who they are becoming or how they are changing. That is what I tried to lay out in the appendix. It is very easy to say that these are the kinds of things that teachers need to be able to do. One of those is that, as teachers get on, they ought to be teaching other teachers within the school context. I think that affects the attrition rate. People say: ‘It’s very difficult. I’ve got to do so many more years before I can become a head of department or something,’ or ‘If I want to stay in this school, someone has got to leave,’ or something like that. They get very demoralised as well as burnt out.

Mr HENRY—I understand that.

Ms BIRD—It has been one of the most fascinating submissions. As I said earlier, I am a one-year Dip. Ed. graduate, so I always feel a bit of angst when university academics tell me that you cannot be an effective teacher with one year’s training. I would say that, although many who went through with me did not end up that way, just as many of them did. I always struggle with whether the issue is about the intake and identifying people who have a natural capacity to take to the profession very effectively, whether it is the inputs and what you do while you are in the course or whether it is about what happens afterwards. Some of the things that both of you have presented have given me some real meat to chew on as I think through how this can inform the committee.

Dr Tripp, almost without question the evidence presented to us has been that an effective teacher is a reflective teacher and that you have to teach them how to be a reflective teacher before they go into the classroom. In an ideal world it is a great model but, in the real world, with a growing teacher shortage, the reality is that departments and private providers will take whomever they can get so long as they are a warm body. We have already heard that sort of evidence, so it is not a particularly realistic model.

You seem to have taken up the idea that it is about a systems approach. Having been a teachers college person, it seems to me that the aim should be to develop effective practitioners and to then have a system that allows interaction between the research and the practitioner that informs, develops and grows, for want of a better word. It is a really valuable model for us to work on. The big issues will be around funding—making that happen. Have you seen examples internationally where this stuff has been put into practice, so that we can look at the things that made it work and so forth?

Dr Tripp—Are you talking about initial teaching or are you talking about the profession as a whole?

Ms BIRD—I am talking about the full model stuff and, obviously, whether they looked at the initial training model. But it would seem to me that success or failure would also be predicated on what you did afterwards. You were talking about induction. Do you move some of what you are doing out? At the rate we are going we will have seven-year teacher training courses, because everybody wants something put in. Is there a model that is about the process from intake through to an effective practicing, learning reflective teacher at the top end of the scale? Has that sort of thing happened?

Dr Tripp—The UK has a mature entry scheme where people can come off the street and go straight into a classroom. They are supported and put through a teacher training program while they are teaching in the classroom. It has had very mixed results. I think we need more levels of classroom teachers than we have at the moment. It tends to be the case that you are either a teacher or you are not. It is only recently that we have introduced master teacher or level 3 concepts. We need more graduations so that people can move up in different ways.

I was brought up in the UK system. One of the things that impressed me was that, instead of being given a staff allowance in terms of numbers, principals were instead given a number of points to spend on staff. For example, if you were appointed as a level 2, you constituted two points. After two years, if you wanted to move, the principal could call you in and say: 'I'd like you to do the following duties. I'll give you another point and you can move up to level 3.' So he had some points to play with and he could keep staff. He could give other people things to do and so on. It was a very graduated system. At secondary school, you can take on the careers advice and get another two points for that. They could all be allocated. It is a very flexible system that can reflect not just the amount of experience the person has but also their qualifications. There are a number of people who are very good teachers who have very few academic qualifications. As long as they are in the right place, they can be very effective teachers.

On the other hand, we want to move towards an all-graduate profession, as we have been doing because teaching is a scholarly process, but there should be variety in there. You might be able to take people who have not finished a degree or have not qualified for a degree and put them through a limited amount of training. They would work under supervision in the schools but during the time that came with day release they would be brought up, over five years, to a graduate teacher. Those sorts of flexibilities have to be built into the system.

There are issues about teacher burn-out and changing circumstances. A number of teachers I know do not go back to teaching here because they have lost permanency and status. They say, 'I

don't want to go back and be like that.' I cannot see any reason for that. Why do you lose things simply because you are taking a break? Teachers need sabbaticals. Certainly teachers need breaks, particularly if they have family commitments and if they have got a partner who is working away. If they want to go overseas for a year or something, they should be able to do that and come in and out of teaching, and do part-time work or job sharing. One of our difficulties with getting teachers working at the university is with them going part-time. Much more flexibility in the system is needed, and there are very good models about for that.

Prof. Down—You got to the heart of the problem when you said we would end up with seven-year courses. I guess that is what you are finding—everyone wants to keep adding, adding, adding. But the design might be the problem. It is like a car, isn't it? You keep adding bits to it and eventually it kind of collapses if the design is not right. I think that is what we have seen in teacher education over a long period of time, and I hope it does not happen here that we just keep adding bits. So it is a design thing that we have to reinvent.

I have put in a couple of points on page 5 of the article from Tom, who has done a lot of work in redesigning American teacher education. The second dot point at the top of the page is that perhaps teacher education programs, especially the pre-service component, should be compressed rather than keep expanding into more and more themes that are short in length and intensive in involvement and depth. Then the last point is that the resources currently being devoted to the career-long development of teachers should be redistributed so that fewer resources go into initial professional preparation while added resources go to teacher development during the first few years of teaching. That would then deal with this issue of practice theory. We redesign the model. That is the kind of thinking we need for this kind of review process, rather than how we can be all things to everyone.

Ms BIRD—I will have a good read of that, because it is useful for us. I found your presentation interesting in regard to the challenges in doing the inductive type research. I must say that as a student several years ago doing my Dip. Ed. I found it astounding how little good material was out there about what makes a good teacher. We had an assignment: 'What makes a good teacher?' I could find almost nothing on it. You talk about that inductive research with teachers. There is even less with students about what their experiences of education are, what their feedback is. Barry, you touch on the issue: do we want to improve the training that was developed for teachers delivering in the 19th and 20th centuries or do we want to take on the 21st century? Some of the anecdotal information I hear—from teenagers, in particular—is how irrelevant the whole classroom experience is, and increasingly so. It was designed for an industrial age. Even the set-up of classrooms looks like that. So I need you to give me some practical ideas about what you think we could do with research funding that would perhaps start to address that and give some capacity for that sort of research.

Dr Tripp—It needs to be separated, obviously, from ARC. TAFE have got some funding for further development in action learning. Research action learning is my area. I went along to the briefing for that and found that, in order to get the funding, you had to be working with a group of TAFE teachers. Suddenly I found I could not get any of this funding. I think that was a very good thing for them to do.

Ms BIRD—Who is funding that?

Dr Tripp—The federal government—they have earmarked a couple of hundred thousand dollars. I cannot remember exactly what it is. It cut me out and I think that was a very good thing because I could not come in as an academic and say, ‘I am going to do this for these teachers.’ I had to have a group of teachers that said, ‘We want you to fund us to work with this person, who is going to help us do something.’ The fact that I am working in the university meant that I did not have access to those teachers. It is a good example of the way the two are cut off. I would like to see far more funds that teachers can apply for for help from outside with their work.

Ms BIRD—That is a different model from what happens now.

Dr Tripp—This has to be done on a system basis. Departments of education will say that you have to do outcomes based education or focused education, so they give you some in-service training on that. They get a department line on that and, again, it is all top down. It does not empower the teachers. A lot of them find it very demotivating and they turn off. If they would really like to get their heads around this stuff and apply for funding then there has to be a research component. The academic’s job is to come up with something that you can disseminate. We need new information management systems about this kind of research, which is what I wanted to get ARC funding for.

It has to be separate funding, it has to have a component requested by the teachers and it has to have a generalisable form of outcome. When I say generalisable I do not mean statistically generalisable. A lot of this is $n=1$ stuff. But it could be generalisable by communicating to other people who then put it into practice. To give you an example from my own teaching, in my first year of teaching I went to an in-service on group work. I was a secondary English teacher and all the material we were given was primary science. James Britton used the phrase, ‘What we are aiming for is a group effort at understanding.’

I went away with: how do I get a group effort at understanding—not just people working at a table on their own things, sharing rulers and rubbers, but how do I get a group effort at understanding? That is a generalisable principle of group work. He produced a lot of illustrations about how this can occur and so on. It did not matter that it was primary science; I can generalise it to secondary English. We are looking for generalisable outcomes, but the whole concept of generalisation tends to be statistical sample to whole population, and that is totally inappropriate to education. I have a lecture on that if you want it.

Ms BIRD—Obviously one of the national developments has been the establishment of NIQTSL, the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, and we have heard from them. I got the impression they were quite interested in perhaps driving, with appropriate funding, some research. Do you think that, if government put money into an organisation like that to drive research, there would be more of an understanding of the type of research or do you have some other ideas about where—

Dr Tripp—I do not feel competent to answer that question because I am not sure about the organisation you are talking about.

Ms BIRD—Generally speaking, you are saying that the culture of the current way funding is allocated is a deductive literature based focus. You are saying: get some funding to people who understand the challenges of the modern classroom and what will be useful.

Dr Tripp—The National Schools Network has done a great job working with teachers. There are other things out there that could be looked at.

Ms BIRD—They tend not to hold buckets of funding.

Dr Tripp—No, they do not.

Prof. Down—That is part of the problem. The really innovative things do not have the funding. That is the big tragedy with teacher education. With all the constraints we are not getting innovation. That is our concern. The way we work around that is that we have to go back to teachers and schools and let them drive it, but we have to find a mechanism to allow them space to work.

Ms BIRD—It is a good challenge for this committee.

Dr Tripp—It is a two-way thing: practice has to discipline theory. BF Skinner said that there is nothing so practical as a good theory. If you have the understanding of how things work it is extremely practical. The two have to go together and, at the moment, as we have heard over and over again, they are two separate things.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee. You have given us a valuable new viewpoint. We may contact you if we need further information. A transcript of your evidence will be loaded on the parliamentary website.

Dr Tripp—Thank you for giving us so much time.

Proceedings suspended from 12.21 pm to 1.00 pm

MCNEE, Ms Kathryn, Partner, Smart Teachers

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that 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 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 note that you provided an exhibit to the committee. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Ms McNee—I am very excited to be here in front of you all today. I am coming from a quite different perspective to that which you most likely discussed earlier today with training institutions. I am coming from the perspective that we are underutilising our current teacher work force, and I am looking at that from a global perspective. Smart Teachers are a global company who recruit internationally. I was a teacher, taught in Australia, went on to teach in the UK and have spent the last nine years specialising in education recruitment. Our aim is to create and maintain an exciting and interesting work pathway for teachers. We do this by looking at a cyclical style of recruitment where we are moving a work force around the globe.

The reason I wanted to make you very aware of this is that, at the moment, our main flow of teachers largely goes from Australia to the UK. It is estimated that between 4,000 and 5,000 teachers a year would go to experience working in the UK or other overseas locations. Based on that, we have to consider why it happens, what happens to the teachers after they have been there for a period of time and why we are not attracting the same numbers of people into our education system. I want to cover today the utilisation of that work force.

Smart Teachers have established relationships with some training colleges in the UK which could, with our current shortages in education not only in schools and teaching but also in the child-care industry, become very advantageous for us. The UK currently has an oversupply of nursery nurses and we are suffering huge shortages, which will continue to go along with the expansion of child-care facilities. Most of you have probably seen in the news over the last few days that there is continued expansion within the child-care industry which is going to be an ongoing problem for us.

I was also excited by the people that are in this particular committee—Sharon, with your background in education; Luke, with your interest in getting professionals into regional and rural Australia; and Ann, with your portfolio as the shadow parliamentary secretary for immigration. Those elements are going to be very important in what I am proposing to you today.

Our visa restrictions are the reason we currently have a difficulty in bringing teachers into Australia. Any Australian under the age of 30 can go and work in the UK for a two-year period. They are allowed to work with one employer throughout that whole time. The intention should still be to include travel in the time that they are there, although over the last few years there have been several changes. At one stage teachers had complete carte blanche; there were no restrictions—they could work continually the whole time they were there, whether they holidayed or not. That has changed recently, in that they are encouraging people to holiday

whilst on their working holiday visa. But it allows a teacher to go over there and work for at least a year continuously in the same classroom. All of you would understand the importance, having been children yourselves, of the continuity of care that is needed to be maintained throughout a school year, which a child that goes through numerous changes of teachers is not going to have. Parents are obviously very aware of effects that constant changes within a classroom have on their children. That is a very important aspect.

With the work visas to Australia, currently you can only work for 90 consecutive calendar days with one employer. This means that you may just manage to get a school term in, but there is no continuity through the school year. A year ago I was in Canada recruiting Canadian graduates to the UK and I was absolutely overwhelmed by the numbers of them who, as soon as they heard my Australian accent, asked me: 'Can we come there?' Canadian teachers are incredibly enthusiastic and very well trained. One aspect of recruiting from the Commonwealth countries is that we all have outcomes based curriculums. I found the transition between the curriculum here and the curriculum in the UK very easy and not unlike making a transition from WA to New South Wales, quite frankly. It was very easy for teachers to move around those countries.

When I told the Canadians that they would have to change employers every three months they said: 'Oh, that's not great.' Evidently on a CV it does not look good to have short blobs of jobs. It does not create a good CV and a good professional profile to have little pockets of employment. Also, you are not going to gain from it professionally unless you are there for a longer period of time. In any new position, after three months you are still just finding your feet so we really do not gain the advantage of the teacher's full skills by having them for such a short period of time. So that is very off-putting.

We currently have about 700 target teachers—teachers who we have selected as ideal candidates for the Australian schools—on our books. Ninety per cent of them are restricted by visas. Therefore, it is not appealing to our Australian schools because the schools do not necessarily want to go through the lengthy process of sponsoring. The child-care industry cannot sponsor. It is not on the skills list, so child-care workers, although they have the equivalent of a diploma here in Australia, are not listed on the skills list to enter Australia. Another aspect of that is that someone must have a salary of at least \$39,000 to enter as a skilled employee. That counts out our nursery nurses and our qualified child-care workers.

We need to consider the differences that we could make with some very simple changes to the working holiday visa. It could be unrestricted, enabling teachers to work with one employer, and you could still maintain that they needed to holiday and keep the intention of a holiday as such—with a teacher that is not hard because they have 12 weeks of holidays a year. That would allow more continuity. One idea that may appeal to you, Mr Chair, is the possibility of saying: 'If you teach in a rural or regional location, then we will give you another year on your working holiday visa.' We do this currently for fruit pickers or anyone harvesting in regional areas or doing any rural activity outside the metropolitan areas. Currently if you go on working somewhere for three months you can extend your working holiday visa for another year. I look at this and see we are using it in an unskilled work force. Why don't we look at it for our professional, skilled work force?

It is quite staggering when you consider the situation in the UK, where there is a large antipodean component of the work force. If they were to return home, I am sure the health and education systems would come crumbling down because there are so many Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and South Africans who are in the UK and working there professionally. The most staggering thing, however, is that every year about 30,000 working holiday visas to the UK are issued. There are also other forms of entry. It is very easy: if you are under 30 there is the working holiday visa but if you have parents or grandparents who were born in the UK then you are eligible for a right of abode or an ancestral visa, or you may even be eligible for a British passport.

If you are ineligible for any of those, you are 45 and you do not have any ancestry in the UK, we can find you a position in the UK and have a school sponsor you in. Once we find the sponsored positions, 75 per cent of the work permit applications are processed in one week and 100 per cent in three weeks. The same process, coming through sponsorship into Australia, can take up to 18 months. So if we have a school with an urgent need in the UK we can easily speak to an Australian teacher or a Canadian teacher, interview them telephonically and place them, and very quickly the person can be on the other side of the world and in a classroom.

In Australia every year, 94,000 working holiday visas are issued. We do not see the impact of these people that come into our country. Financially we probably do, but as a work force we do not. I have outlined the working holiday visa figures on page 6 of my submission. The UK would issue 35,000 working holiday visas to Australia. There would be 12,000 from Ireland, approximately 10,000 from Japan, a similar figure from Germany, 6½ thousand from Canada and about 3,000 from the Netherlands. So all of these people are coming into our work force yet they are unable to pursue a professional career or the restrictions make it very limiting for them.

Not only that, but now our Australian universities have an enormous number of international enrolments. It is becoming particularly favourable in the Canadians' eyes to come across to Australia. Obviously a lot of them find it a great alternative because our systems are very similar. A number of Americans are also coming to the University of Notre Dame in Perth. We are training these young Canadians, Americans and people from various other countries within our system and then letting them walk back out the door. They are able on a student visa to work part time for a short period of time but, again, that is not something that a young graduate would want to pursue at the beginning of their career. They would want to look at a pathway that would be a good step forward for their future. From that perspective also, they cannot change from a student visa to a working holiday visa within the country. They have to leave Australia and come back to gain a working holiday visa. As I mentioned before, that is not necessarily appealing to them because of our 90-day restrictions.

That is probably the bulk of what I have to introduce to you, but I would like to point out a little bit more on establishing relationships with Smart Teachers and our relationships in the UK with training colleges there. This goes back to bringing the graduates of NNEB diplomas in child care into Australia. We have several colleges in the UK which are presently ready for us to say to them, 'We can find your students work placements.' The concept would be that we would find their students work placements whilst in training. They would fly their students to Australia. They would like the placements ideally to be for six or 12 months. I have encouraged them to make it six or 12 months because of our industry needs. Our industry does not want short-term workers. It wants to get people in for a reasonable amount of time, and here the continuity of

care again comes in. We would propose that students would be, for example, in their second year at college—that system is similar to our TAFE system—and the training college would support them coming out to Australia. The reason we have asked them to come on board with that is that most of these young kids would not have the money available to be able to do this. We would find them a work placement here and then they would return to their training back in the UK.

You may ask: ‘Do we need qualified workers or unqualified workers?’ Realistically, we need the qualified ones, but we considered that if we get a training establishment on board in the UK and start an interest in working in Australia, and perhaps set it up as a program, a result of that could be that the students would love Australia and want to come back the following year to have a working holiday and work in the same centre for another year or then go to a regional area and stay another year.

CHAIR—Is that work placement that you are talking about purely a practicum rotation?

Ms McNee—Yes, but it would be a paid position for them. We would set it up so that they were earning. Because they are unqualified, you would employ unqualified staff in a child-care centre. They do not necessarily have to have a qualification. The reason why we thought this would be advantageous is because these students are already on the pathway to child-care careers. We thought it would be more appealing to the child-care centres to have this type of applicant come into their centres and perhaps be interested in staying longer.

CHAIR—I am sorry, I interrupted you. Please continue.

Ms McNee—The infrastructure of Smart Teachers is global, so we have a presence in all of these countries and can move the staff from one country to another. That obviously makes it much easier for us to also look at their pathways and see how they can be inspired. One of the greatest things, and something which I greatly enjoyed about being in the UK, was the exposure to a new system. I went from a very lovely environment here to London’s East End. I used to say to my friends, ‘I used to be at a school where all I had to worry about was whether the kids had their socks pulled up, and now I am just happy if they have socks on.’

So it was quite a different experience for me, but professionally it was the greatest thing that I have ever experienced because I was challenged as a teacher. The thing that I found there was that my training stood me in very good stead. Australian teachers are highly regarded in the UK and many of our principals would say, ‘Get me one of those Australians’ or ‘I need a New Zealander.’ It is very similar throughout the Commonwealth countries; there is a very high level of teacher education. The UK is totally utilising that, but we are not picking up on it.

On the transition between the two systems, another valuable thing that I gained from it, and what many teachers gain from it, is what you then bring back to the classroom here, including being able to talk about your experiences. Certainly, it may sound very appealing for a young Canadian coming to teach in Australia to go and teach in the central wheat belt. If someone said to me, ‘Go to the prairies of Saskatchewan,’ I would find that interesting, but perhaps a Canadian would not. We have to take advantage of how we are perceived in our global community. For them, going to a dirty and dusty plain out in the Kimberley could be very attractive and sound like an incredibly interesting concept.

CHAIR—You have probably answered this question, but just from a recruitment perspective you appear quite confident about the qualities of Australian teachers as they currently are. Is this inquiry a case of saying, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’? Do you think that things are just fine the way they are or do you think that there are some improvements we could make? If so, what might they be—from an employer’s perspective?

Ms McNee—I can look at it from having experienced two different systems and also from preparing teachers for different classroom environments. It certainly is not ‘broke’. We have a fantastic teacher education system. But where I feel we fall down is that, once they leave the university or the institution, we then say, ‘Off you go! Go to Salmon Gums—a one-teacher school—and reinvent the wheel.’ Teachers do not have any support once they are in a placement.

As far as the evolutionary path of an education system goes, the UK is several decades ahead of us, and also many things impact on them because of their massive population. In her time as education minister, Maggie Thatcher really turned that system upside down. But I can tell you right now that even though in the old days people were saying, ‘Thatcher, Thatcher, milk snatcher,’ they are now very happy with the changes that were instigated then because they formed a national approach. They saw that so much great knowledge was being developed in many different ways, and in some areas underdeveloped, and that they needed to bring it together. So they formatted the national curriculum in the late eighties.

Within the national curriculum they then have fantastic support. A beginning teacher can literally go to a web site that will outline how they could best teach a particular maths philosophy. They can go through the site and there it is, outlined with examples of how to implement it and with aims and objectives all the way through. An enormous amount of support is given. There are also mentoring programs within the schools that have been a great support.

It was quite interesting that for some of the more difficult London schools they have started a program called Teach First, where they have got industry involved. What they are doing has quite an interesting philosophy behind it. They are attracting graduates who would not be in education courses as such. They are saying to them, ‘If you come to Teach First, we will also provide you with a pathway towards a business career.’ So they are attracting people, perhaps for a limited time; but the advantages of that are that you are getting people with great skills, with great scientific knowledge, into schools that may never have been attracted to going down that pathway previously.

They do a truncated summer course to introduce people to teaching and to classroom management. It is fairly short and condensed. That is one thing: if a program like this were to be run, you would immediately come up against a lot of objections from the education establishments about it being too short. However, as a teacher, knowledge is what you have, and then you have the tools to teach. Realistically, the tools to teach come down to communication and managing people. Those are skills that you can become aware of and develop. If you have the content, it is much easier to go into a classroom and concentrate on the way to teach because you feel confident with what you are teaching. If you are struggling with your content, and then try to teach and manage a classroom as well, it becomes very difficult.

They then also allow those students who are in the schools under these placements to do continued business elements of a course so that they also have an element of a business degree,

which comes out at the end of two years. That also has two advantages in that, if they went on an educational pathway, it gives them a good grounding in business if they are going to go into administrative roles; but the Teach First concept is also that there are corporations that say, 'If you go through this program, we will look at you coming into our corporation.' So it is a privatised program. The one thing that I have not really been able to obtain is how successful the program has been. In theory, it is a very interesting program.

Ms BIRD—You have sort of answered the questions I will be asking. I take your point about teachers coming here being so problematic. Perhaps it is more problematic for us that so many of our teachers are freely able to go elsewhere. One thing that has been raised with us is the number of teachers in the first five years who leave the profession. Part of one of the submissions—or it may have been during questions—was someone saying that that is just an aspect of young people and their view of the work world now; they do not tend to say, 'Now I'm a teacher, I'm staying at this school for 20 years.' I would be interested in some of your feedback. I imagine that most of the people you are dealing with in your program are young teachers.

Ms McNee—You would be surprised. To tell the truth, only about 25 per cent would be new graduates. I left after I had three years experience here. I felt that I needed to have that much experience under my belt. We have an enormous number of people aged 50-plus who are taking a bit of retirement and there are a lot of people on long-service leave.

So it actually is not only young teachers. Anyone would think that it was the young ones who were taking off on their working holidays, and a lot of people do say, 'You are taking those teachers away from the system.' But basically, we have seen a situation where they are going there to do it, so we should support them. Let us make it a good pathway; let us make it a valuable pathway. It will happen regardless. Certainly, after three years of teaching, I was keen to go and see the world. I just cannot impress upon you enough what you gain from being in a different system. It is brilliant in terms of what you can bring back into your classroom here. In the UK, they are very open to curriculum ideas. They use a lot of First Steps curriculum—Western Australian curriculum that is widely used in the UK. Reading Recovery, which is a New Zealand program, is widely used. So you just see this amazing melting pot of ideas. I cannot but encourage that flow of people to continue. I only want to see if we can encourage that flow back again.

Ms BIRD—Good point.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to make a quick comment and I have a quick question. My comment is that the message I am getting from you is about the need for us to revisit our visa systems. I do not quite know how that fits in with our terms of reference but perhaps, with a different hat on, some of us can do that. My question relates to one of the terms of reference—that we should look at the attrition rates of teachers. It seems to me that we are facing a woman who was trained and who taught and who then left the system. Why did you leave the system?

Ms McNee—I thought that you might ask me that today. I think what it was for me was that I was on a very dedicated pathway. I taught just down the road here. My frustration as a young teacher was that I felt that I gave every ounce that I had and I saw other people who were perhaps further down the line and a bit bitter. They would come to school and then they would leave as quickly as they could. I was in a role where I was doing physical education, so we

would have morning training and after-school sport and all sorts of things. I was there for 12 hours a day. I am a country girl and I come from a farm. On the farm, you worked as hard as you could. That is how you earned your living, because that is what you should do. I could not understand why those others walked out the door. Why didn't they want to stay? Why didn't they want to embrace that whole community? I feared becoming that kind of person. When I was in the UK, I saw that there were a lot of teachers coming from Australia without any guidance from the other end. That is when I decided to come back here and spread the word. That is what happened to me.

CHAIR—While slightly outside the terms of reference, would you see performance based pay as a solution to that sort of situation?

Ms McNee—Yes, definitely. What does it take? Is it the dollar that makes it something that people will be committed to doing? It is very interesting: in the UK, they instigated the same thing. However, they found that there was a bit of fiddling of children's marks to make their performance look good. So you have to be careful of the other influences that then come into that. Do not create a monster. They have actually stopped doing that in the UK. They now have positions called 'advanced skill teachers' where they basically put teachers at a level where they are then in-servicing young teachers. Their time is freed up. They are given different types of responsibilities—other than just those in the classroom. In theory it often sounds good, but you have to be careful of the impact it may have.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need any further information. The secretariat will provide you with a copy of your evidence. A copy of the transcript will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

Ms McNee—Thank you all very much.

[1.30 pm]

COOK, Ms Christine, Director, Strategic Human Resources and Professional Learning, Department of Education and Training, Western Australia

WILLIAMS, Ms Claire, Acting Manager, Workforce Planning, Strategic Human Resources and Professional Learning, Department of Education and Training, Western Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is made available to the public through the parliamentary web site. Although the committees 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 statements is considered quite a serious matter and would be considered a contempt of the parliament. Would you like to make some introductory remarks in relation to your submission?

Ms Cook—The department is very pleased to make this oral submission to the inquiry into teacher education, and we would like to thank you for this opportunity to provide further information. We are very happy to elaborate where required. In our written submission, we outlined a response to several key areas. These included the fact that the department, in the context in which we operate, is obviously the largest employer of teachers in Western Australia. Therefore the onus of working with teacher educators is of paramount importance to us, as is the need to provide suitably qualified and capable teachers right across the government schools, including in remote, regional and metropolitan areas. That is some challenge for a state like Western Australia, as you may imagine.

In our written submission we also noted the anticipated trend towards a shortage of teacher supply, particularly in some key learning areas—we indicated that those are predominantly physical sciences, maths, technology and enterprise and some languages—and in some geographical locations in Western Australia, apart from those learning areas. We indicated also that in 2002 we did a comprehensive survey of large cohorts of teachers new to the profession. The gaps identified in that survey were really focused on managing behaviour, assessment and reporting, and relationships with parents. Given current pedagogical practice across Australia and the contemporary ways of teaching that we would want for the profession, that was very pertinent information for the department. We are very happy to provide that document to you. We have not brought it today, but if you require it we will give you that survey.

We also noted the suggestions relating to the examination by the committee of factors that limit a realised benefit of initiatives, particularly as they are germane to the taxation implications for teaching scholarships. As you might imagine, that is a factor that inhibits many people from applying for those scholarships.

We talked about the inclusion of relevant professional attributes as part of the selection process for teacher training courses. We acknowledge that one of the most important attributes is an absolute love of kids and having that passion for teaching right up front in the selection for some tertiary education courses. Unless people have that attribute and the ability to relate to and

communicate with not only students but the school communities, that is going to jeopardise their success as teachers.

We talked about the inadequacy of some graduate diploma courses, particularly design and technology, and that would include a one-year Grad. Dip. We have some concern, anxiety, about those teachers being prepared to work with heavy equipment and the risk to safety for some students in those contexts.

We talked about the increased exposure to rural teaching settings. Some 70 per cent of our teachers new to the profession are deployed to the country. They are working with Aboriginal communities. The teacher training does not necessarily focus to any large degree on preparing student teachers not only for the rural context but also for students from Aboriginal communities and the literacy challenges that they may have. If you link that back to our survey, I think you will agree that working with communities is already shown in that survey as a major concern for student teachers.

We mentioned the improved role clarification that is required for the training and/or remuneration of practicum coordinators and supervising teachers. We talked about the examination of alternative pathways into teaching and the remuneration for degree qualified, industry experienced professionals. These pathways target career changes, as we know that there are many people aged between 25 and 45 who really want to teach children. They are altruistic about that and they want to come into teaching. We are endeavouring to target those people.

We would like to add some information. We have talked about perceived trend analysis in relation to teacher shortages. We have brought with us today copies of *The teaching workforce: a profile (April 2004)* for your perusal. This information is currently being updated—we try and do this annually—but the interim data show similar results. We have also brought with us the *Competency framework for teachers*, which has been developed over some eight years. It sets the trend for the national framework for the setting of standards, which is put together by MCEETYA. It is groundbreaking in that it has phases of development, looking at different standards for new teachers as opposed to accomplished and exemplary practice. It itemises each element that articulates with the national framework. As I said, it is groundbreaking. In this state we have assessment against the exemplary standard, which acknowledges and recognises teachers of excellence by retaining them in the classroom and giving them access to point 1 to work with other teachers in the school. It acknowledges their excellence and pays them handsomely for that excellence—so not only an increased status but also an increased salary.

We will leave this document for you to look at. It has links to national descriptions of standards in English, maths, science, early childhood and LOTE. It is a generic framework, but it allows teachers to cross-link very readily to national positions on standards. If you are in a secondary school, you can look at the CD at the front of the document and see how they work together—the interrelationships. For primary teachers, sometimes a generic document is more accessible as opposed to varying standards. But, if they want to look at the science teacher and see how it might look in their classroom, they can click onto that particular description.

The College of Teaching also uses the competency framework for teachers that I have referred to. They have designed interim standards, and this particular description of standards is reflected in their current draft. We are establishing a relationship with Edith Cowan—a slightly different

tack—for a two-year course to train degree qualified people as design and technology teachers and home economics teachers. In addition, participants will receive the equivalent of one year of manual skills training through TAFE WA and one year of teacher training. It links with the theory for the one year of pedagogical practice, and tacks on to that the practice of working in the disciplines of design and technology and home economics. So you actually get the best of both worlds.

The department has found that, within this learning area, it is difficult to attract suitable candidates. The most suitable applicants are those who are trade qualified but, given the current demand for and remuneration of tradespeople, the need to complete four years of teacher training is highly restrictive. For those who undertake a graduate diploma as a career change—which I alluded to earlier—a few base level degrees generally provide an adequate skill level to safely teach these subjects. An additional and positive outcome of this collaborative relationship has been the acknowledgement of both parties working together to enhance training teachers' exposure to and understanding of VET courses. Research done across Australia also shows that many current teachers in mathematics and the physical sciences have not received sufficient training to teach at a post-compulsory level—and we endorse that.

Finally, the department expresses concern with the training, assessment and support of people with disabilities as trainee teachers. The department supports the employment of people with disabilities and willingly makes reasonable adjustments. Experience is showing that the department is appointing a number of graduates whose degree of disability has meant the graduate is unable to demonstrate the capacity to meet the essential requirements of the position. Of concern is the duty of care of students as well as the expectations of the graduate. For example, despite adjustments to the workplace by the department, a number of graduates with disabilities have withdrawn from teaching within their first year of employment because they were unaware of the extent of workplace adjustment that would be required and were unwilling to work with the adjustments needed. It is hoped that guidelines and protocols are developed in consultation with all parties to ensure, particularly as they enter tertiary education, that people with disabilities are provided with realistic expectations of adjustments and employment. Thank you for the opportunity to comment further. The department supports this inquiry and will be pleased to respond to any questions that the committee may have with regard to the submission.

CHAIR—Thank you. In your submission you talk about attracting appropriate, quality candidates and the identification of particular attributes that potential teachers may have before considering enrolling in teaching. Obviously, from a university's point of view, the idea of some form of interview is very laborious and something that their resources do not permit and, as a result, they generally rely on TER scores. From a departmental point of view, would you be happy to assist financially in a more rigorous candidate assessment process? Is that something that the department sees value in?

Ms Cook—My immediate answer is yes. There is economic rationalising happening within the state government, but I would be prepared to put up a compelling case as to why funds might be allocated towards that and put that forward to the director-general. We could make a convincing case that this would raise the quality of teaching for their state and government schools. We currently conduct interviews ourselves. We did it in the past, and we reneged on that for quite a long time, but in the last 12 months we have reinstated those interviews.

CHAIR—That is for graduate teachers at that stage?

Ms Cook—The department interviews all teachers seeking employment. This includes overseas trained teachers and interstate, re-entry and graduate teachers. For graduate teachers, because what we want, apart from the transcripts from university and knowing how they may have achieved—well or in a mediocre way—is to hear from them a commitment to the profession. We want to hear that for ourselves. We ask them to design a teaching and learning program. We get our level 3—we call them level 3; they are exemplary practitioners and assessed as such—on the panel selecting graduate teachers. I have to say that they have taken away the teaching and learning programs. They have been so outstanding. So we have set in place already further crosschecks in our recruitment of teachers for our system, always aiming for quality.

If we go back to perceived shortages, in the last period of time we in WA have been able to fill vacancies. The vacancies are always filled. We now have that opportunity—I do not think they have it in the UK—to go for quality. How can we now start ramping up the quality and getting the very best graduates into government schools? With that in mind, we have accordingly returned to various strategies. Even within that interview, we have lined it up with the standards that I talked about earlier—the phase 1 standards. The questions relate to those standards and the teacher education relates to those standards, which we have in our submission. Going back to your question: yes, it would be logical to say that we could make an argument. I cannot guarantee that the department has the funds at this point in time, but I would certainly make a case to the director-general.

Ms BIRD—That was very interesting. Thank you for that. Can you clarify for me, being a New South Welshman, what the College of Teaching is?

Ms Cook—The College of Teaching is the registration board.

Ms BIRD—I suppose one of the interesting things we have heard from all of the universities is the fact that this sort of faculty has difficulty attracting funding for relevant industry research. If you are the engineering faculty, then you might have the big BHPs and so forth that might resource research funding that they can then commercialise. It would appear with education that the big employers are state education departments and private education providers. Do you have a research funding component of your department?

Ms Cook—Absolutely. Being called Strategic Human Resources, a major component of our work is research. Part of that research is continued reviewing and surveying of personnel and obviously researching what is happening in other states and territories and across the world in recruiting quality teachers and administrators. I alluded to the surveying that we have already done. We meet with the deans every quarter. We meet with senior lecturers in and around the forums that we have organised. We have been meeting with them for four years and we have made that survey information available to them. We have continued to work with them on how they may include in their courses not only the standards but also some of the fine-grain elements which may relate to what we are finding in the surveys. Obviously they are already covering assessment and reporting—there is no teacher education course in Australia that does not cover that—but student teachers find that when they work in schools they may not be familiar with the diagnostic instruments. It might be something like the first steps program, which you may have

heard about—what that looks like. There is a variety of tools used out in schools and it may be that the universities have not had enough time in the courses to cover all those instruments.

The same applies to reporting. As you know, reporting takes place against an outcomes environment. As universities come with the Curriculum Council of Western Australia and/or the department, we make sure that the universities are giving student teachers exactly the same information that our current teachers are receiving at in-service courses.

Going back to your question, we share the research that we do with the tertiary trainers and we work with focus groups as well. We have one-to-one phone calls with our scholarship recipients so that we get very, very transparent information from them—and sometimes it is very candid.

Ms BIRD—You have described your research. Do you not fund universities to do research?

Ms Cook—Sometimes when we want particular research done we contract it out to universities, yes. When we did a review of our processes for assessing exemplary practice we took that to the universities. UWA worked with an officer who provided us with research. When we have set up questions for surveys we have worked with UWA in determining what the questions for graduate teachers might look like. So, yes, we have very close links.

We used some research from Curtin University in looking at recruiting Aboriginal teachers. That was a ground-breaking course with Curtin to look at recognised prior learning and fast-track learning with different entry and exit points for Aboriginal teachers. The research from Curtin indicated that students who were Aboriginal found universities particularly alienating. We designed an online course which was really hybrid in its multimodal delivery. We realised that at Warburton in Western Australia—which is where we were trying to target—Aboriginal assistants were sometimes taking the classes as relief teachers. They were well prepared to become teachers. So, although we did not secure that research from the university, we tapped into it to design a course. So 50 potential teachers are coming in from the goldfields, Kimberley and Pilbara. They are ostensibly now education assistants and in two, three or four years they will become Aboriginal teachers. That is exactly what we want. The research is telling us that those people who are not itinerant and who are committed to their communities will make a difference for Aboriginal students and the outcomes they achieve. We are tick-tacking with the researchers. That is not quite the question you asked.

Ms BIRD—Part of the dilemma for education departments and university faculties is that their prestige and seriousness, and therefore flow-on funding allocated by universities, is driven by a research culture. If they have employers who will not, in the way that BHP will in an engineering faculty, put in funding in that way then it is difficult for them to compete to get their fair funding allocation, including from federal and state governments.

Ms Cook—The most recent research that we have been partners in, through an ARC grant, is with Edith Cowan. It works across the education department, police and nurses. It is a very large survey of some 3,000 teaching staff, including teachers and administrators, looking at health and wellbeing. It looks at perception of heavy workload, dealing with curriculum initiatives and discipline renewal. Perception of workload is one of the reasons we have teacher attrition at various points, particularly up to five years from graduation. It is an in-depth survey particularly focusing in rural locations.

Ms CORCORAN—I am from Victoria, so I do not know what happens here in WA. Does the department employ teachers that it allocates out to schools or does each school employ their own staff? In Victoria, for instance, each school principal advertises, interviews and employs.

Ms Cook—There is some duality in Western Australia. By that I mean that there is a transfer system and central appointments. So there is a central determination and that has been the traditional way of appointing staff to schools. As far back as 1998, we had a local selection trial. It has been in trial for a while and there have been some 129 schools out of the 800-odd sites that have had access to local selection. The uptake of local selection has been patchy. It arises from a variety of factors. Many administrators feel that they do not have the time and some locations, you can imagine, such as Meekatharra, Cue and Warburton—very remote and not particularly attractive to most—even if they were to have local selection, would get no applications. So they have immediately jettisoned that opportunity and gone straight to the centralised process.

Last year some 300 more schools were given the opportunity. They put their hands up for local selection. As any vacancy comes up in the school there is a redeployment element that comes up, as a No. 1 priority, for any displaced permanent staff member. After that, if central declares the school has a clear vacancy, they may choose to run a local selection process or they can flick it back to central. We have this constant duality happening over the next period of time. We will be evaluating that as we go through the next three years because each year there will be another 300 schools which will have further opportunities to access local selection until we hit 2007. Graduate teachers, as I said before, 71 per cent of whom traditionally get deployed to the country, may now apply to any local select school, which includes the metropolitan schools. This should be a shot in the arm for some local schools in the metropolitan area because the age cohort for the metropolitan area in the south-west chardonnay belt of WA is anywhere between 50 and 55 as opposed to the average age of teachers, which is about 47, across the state. You can imagine some of those teachers and administrators have been in those schools anything from 10 to 25 years. They do not live far from home. There is no real incentive and there is this whole mobility question. Having local selection will mean that those administrators will be able to get a better age profile in the school. Not that a more experienced teacher is any less committed or conscientious in their attitude towards teaching—I would not say that for one moment—it just means better demographics in the school. As we ramp up local selection to mirror Victoria, we will see what the age profile and experience profile are, because the two do not necessarily mean the same thing, particularly if we get more career changers coming in as graduates.

Ms CORCORAN—Thank you for that. One of the comments brought me back to a paragraph in your covering letter where—I want to get the stats right in my head—you say:

... the Department receives applications for teaching positions from three-quarters of graduates in each year and in 2004 over 700 graduate teachers were employed.

You added then that 71 per cent go off to rural areas. Is it my understanding that, of all the graduates of each particular year from all over the universities in WA, three-quarters of them apply for jobs with the department?

Ms Cook—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—And of those, three-quarters wander off to the regional schools?

Ms Cook—That is right. Towards the end of the year it might get closer to 800 who finally get deployed. Some of those are deployed for one term and then that arrangement closes down, so it might be the same number who are travelling around the state to various locations. Yes, with 800 you would imagine that about 600 are then going country. The scholarship recipients are contracted to go country. As we have itemised in the report, this year they are receiving \$40,000, but they are tied to the country. We have found that to be a very good way of addressing what we have identified, in our trend analysis, as shortages that we may have in the country.

Ms CORCORAN—In fact, that brings me to one of my questions. I did not quite understand the paragraph that talks about that. My understanding is that these scholarships are issued to teachers in particular subject areas—you talked about maths and physical sciences, for instance—as well as to go into the country. Is that correct? Or are they issued to teachers to go into the country to teach?

Ms Cook—The scholarships are only available in those learning areas that I mentioned: physical science and maths. If you receive any one of those scholarships for those learning areas where, in our analysis, we think there will be shortages in five to 10 years, then those recipients must go to the country.

Ms CORCORAN—So the scholarship is to teach in the country in those subject areas?

Ms Cook—That is right.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about problems—but before we turn to that I would like to ask you about what might be a small typo in the submission. It says: ‘The Commonwealth does prove funding for scholarships in mathematics and the physical sciences.’ Do you mean ‘approve’ or ‘provide’?

Ms Cook—I saw that this morning, too. I think it is a typo.

Ms CORCORAN—I think it is a typo, but I do not know quite what it is meant to be. Can you answer that quickly? If you cannot, we can get it from you on notice perhaps.

Ms Williams—The state government, via the InnovateWA policy, provides some funding for those scholarships through the Office of Science and Innovation.

Ms CORCORAN—So it possibly should read ‘provide’ funding?

Ms Cook—Yes—some of our funding.

Ms CORCORAN—If it does not, will you get back to us?

Ms Cook—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—You go on to talk about problems with the FBT. When you use that acronym do you mean the fringe benefits tax?

Ms Cook—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—So what is the problem? Or is that the question you want to take on notice?

Ms Williams—With the scholarships, if the department makes a commitment to employment, the scholarship is therefore taxed. So the individual gets taxed or the department gets taxed. Either way, there is a taxation component so, in effect, any amount that you give is sort of halved. In the past we have had scholarships where there has not been a commitment to employment, and those are not taxed, but then there is no commitment and people can go and work wherever they like. If they have been a scholarship recipient, private schools are equally as attracted to them as we are. So with the taxation implications for the department, or for the students themselves, the real benefit is not realised.

Ms CORCORAN—On page 4 you talk about the Student Teacher Rural Experience Program. The last sentence talks about the need to provide additional support to enable the expansion of this program. You simply want more money to put more students through the program, I assume. Do you want to talk a little bit about that program, and how it works and what it means?

Ms Cook—It is described in the fifth paragraph. A stipend is mainly provided to student teachers. Support is provided from a district office. We encourage them to go to the country for their practice. That stipend is absolutely minimal, but it does assist in the travel costs for some of those rural locations. The university provides us with those student teacher placements. Claire, you might like to add something to that.

Ms Williams—In terms of the success rate of people who go on the program, we get quite a high proportion—I think it is around half, though I could not quote the exact figure—of people who have been on the rural practicum then applying for a position in the country. So it has been quite successful in giving people exposure to working in the country, but it is a limited pool of money.

Ms Cook—It has gone up to 61 per cent. Each year it is incremental. It was about 48 per cent two or three years ago. Each year, as we have ramped up, we have put further funds into it. It is obviously making a difference in encouraging student teachers. Most have not been off the bitumen. There is a delight in teaching in the country. Those of us who have a teaching background know how rewarding it is teaching in the country. They have found that too and have voted with their feet in their applications for placement to go country.

Ms CORCORAN—At the moment it is available to final year teaching students. Would you extend that to other years if you had the money?

Ms Cook—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—So there is obviously a lot of point in doing that. I have two more questions. Firstly, on the issue of practicum, somewhere along the line it has been suggested—or maybe the committee have dreamt it up themselves—that all schools be required to take on student teachers for practicum. Do you see that as a good thing, a bad thing or totally impractical?

Ms Cook—I think it is practical. I think it does hark back to where we were perhaps a few decades ago. There was almost an expectation that, if you were a teacher, you would have student teachers. It disappeared for WA schools. As we have said here, the universities are finding it particularly difficult. You would have heard that from them, I am sure. We have tried to ameliorate that by designing a career progression and having senior teachers appointed. But part of getting that status and that salary remuneration is a commitment to working with student teachers and taking on practicums. We have thousands of teachers each year who will reach a particular level on their salary scale when they can access the senior teacher level. Whether they are prepared to go through PD requirements to become a senior teacher and then have the ongoing commitment to the responsibilities of that particular level is another thing. In our surveying—as I hark back to—teachers are overwhelmed at the moment with curriculum initiatives. The thought of having a student teacher as well—daunting is not the right word, because if you are 47 and have been doing it for 27 years you have probably had student teachers before—is just one other thing to the layer of duties you have to do.

Ms CORCORAN—Does it become a bit overwhelming?

Ms Cook—It does become a bit overwhelming. I think also—and this links in with some of the comments the student teachers are making—the behaviour of students in some schools is very different from the expectations of student teachers. It requires a great deal of working through that, as the supervising teacher, to share the complex strategies used to manage students today. In some schools, as I say, it is particularly challenging. It is hard for some teachers to let go and know that, in six to 10 weeks, after someone else has had the students, they will have to take over again and rework that group of students to how they had them before the student teacher was with them. That is not being pejorative about student teachers—they are outstanding. So there are multiple factors as to why, at this point in time, teachers are not taking on student teachers.

If we were to stipulate that schools are required to have student teachers we would need to have, commensurate with that, some time allocation for the supervising teacher. At this time, for what we are asking in individual learning programs for students and ongoing work with school communities—all of those extra duties that we ask of the teacher today to deliver the sort of schooling we want—if we were making a requirement for working with student teachers as well I think we would need to have some sort of allocated time where the teacher could work quietly with that student teacher.

Ms CORCORAN—You just touched on my final question. Are all teachers in WA required to undertake professional development or is it just those who want to get up to the next level?

Ms Cook—It will be as part of registration. Every five years, to be reregistered, teachers will have to demonstrate engagement with professional learning that articulates the school and system agendas. Currently, most teachers would be involved in professional learning through what we in WA call school development days, which is during school time. Teachers are being in-serviced at a school level and a district level on those particular days, and they make commitments out of school hours as well. Yes, those who want to go up that career pathway are committed, but some others do not make the same commitment out of school hours.

CHAIR—Can I hark back to the \$40,000 final year scholarship in those specific areas. How does that work? When the student gets into their last year, do they become an employee of the department and then become a teacher, subject to meeting all requirements at the end of their year, or is it a payment made to the student subject to certain terms and conditions and separate from some employment offer?

Ms Cook—We have recast and reviewed that program quite considerably this year. Previously, it was a one-off payment. The contract to the department makes the recipient an employee ostensibly and, hence, the FBT kicks in. This year we have tempered the program. If the recipient does not succeed at any point in time, they have to pay back the money. The first call is where they can put their hands up and say, ‘Yes, I’d like to go in,’ and they will get an initial period of time. I think it might be best if Claire talked about that.

Ms Williams—As Chris mentioned, it was initially a one-off payment. In reviewing the program, this year we are introducing a four-week grace period when the trainee can go in, start to see the course, see if teaching is for them and, if not, pull out with no disadvantage. After four weeks they will get an initial \$10,000 payment. Before the end of the financial year and after they have the results from their first practicum, they will get an additional \$20,000 payment. That is subject to satisfactory performance in the course. Being in the first half of the financial year, that will spread the taxation burden for that person over the following year when they will have started employment and receive a full salary. At the end of their academic year, when they accept an appointment with the department, there will now be a final \$10,000 payment which will assist them in perhaps buying a vehicle or getting themselves set up for a country posting. That will be a final incentive for them to stay with the department, because we have also found that a few scholarship recipients have been attracted by some of the private schools. That is the way we have modified it this year and we will continue to review that.

CHAIR—If I were a mathematician who had completed a degree in mathematics previously and then did a one-year Dip. Ed., would that qualify under that program as well?

Ms Cook—Yes.

CHAIR—It could be any final year activity. Okay. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will contact you if we need further information. A transcript of today’s proceedings will be loaded on the parliamentary web site. Thank you very much.

Proceedings suspended from 2.08 pm to 2.28 pm

BOGUNOVICH, Ms Sonja Maree, Coordinator, Vocational Education and Training Programs, University of Notre Dame Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record will be made available to the public 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. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Ms Bogunovich—I have prepared a quick opening speech, if you are happy for me to read it. Vocational education and training—or VET, as we know it—in schools can be seen as one of the most significant developments in Australian secondary education over the last few years. Exponential growth in the uptake of VET in Schools has occurred and is continuing to occur. In 2002, statistics showed that independent schools experienced a growth of 211 per cent in the number of schools involved in VET programs; this is continuing. Successful VET in School programs are seen to provide the following outcomes: youth employment, increased school retention rates, easier student transitions from school to employment, transferable generic skills, increased student confidence in employability, alternative tertiary education pathways and a positive impact on Australia's current skills shortage.

Given the strong industry, school and student demand for VET in Schools, it is perplexing to observe the large number of secondary teachers who have very little understanding of the VET arena, many of whom teach or coordinate the area. Those who do take on VET in Schools tend to be the extremely passionate teachers who see the huge benefits of VET for their students. Very little additional time, if any, is allocated to their role. These teachers are expected to become fully conversant with two very different educational systems. They are expected to meet all AQTF and Curriculum Council requirements while ensuring that an innovative industry-led program is available for their students. Given the added responsibility being placed on these teachers and almost no additional time being allocated to them, is it any wonder that we end up with a school system where teachers are reluctant to take on VET programs, see them as an unwanted additional burden that only creates extra work, are unable to take on additional training in the VET area due to time restrictions already incurred and lack the relevant skills, knowledge and very often industry requirements to adequately perform their role?

Until government, principals and deputies become fully aware of not only the opportunities that VET in Schools presents but also the additional time demands that VET places on teachers, we will continue to have teachers in that area who are poorly trained, who are delivering but not meeting AQTF compliance requirements and thereby undermining the whole system; poorly trained students who do not meet industry needs; and burnt out teachers. The allocation of government funding for new apprenticeship links, traineeships, TAFE profile funding et cetera is all very well; however, the effective outcomes are severely diluted when the school coalface is not coping with the demands being made on the system.

CHAIR—Thank you. The make-up of this committee is quite mixed—some are teachers and some are not; I am one who is not. In your submission, you refer to VET-specific units. For my benefit, would you describe what they are and what they contain?

Ms Bogunovich—We have a number of VET-specific units that are targeted at teachers who currently teach in the system and want to increase their knowledge of the VET area. Of the units themselves, one is introductory and outlines for the teachers the system that they will be working in, the key players in the system and the system's role in education. Another unit outlines teaching strategies for how to implement VET effectively. It looks at training packages—why we have them and how to unpack them—and starts getting into the Australian Quality Training Framework requirements. We have one on assessment, which goes through similar modes but focuses on assessment. We also have a couple of additional units that are focused purely on the teacher who wants to deliver VET in a school environment. Our focus has always been that teachers or students undertaking these VET-specific subjects could go into the TAFE or private RTO system or, if they are qualified teachers, into the school system.

CHAIR—Regarding the content of the course, what is the actual VET package that is offered to a student?

Ms Bogunovich—From the university we do not offer a training package as such. There are two pathways. One is the undergraduate degree program in vocational education, which essentially is targeted at students who already have a trade qualification and who want to teach their trade. They become four-year trained teachers who can teach in TAFE as well as in the school system, but they already have that VET—if you want to call it that—qualification behind them.

CHAIR—Where does the teacher who may not have that qualification but who wants to teach VET obtain whatever trade skills or technical skills he needs to pass on?

Ms Bogunovich—We make them aware of that. Quite a number of teachers come to Notre Dame and undertake this study without recognising that, to meet Australian Quality Training Framework—or AQTF, as I will refer to it—requirements, they need to have an industry background equal to the training package they are delivering. On that basis, either they need to go and get it or they already have it. One of my issues is that quite often teachers just do not have that background in industry. Therefore, in a school environment, teachers who are not industry trained and who do not have that industry background are delivering programs to students.

Ms BIRD—Just to follow that up: when I taught in the New South Wales TAFE system they had a Return to Industry Program. In that program, you continued to be paid by the department—and this will horrify education ministers, I am sure—while for up to one year you worked in a workplace. The concept was that you kept your skills current regarding the particular industry you were teaching in. Would you see something like that as a viable alternative? Say that you have a woodwork teacher who has been teaching for many years but who has never actually worked as a carpenter or had the AQTF type thing. Would that sort of program—where their employer allowed them to work in the industry for a year—generally get them to the standard required by the AQTF?

Ms Bogunovich—Absolutely. I think that would be brilliant. Bear in mind that in the school system usually the school, if they are not outsourcing it to an RTO, will be delivering it themselves. They usually only deliver up to a certificate II and possibly a certificate III at most, so the level they are delivering is relatively low. To go and gather that industry experience themselves, they would not need to get to an extremely high level in that particular industry. I think that would work really well, if the school would allow them that opportunity.

Ms BIRD—Further to comments in your submission about information communication technology, which obviously is one of the growing areas in this particular field, I note you make the point that it is very often treated as an add-on rather than as an integral tool that could be accessed across a range of curricula. I think that is very true. As I mentioned before, my background is in English teaching. It struck me as particularly odd to teach business-focused English and communication courses without computers, because there are so few workplaces where you do anything that is not computer based.

Ms Bogunovich—Yes.

Ms BIRD—What is your view of what is happening at the moment with ICT in the schools where it is treated as a VET course as well as integrated into the classroom? Have you seen good examples of that happening?

Ms Bogunovich—I would like to think that increasingly schools are taking a holistic view of teaching computers and technology as opposed to treating them as separate learning areas; that is what they have been traditionally. However, there still appears to be a lack in that area. There are computer rooms being used specifically for training students in the skills of keyboarding and Excel and whatever else they need, but it is not being seen as something they should integrate into their daily activities of—in this particular instance—VET. As you have said, it would be very rare that you go into a workplace, regardless of what sort of workplace it is, where you would not utilise a computer. These separate learning environments are still going on, and it would appear to me that never the twain will meet—they are not being looked at holistically but are being kept as separate entities.

Ms BIRD—At other universities we have seen some programs that are VET elective strands. What is your view of that format, where somebody may be training to be an English history teacher in secondary but would like to pick up some VET strands? Have you looked at those?

Ms Bogunovich—When you say ‘VET’ do you mean the teaching of VET or that they take on a vocational stream themselves?

Ms BIRD—It would be the teaching of VET, I imagine, like the modules you outlined a moment ago.

Ms Bogunovich—I think it is a great initiative. All unis should do it. In Western Australia—I am not completely up to date with the curriculum in the east—we are looking at trying to embed VET in most new courses of study that are coming in over the next couple of years. If that is going to be the push, teachers will need to have some sort of VET background and I am worried that they will not have it. Unless they are coming through now trained with a VET background, it will further exacerbate the problem of these teachers who are thrown into VET but who do not

meet the qualifications or the requirements of the AQTF, which will undermine the system as it is supposed to be.

CHAIR—Just taking that a bit further, do you believe that outcome will still be produced in schools if teachers who specialise in other disciplines do the VET strand without having the underpinning trade or technical base from which to pass on information?

Ms Bogunovich—It would certainly be an advantage to have some VET background, regardless of your own personal background, especially where we are looking at embedding VET units of competency into the general curriculum. However, to fully utilise the VET system as it is supposed to be, they do need—and I use the words loosely—a ‘trade background’ of some sort. If they are delivering the business training package, they need to have been actively involved in industry and business at some time in their past. If they do not have that, while obviously it would be advantageous for them to have that VET understanding, it limits their ability to deliver VET and, again, undermines the system as it is meant to be.

Ms CORCORAN—Are your VET students in courses alongside other students who are doing normal teacher training?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes. In the pedagogical units, they are together. Then those who are VET specific take their VET-specific subjects. Their trade background is their major area of specialisation and that is what they take into schools to teach in a VET capacity, but while at university they also train in a general curriculum minor—so they end up with both. For a variety of the time they are at the university they certainly mix with students who are taking either secondary or primary teaching, but then they specialise.

Ms CORCORAN—I am sorry, you talked about this before but I cannot remember exactly what you said. Are some of your students coming in and doing three- or four-year courses, or is it mainly students with a trade background coming in to do one or two years?

Ms Bogunovich—No. It is four years for the teacher courses. Those who come to do the undergraduate Bachelor of Vocational Education also must have met minimum entry requirements of having a trade qualification of certificate IV or diploma level or above. It can be that they have undergone an apprenticeship at some stage in their past. On that basis, they get what we call their first year of advanced standing, because then they do not have to study a major area; they are qualified in that already. Then they take three years of pedagogical study and VET-specific study. They end up completing a four-year qualified course to be fully trained.

Ms CORCORAN—How do you arrange practicums for VET students as well as normal students?

Ms Bogunovich—VET-specific students must do a 10-week internship at a school, plus a two-week observational period at a school—one that delivers VET, obviously—at another point in their degree, plus take 10 weeks at a TAFE environment or an RTO and, if they do not have recent industry experience, undergo four to six weeks of industry experience. Students who are training to become primary or secondary teachers, over their course of four years, undertake 32 weeks of practicum just in the school environment.

Ms CORCORAN—I was not adding it all up when you were talking about the VET students, but it comes pretty close to 32 weeks, doesn't it? There are two lots of 10 and then—

Ms Bogunovich—It would end up being about 32 to 34 weeks in total.

Ms CORCORAN—Is that across the whole three or four years?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—Do you have trouble finding places to put these students? A suggestion has been made that all schools be obliged to take on student teachers. Do you have a view about that?

Ms Bogunovich—Certainly it is getting harder. Of the universities, we appear to struggle least; perhaps that is because we have smaller cohorts of students. We certainly take the time to ensure that we develop really strong relationships with schools. I guess we are slightly unique in that. Because we are a Catholic university, there are some partnership arrangements with Catholic schools. I would hope that, because of the nature of the university, we are their first port of call when they want to take a student.

But, yes, it is certainly getting increasingly difficult to place our students at schools. On that note, I have to say that the burdens placed on the teachers who take on these trainee students are becoming increasingly difficult as their role becomes increasingly difficult, with the outcomes based education, with everything that is going on at the moment. They seem to have a huge burden with the workload and with trying to grapple with new understandings, so to take on a student teacher as well would be a difficult job.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about developing relationships with schools. What does that mean in practical terms? You do not need to name a particular school, but what does having a relationship with a school mean? What do you give and what do they give?

Ms Bogunovich—We have what we call a head of professional practice, or HOPS. We engage, for a very small remuneration, a HOP from a school who is willing to be trained by us. The training is usually just an intensive week, perhaps over the holidays or it could be at different times during the year. We have contact with and train these teachers who are currently in schools and are prepared to take on the student teacher. We develop the relationship with them by doing that, by being in constant contact with them but also imparting an understanding of what we expect them to do. We support them in that role, as opposed to just sending out an assessment file, for example. We certainly develop a relationship and then an understanding of what we expect.

Ms CORCORAN—So you provide a week's training for a staff member of the school you have a relationship with so that that particular member of staff is able to take on your student.

Ms Bogunovich—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—The schools must see a benefit in that or they would not do it.

Ms Bogunovich—Absolutely.

Ms CORCORAN—So what is in it for the school?

Ms Bogunovich—I think the school recognises the potential of these students coming through and also the community involvement of having these students at their school. I have very little to do with the practicum; someone else organises all of that. But I would like to think because the schools see us having a really active role in building the relationships with the teachers and ensuring they are fully conversant with what we want our students to achieve that that gives us an edge.

Ms CORCORAN—So they might see this as a chance, before a student graduates, to size up that student for employment purposes later on?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes, perhaps.

Ms CORCORAN—In your submission you talk about your students being provided with units specifically targeted at classroom management. Is that just your VET students?

Ms Bogunovich—All the students do, yes.

Ms CORCORAN—But do all the students attend one class or do the VET students do separate—

Ms Bogunovich—The VET students would attend the secondary student subjects. The primary and the secondary would be different. The VET students would attend the same classes as those students who are undergoing secondary training.

Ms CORCORAN—I think I understand your submission correctly where you say that students also qualify to teach up to year 10 in secondary schools. A VET student coming through at the end is qualified to teach up to year 10 in secondary schools—is that right?

Ms Bogunovich—They are qualified to teach up to year 12 in their VET related discipline and then up to year 10 in a general curriculum, so they take on a learning area while they are with us at uni.

Ms CORCORAN—In the next paragraph you talk about adult learning principles being applied throughout the VocEd curriculum. Could you explain what you mean by that?

Ms Bogunovich—I can only speak for my specific classes, although I know that it does go on throughout all classes. With the VET-specific subjects, we ensure that the training that they are undertaking is very specific to their workplace, that the projects and assignments they need to implement and write over the course of time they are with us are related to what is going on in their workplace. So they can take it away, implement it, see how it works and bring it back. If I am their lecturer I will assess it or speak to them and provide feedback on an ongoing basis, perhaps on how they need to change a project to ensure that it meets the requirements of both the Curriculum Council and AQTF and so is fully compliant in the school system, and then they try it out.

So the knowledge that they are gaining is very meaningful to their workplace and to them and their interests. We apply those kinds of principles in the classroom. The conversations that occur in these particular VET units are in far more depth than those I have heard in any of the other classes. All classes certainly generate a great response with discussion, but it could go on for hours in these particular VET units. They are really passionate people about the area.

CHAIR—Many people with a trade background who undertake an undergraduate course may not have studied for quite a number of years. Do you find that students struggle in that transition from their previous trade based training to a university standard course? What is the attrition rate?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes, there is certainly a struggle, but not for everyone, of course. Probably the first semester is the hardest semester for these students because it is a very different environment to the one that they have been used to. If someone is going to pull out, they will pull out in the first couple of weeks because they suddenly recognise the requirements and demands of this course, and it is beyond what they feel that they are capable of. Our attrition rate is actually quite high. Probably the most prominent reason for people pulling out is not necessarily that they feel they cannot cope with the course; it is the burden of time that is being placed on them in their working environment that just does not allow them to commit to the course. I think that once they get into it that is when the issues arise—and there certainly can be issues.

One of the biggest issues is probably with the tradespeople. Their literacy and numeracy abilities are not particularly great. We have strategies in place to try and help them with that. They sit for tests to come into the university, not so much as an entry requirement because once they have met the entry requirements they can come in, but once they are in we ensure that they sit a literacy test. If we feel they are not up to the level that we recognise as needed in a teaching capacity, then they have to take additional units to cope with that. I think that strategy helps those students, particularly those who have not been in a learning environment for a while.

CHAIR—Is that assessment done early so they have a chance to improve their skills before the coursework starts?

Ms Bogunovich—They do that assessment upon enrolment. It happens basically straightaway. They need to enrol in their subjects concurrently with some of their other subjects in that first semester. But they are tracked and we ensure that they are coping with those subjects. If it looks like they are not coping, then we will probably be more inclined to take them out of some of their other subjects and have them focus on those skills that they really do need.

Ms BIRD—Would those additional subjects incur a HECS debt?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes, they would. They are one-credit-point subjects. They would involve a very low debt, though. For example, I can think of one 13-week subject and it is something like \$130. It is a very minimal amount.

Ms BIRD—It is not prohibitive.

Ms Bogunovich—No, not at all.

Ms BIRD—I could imagine great resentment if, suddenly, you were told you had to do additional subjects beyond what others were doing and that there was a debt component.

Ms Bogunovich—It is certainly to their advantage, because if they do not have that level of skill they will struggle in everything else. They will struggle in their assignment writing. It goes further than that, obviously. As the training packages stand at the moment, as teachers we have to ensure that the literacy and numeracy requirements of those training packages are delivered. We are trying to ensure that that is done in the school environment. For example, we may have trade teachers who do not have the literacy or numeracy abilities themselves to ensure that their students have those abilities. There can be a flow-on effect.

CHAIR—What is involved in the process to select a student? How would it work for a tradesman who may have been out of formal training for many years and decides he wants to be a teacher?

Ms Bogunovich—We interview all of our students prior to them coming into the program. We ask them to write a personal statement—and this is across the university; it does not matter whether they are applying for law or vocational education—and obviously they provide all their transcripts and then have an interview, usually with a course coordinator. So I have personally interviewed all vocational education students coming through. We have quite a lengthy discussion on why they want to do it, what the area would be and exactly what it entails so that they have a very good understanding of what they are getting themselves into.

CHAIR—At that interview stage do you often pick up the fact that people may be at risk for literacy and numeracy?

Ms Bogunovich—Yes, certainly.

CHAIR—If so, have you looked at the idea of possibly doing the 13-week courses before enrolment starts? Suppose someone enrolls on Monday and starts all of the other workload on Monday but does not have the literacy and numeracy skills fully developed by that stage. It seems that they are swimming against the tide a bit in that very initial shock stage.

Ms Bogunovich—We have a bridging course called the Tertiary Enabling Program. If we as coordinators are concerned about the academic ability of a particular student we might advise students to do a bridging course. Quite often, sadly, we will have students applying who have previously obtained a certificate IV, for example, in a particular area and they have met certain entry requirements. But we are quite concerned in speaking to them and, if they have brought in a portfolio, in looking at the level of work because we can see that that level of work is going to let them down—and obviously we do not want to set them up for failure. So we will discuss with these students that they may like to undertake our bridging course, which is a one-semester course. It ensures that all of those skills we were talking about—literacy and numeracy plus academic writing and researching for university purposes—are provided for through an intensive period of 13 weeks in a supporting environment. They are exposed to those types of skills and brought up to the level that we feel is commensurate with what they need at university.

CHAIR—As there are no further questions, thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information.

Proceedings suspended from 2.57 pm to 3.30 pm

ALDOUS, Mr John, President, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia

CICCARELLI, Ms Mary, Executive Officer, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings for 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 some introductory remarks?

Mr Aldous—We will make some brief introductory remarks. Obviously we do not want to restate what is already in our submission—mainly for your ease rather than anything else—but we will make some additional remarks and maybe some clarifying remarks in relation to our submission. We have had the benefit of meeting over the weekend with all of our delegates from each of the states and territories and we had a further opportunity to discuss the submission then. They suggested that we make a few additional comments. Firstly, our members suggest very strongly that they are keen on potential teachers deciding from the very start that they want to be teachers. Our experience in schools is that those who have had a much more extended period of teaching practice are far better prepared for their roles as teachers in their first year out teaching. We suggest that we look at ways in which we can attract more people to want to become teachers from the very beginning rather than perhaps making that decision once they have received their degree in their particular area of expertise.

A couple of ways that this could be done are through scholarships or by paying their HECS payments as they progress through their tertiary studies. Certainly we can see some significant benefits from people making a decision much earlier in the piece to become teachers. We do not want to preclude the possibility for people to make that decision to become a teacher after they have already achieved a degree. Some people come out with a double degree even though it is still within four years—it may be a Bachelor of Arts with a Bachelor of Teaching. We feel that would be a far more attractive proposition to young graduates. So we do need to look at ways of encouraging people to choose teaching from the beginning. As far as the profile of the profession is concerned, it is a real challenge for us to get good people interested in becoming a teacher. Some people have suggested that improved remuneration would be of some benefit. We think it goes beyond that, though—certainly the extent to which the community values teaching as a profession has a great deal to do with that. Our colleagues believe very strongly that it is not helped by teachers and schools being bagged by the media, and, in some cases, their own ministers of education at both state and federal level.

Recently there has been some reference made in the media to internship. We made a brief reference to such a possibility in our submission. We have certainly been made aware by our colleagues around Australia that some states and territories have had, and still have, some very good experiences of internships. We appreciate that in some states, including Western Australia, internships are perhaps no longer possible because of the College of Teaching regulations and other such requirements that might exist in certain states and territories. We would very much

like to see a continuation of looking at internships as a good way of preparing people for teaching. Our experience in schools is that a lot of beginning teachers feel as though they are totally unprepared for the amount of time needed for non-classroom duties—that is, duties that are quite apart from their actual teaching time and lesson preparation time. Many of them remain very surprised at the amount of administration that is involved in the job of teaching, be it forms to fill in with regard to absentees, home room records, reports to parents, dealing with pastoral matters pertaining to students and families and so on. We feel that an internship would more likely give a prospective teacher a more realistic impression of what it is really like to be a teacher.

In terms of funding for schools, we feel it is important to give mentors, and others who supervise practice teachers, time to better meet their responsibilities in this regard. Schools are not generally in the financial position to give time release for staff involved in these important roles. The universities usually pay something to the supervising teacher but more often than not it is very minimal and little encouragement for people to take on the role of supervising teacher for practicum students. Certainly, in terms of financial rewards for them, there is very little in terms of post-tax dollars. I would think that, for most of our teachers, time would be more important for them than any particular salary remuneration.

We are aware that universities are increasingly having trouble getting placements in schools for prac teachers. It is probably to some extent due to the fact that—certainly this year—there are more young people being offered teaching places in universities. But I think it also probably reflects, and is compounded by, the increasing pressures on staff and time, particularly given the immense curriculum changes going on around Australia at the moment. There seem to be more and more experienced teachers who are willing to take on the role of being a mentor or supervising teacher for prac students.

The final point I would like to make is to clarify the research from Beaman and Wheldall that was quoted in our submission. Research does suggest that the great majority of issues for young teachers in relation to classroom management are relatively trivial. We are not talking about issues pertaining to violence and so on; they are usually very trivial. They are often very persistent and we believe it is important for our young people who are becoming teachers for the first time to be better prepared, through their training or their practicum or both, to deal with these particular actions by students. Those are just a few points of clarification in relation to our submission.

CHAIR—Thank you. You mentioned the idea of an internship. Have you got any ideas in mind on the kind of structure of an internship that you think would be appropriate?

Mr Aldous—In discussion with our colleagues we found that they would very much favour an internship of as long as six months, perhaps in the final semester of a person's training, whereby they are placed under the direct care of a supervisor. It may be a head of faculty in the case of secondary schools or someone similar who is very experienced. We would expect that the level of supervision would be somewhere between that currently given to a teacher on practicum and that given to a first year out teacher, who is normally given a mentor, a person within their department or whatever it is, in secondary schools. We think that the level of supervision would be somewhere between the two so that the person has the capacity to be a bit more independent than a practicum teacher but at the same time has a significant stint of time in a school in which

they can find out what it is really like to be a teacher. They would be on a reduced load—perhaps 0.8 of a normal load. They would maybe take four classes instead of five, and be paid for it at maybe a significantly lower or somewhat lower rate than an experienced or fully qualified teacher. They might teach 0.8 of a load and get paid 0.6 of a salary—something along those lines.

CHAIR—Would they have virtual control of the class during the time of the internship, with supervision?

Mr Aldous—Yes, but they would be closely monitored, although perhaps not as closely monitored as if they were on a teaching practice.

Ms CORCORAN—I have a question on internships as well. Was that the model that used to exist?

Mr Aldous—We understand, from our colleagues, that it does currently exist in some states. I can speak only with some knowledge of Western Australia. It did not happen in private schools in Western Australia, as far as I am aware, but I have certainly employed young people who have come through department of education schools who have been on an internship model, which I understand no longer exists. I have had very good experiences of employing people who have been through that particular model. They are often sent to more difficult to staff schools—regional schools, for example—and then they are free to apply thereafter for positions either within the government or the private sector.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked earlier about the desirability of students deciding right from the word go that they want to be teachers. That would suggest that the internship should happen earlier rather than later. Of course, the usefulness in the schools is greater later rather than earlier. I was thinking it was an internship but maybe it was something else; is there a capacity for students to do some sort of intense work at a school before they get too far down the track?

Mr Aldous—Our reasoning for wanting students to make the decision earlier, and encouraging people to make the decision earlier, is so that they can get more practice experience. Maybe they could do two practices a year in their first three years of study—even short-term ones of perhaps two weeks or during the university breaks or before university even starts and during other university breaks—so that they get a number of different experiences in different schools over the course of their degree. Then, of course, in the final year they would have a more intense period of practice of perhaps one term or more. An internship, though, would give them up to six months.

Ms BIRD—I have a question on the internship too. I think that has a lot of value. The one problem I can see is parental reaction. From the perspective of the principals association, do you anticipate parents having a problem? They might say, ‘Hang on a second. For six months my kid is going to have this person who’s not even a proper teacher.’ As a representative of principals, do you think that is a manageable thing?

Mr Aldous—Obviously, at the moment classes are very carefully chosen for people who are placed into practicums. For example, you would not normally give a year 12 class to a prac teacher. My experience as a principal over the last 12 years has been that very rarely, if ever, has

a parent complained about having a prac teacher for as long as a term. I do not see that it would be a significantly greater problem if it were for two terms. It may be just the particular experiences that we have had, but parents seem to be very understanding that this is an important part of preparing people for teaching.

Ms Ciccarelli—If we were looking at an internship towards the end of a preparing-teachers course—which our association has considered—we would really only be looking to do it for the months before they would be in a classroom as a beginning teacher anyway. But you have the added advantage of more structured and closer mentoring and supervision. I think that it could be quite easily managed, provided that those sorts of structures were in place, provided that parents were assured that these people were being properly mentored, that they had been prepared and that this was not just dumping someone totally inexperienced on a class for an extended period of time.

Ms BIRD—You mentioned that some of them seem to have dropped off. Is that because of the new registering bodies? Is the problem that you have to be a registered teacher to be in a classroom?

Mr Aldous—Certainly that is the case in Western Australia. As I understand it, under the new College of Teaching regulations the internship is no longer a possibility.

CHAIR—Do you find the quality of the new graduates that are coming out to your schools acceptable? Do you find them a mixed bag? Are there any shortcomings that are consistently evident?

Mr Aldous—The reality is that we are having difficulty attracting good people to teaching. Therefore, I am finding that literacy skills, for example, are perhaps not as good as they may have been in the past. One might argue that perhaps that reflects the general population at large. Certainly, from my perspective, the literacy skills of young people who are coming into teaching would be somewhat lacking, particularly when it comes to the need to write school reports and assignments appropriately. That would be one concern of mine. I have a small concern—it is certainly not widespread—that a number of people are coming out without the true dedication and commitment to teaching that we have been used to in the past. Perhaps many of them are seeing it as a second or third choice. Maybe they are just doing teaching because they cannot get into anything else or because they have come to the end of their three-year degree and employment prospects in their particular area of specialisation are not good. So they say, ‘What will I do? I’ll become a teacher.’

CHAIR—How does that manifest itself in schools? I guess it does that in a range of different ways. How is that reflected in the school community?

Mr Aldous—It would have to be reflected in standards. It would have to be reflected in the perceptions of the teaching profession in the wider community. Also, if people are not as committed to teaching as they might otherwise be and do not have the same work ethic as others may have had in the past, our young people will suffer in terms of the extra things that teachers are prepared to do for young people. That is why I think it is so critically important to do everything we can to attract better and more committed people to the profession.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked before about difficulties in placing students for practicums. It has been suggested that it might be sensible to have a situation where all schools are obliged to take on students, with appropriate time release or whatever. What would your reaction to that be?

Mr Aldous—That is fine, but I also acknowledge that perhaps some schools might be better positioned to take on prac teachers than other schools. It would depend significantly on, for example, the staff cohort that you have in any particular year. If you have a more experienced staff, clearly you can take on more prac teachers. For example, I know our regional people, who are in isolated communities, very rarely have many teachers at all on their staff who have more than one or two years experience; they may not be the best people to be taking on prac teachers. I appreciate the issues pertaining to where people live, and that having a prac placement that is not too far away from home is an issue, but I would be concerned if we were placing our prac teachers with a school where there is a significantly inexperienced staff.

Ms CORCORAN—I take your point. Is there an argument, though, that if students do pracs at these more remote places they might be encouraged to go out there and teach? Is that a fair comment or does it not hold much water?

Ms Ciccarelli—Often those schools have considerable difficulties anyway. Unless you could be fairly certain that the experience the students would have—particularly in remote, small schools—is one of being properly supervised and supported, I suspect that you may have as much of a negative impact as you would hope to have a positive one.

Ms CORCORAN—In your submission you referred to a particular Senate inquiry—and in fact there have been a number of different inquiries—and you said that there is no evidence to suggest that the Senate inquiry led to any improvement in the status of teachers or in the attraction to the profession of high-achieving potential trainees. There must have been a recommendation in there somewhere related to this, or other recommendations, that has not been picked up. Was that recommendation actually picked up and put in place? Is the reason that it fell over because it was never picked up in the first place, or was it picked up and then did not work?

Ms Ciccarelli—The point that we were trying to make was more that this issue is not something that has suddenly come out of the blue. We were not looking at any particular recommendations that have not been taken up. The point was simply that these things have been talked about for a period of time and, whatever the good intentions and whatever good ideas are floated around, we have not seen any result in increasing the demand by high-quality students to enter the profession. It was not a particular jibe about committee recommendations that have been knocked on the head or put on the shelf.

Ms CORCORAN—I think that is fair comment. The first time I read your submission, I read it incorrectly and I thought you were saying that principals are actively discouraging their students from taking up teaching, and I was going to ask you why they would do such a thing. I have now read it properly and realise that experienced principals see instances of students being discouraged—

Ms Ciccarelli—Discouraged by current teachers.

Ms CORCORAN—That was my point: is it current teachers who are doing that? And if so—

Ms BIRD—Particularly if they are parents.

Ms CORCORAN—So parents who teach are discouraging? I will ask the dumb question: on what grounds?

Ms Ciccarelli—John may have other things to say, but I think that generally teachers themselves often feel that their role in the school and in the wider community is not sufficiently valued, that they work extremely hard and that they seem to be working harder and harder, that the time commitment appears to be becoming greater and greater and the complexity of demands is ever-increasing. I think it is because they feel that they are not valued for all of that that they say to bright young 17-year-old students coming up, ‘You can find something better to do, something where you will be more valued.’ Some of that is about salaries and remuneration but, as John said earlier, it is not all about that. It is also about perceptions of the esteem in which the profession is held.

Ms CORCORAN—So you are putting another layer on the ‘overworked, underpaid’ scenario. You are adding ‘undervalued’. What do we have to do as a society to increase the value that we place on teachers?

Ms Ciccarelli—There are some simple things that we hear, although they are not a panacea, by any stretch of the imagination. I would also argue that remuneration is not something that should simply be shunted off to the side as unimportant, because I think it is crucial.

Ms CORCORAN—But it is part of the mix, isn’t it?

Ms Ciccarelli—It is part of the mix. To be honest, the comment that John made in his introductory comments I would extend, not simply to state and federal ministers making comments that are perceived as less than laudatory of many in the teaching profession. I think there are often instances when employers or employing authorities do not take the public opportunity to affirm what is being done in schools in ways that they could. I think the public affirmation of the very genuine worth of what the vast majority of teachers do in our schools is really important.

Ms CORCORAN—I agree with you.

Mr Aldous—Even in the private sector, where one could argue that the morale of staff is somewhat higher, perhaps, than in other sectors, if our own staff are actively discouraging students in their classes from becoming teachers, when it comes to that critical time in years 10, 11 and 12 of considering future careers, then we are our own worst enemies. I have had to say that to my staff on numerous occasions and I dare say that scenario is being repeated around the country in most schools. We are our own worst enemies in discouraging young people from becoming teachers. I suppose that is because we know what it is like to be a teacher, and undervalued.

Ms Bird made the comment ‘especially if you’re a parent yourself’. It is interesting to note what is probably a trend. I do not have any firm evidence of this—just anecdotal evidence.

Increasingly, children of teachers are not becoming teachers because they see that the public perception that teaching is a nine-to-three job with 12 weeks holiday a year is far from the truth. They probably see their parents—or teachers they get to know very well—doing a lot of work at night time in lesson preparation, marking and so on, putting up with a lot in the classroom which you would not have to put up with in a typical, nine-to-five, 48-week-a-year job and giving up lunch breaks and so on that people in the general community have. So I think they see a different side of teachers and realise just how hard it is. That is a real problem. But we are our own worst enemy. I have no qualms about saying that at all. I am very critical of my staff who openly discourage our year 12s from applying for teaching when it comes to choosing tertiary options for the following year.

Ms CORCORAN—With teachers who bag their own profession, you have to ask why they are in it themselves. Just to cheer you up: my own daughter has followed her father into teaching, so there are some kids still following their parents into the game.

Mr Aldous—I know of a few too.

Ms BIRD—As politicians we entirely sympathise with the lack of valuing of how many hours you put in and what sort of workload you have. And we are much lower down the tree of esteem than teachers. So I certainly take on board what you are saying. Much of your submission is spot on with regard to the vast bulk of what we are hearing in this inquiry. We have sustained some criticism for calling it teacher training, rather than teacher education. But that partly reflects the fact that we were doing the inquiry because we had identified that there were some concerns around the issue of the practicum and the feedback from beginning teachers that they just did not feel work ready, or job ready coming out of their courses.

What would you say is the best way to address the sorts of points you make about the administrative and relationship management tasks involved in the job? Would you look at adding more subjects to the university based training? Would you prefer to deal with that in an internship model? Would you prefer a postgraduation, postregistration formal mentoring program for beginning teachers? While I acknowledge that you say it happens, it is very patchy in how it happens. What do you think would be the best way to deal with that side of the job, which is clearly what beginning teachers are saying they did not feel prepared for?

Ms Ciccarelli—I would think that some of that can be covered more thoroughly—but not sufficiently—in course work in a teacher preparation program.

Ms BIRD—In existing course work? You do not see it as requiring more subjects?

Ms Ciccarelli—Not necessarily. I think those sorts of things can be massaged—whether you put in an extra unit on relationship management or whatever—however the course is structured. I think it can and should be addressed at that level, because some of it is skills that can be taught. I also think that a lot of it needs to be worked through in an experiential way. That is why the members of our association would feel that an internship is a very useful tool. A practicum, which ranges typically from two weeks to four weeks, does not really give a student who is preparing to teach a real feel for the breadth of the role—the administration, the record keeping, the writing to parents, the decisions about when you pick up a phone and ring a parent and how you deal with that, what sorts of records you keep of that afterwards and whom you deal with in

the staff about that. All of those things can seem terribly minor but can be really important for a new teacher, for how the school manages those sorts of things and for the student and parent. If those things are not got right, you can create an awful lot of problems and an enormous amount of angst for a new teacher.

Mr Aldous—One of the benefits of doing it through an internship before the person is posted to a formal teaching position is that very often their first posting might be in a fairly remote community with a whole lot of other inexperienced teachers around them. The opportunities for good experiences of mentoring may not be there, through no-one's fault other than the fact that it is a relatively inexperienced staff. To have that experience somewhere preferably away from an isolated community, where there is good mentoring going on—perhaps as part of an internship while they are still training—would be a far more effective way of giving them an appreciation of what it is really like, whilst also perhaps being on a lighter load of teaching. We would all love to give our first-year-out teachers one less class, and many schools do in fact do that, but we cannot all afford to do that. I think that, whilst that is not achievable, if a person can have those experiences of what it is like to meet, for example, reporting deadlines—which people find terribly stressful, especially in their earlier years of teaching—while they are on a lighter load, and have someone really closely monitoring and supporting them, that is enormously beneficial, rather than doing it when the pressure is really on as a first-year-out teacher, perhaps many hundreds of kilometres away from the next school.

Ms BIRD—That is useful; it takes us a bit beyond the practicum. While there is lots we have heard about the way the current model of practicum is funded and about things that could be improved in the way partnerships with the schools operate, beyond knowledge, skills and classroom management, it would be a bit much to expect students to also take on board administrative functions and relationship building in that normal practicum module. My view is that you are better off letting them get into a classroom to work that out first in those stages of practicums, but that is a very useful concept of a model for then getting job ready, which I think is where a lot of complaints and concerns, from both beginning teachers and the schools that they go to, come from.

The other issue that comes up consistently is the funding of the practicums. As you say, quite rightly, the universities pay such a small amount. Indeed, I know many teachers who will not do it, because it pushes them into the next tax bracket and they end up financially worse off for having done it. Do you feel funding schools who provide release or coordinating people with releases and so forth would be a more welcome model?

Ms Ciccarelli—I think often for teachers and for schools, it would. But let us focus on the experienced teacher who is thinking about supervising a practice teacher. In the context of schools and everything that goes on in schools today, time is the most precious resource for a practising professional. To ask an experienced teacher to take on the supervision of a prac student and do it in a way that is actually going to be effective, there is no way around it. It absorbs a considerable amount of time: helping the student prepare lessons; observing them; giving feedback in ways that are helpful, compassionate and supportive—all of those sorts of things. These are not just things that you can slip in at the end of the day; they really absorb time. If you talk to teachers, the thing that is most precious to them now, and has been for the last few years, is time.

Ms Corcoran, I was going to pick up on your question earlier about whether it would be appropriate to insist that all schools take on prac students. It seems to me that the taking on of a prac student should be, and generally is, seen by practising members of the profession as one of those important professional responsibilities that you take on. It is not just part of the job; it is a broader professional responsibility. To affirm that approach by giving people the opportunity to have time to do it properly also really affirms the worth of what they are doing in a much more substantial way than giving them a couple of hundred dollars at the end of two weeks when, as you say, most of it goes straight back to the tax office. But to say, 'Okay we'll fund the school, so if you take on a prac student there will be time available'—which the school would obviously have to massage in various ways—to recognise the commitment that you are making and to help you do it properly,' seems to us to be a much more effective way of encouraging practising teachers to support learning teachers. But it also moves it into a much broader context of supporting a professional approach rather than an individual, 'Do you want to do an extra job for a few extra dollars', approach.

Ms BIRD—Yes, that makes a lot of sense.

Mr Aldous—And as a practising principal with overall responsibility for a budget, the cost of providing time is clearly significantly greater than providing even some reasonable levels of salary increase. That is just an unfortunate fact of life. We hear this story time and time again from staff: 'I'm not really interested in the money, but I do need time to do something well.'

CHAIR—This committee has discussed with a range of witnesses possible partnerships between universities and schools and the ways in which trainee teachers can give back to schools, can be part of a school's community and can perhaps assist in some way with the workload of teachers. There have been some good suggestions put forward. You raise the point that many other witnesses have raised in relation to the constraints on the time of teachers these days—and that increasing pressure on time in the last few years. For me, as one of the non-teaching people on this committee, could you highlight a number of the factors coming into play that are placing such a strain on professional teachers' time and working against teachers participating in mentoring trainee teachers?

Mr Aldous—Obviously my experience is in the Western Australian context, but I do know that the situation is similar around other parts of the country as well and the trend towards a more outcomes based education—quite apart from arguments about whether that is a good or a bad thing—is certainly imposing a lot of extra work on our teachers in terms of preparing and marking assessment tasks. I am hearing constantly from teachers about the new curriculum changes. I am even hearing about them from our mathematics teachers, for whom marking was a relatively simple thing in days past—I am a former maths teacher myself. Most of Australia has gone to a more outcomes based education philosophy, although the states are all doing that in different ways, but the shift is adding significantly to the workload in terms of lesson and assessment preparation and assessment marking.

Ms BIRD—Can I clarify this, John. I will preface my comments by saying I worked in the New South Wales TAFE system when we went to competency based training. As for what you said, certainly in what were probably the first two years that was true—while we were mastering a new system and developing the new tools. But then it petered out because we had mastered the system and we were familiar with the new methods. Firstly, do you think that is going to be the

case here? Secondly, what strikes me about the teaching profession is not so much the individual changes but the rate and pace of change. Because of the modern world and the society we live in, curriculums do change more regularly. Would you comment on both of those, please.

Mr Aldous—Certainly our colleagues in the eastern states, who have been operating under outcomes based education for longer than we in Western Australia have, still make comments on the huge and increasing workload they have as a consequence of the curriculum change, so the issue is not just the particular curriculum change in a specific direction but the rate of curriculum change generally and the rate of other changes too. There is certainly an increased expectation that there will be more and more things dumped on schools all the time, in the areas of health and so on, that perhaps previously had been addressed through other avenues. There seems to be more and more added to—to quote an old saying—an already overcrowded curriculum.

CHAIR—Given that you talk about the impact of curriculum change on the workload of the teacher, is the major component of that curriculum change the teacher obtaining subject knowledge in a new field or expanding their subject knowledge through, perhaps, personal study in a range of areas, to handle that change—or is it the administration of the change?

Mr Aldous—In my experience, it is probably the administration of the change rather than the necessity to significantly upgrade qualifications in a particular teaching area. It is more a general understanding of what the changes will mean, how to cater for them and how to moderate across subjects and so on. That is where the vast majority of professional development seems to be required, rather than in, for example, learning more about physics to become a better physics teacher. It is more how to cope with the curriculum changes that are happening and how to deal with all those assessment changes.

CHAIR—In your submission, you raise the views of some beginning teachers—how they felt unprepared to face the rigours of the classroom. Do you think it has always been that way or do you think this is a relatively new phenomenon? I know that in many other professions over a long period of time graduate engineers or people in other fields have similarly felt unprepared to meet the rigours of the workplace when they have come out of university. Having left university, they have probably realised the additional knowledge that they still need to gain in order to be a professional in their field.

Mr Aldous—I would agree that in years gone by people really struggled in their first year out teaching. I had the same experience and, I dare say, Mary, who is beside me, had the same experience. Even our colleagues who are presidents of the respective state associations in our organisation were making exactly the same comment last weekend. Yes, we all find it tough in our first year or two of teaching. However, I think the context now is a little bit different. We are looking now at ways in which we can attract more people to teaching and better prepare them for teaching. In years gone by we did not necessarily have the same problems of attracting people to teaching. Even though in many ways it may be just as tough for a first-year-out teacher now as it was then, in other ways it is different. Even though some of the problems that one faces as an initial teacher now are similar to those that others faced before, the context in which we work now is very different. For example, teenagers in our secondary setting are very different now—and I say that in a compassionate way, not a derogatory way. We are dealing with a very different person in front of us in the classroom and that is where a lot of the stress is arising for first-year-out teachers.

Ms Ciccarelli—I think it is very easy to be flippant about the complexities in that regard, but they are quite crucial—and I am particularly talking from the secondary viewpoint. It is not unusual for quite young teachers to have to deal with students who are revealing self-harm or students who are suicidal—let alone students revealing things that a few years ago might have been considered catastrophic: an unplanned pregnancy or something. That is almost minor these days in terms of having to deal and cope with the other sorts of things.

There is also, on the other hand, a growing sense of accountability. Again, I am not saying that in a negative sense. There is a growing sense in which teachers often feel worried about how they are responding—not because they do not feel they are responding correctly to a student in need or a situation but because of how that will or could be perceived in another context or if people did not understand the context. Do you know what I mean?

CHAIR—Yes.

Ms Ciccarelli—There are all of those difficulties.

CHAIR—Would you say that the students of today are more challenging to beginning teachers than perhaps the students of 15 or 20 years ago?

Mr Aldous—Very much so.

Ms Ciccarelli—I do not think there is a lot of doubt about that.

CHAIR—I mean challenging the information that is put forward, not necessarily in specific behaviour traits—challenging the teacher on points that the teacher might make?

Mr Aldous—On both counts I would say yes. For example, a teacher of information communication technology in a secondary school really has trouble keeping ahead of a teenager. Often the kids know much more about computers and so on than the teachers. That is a real challenge for them. So, yes, they are very much more challenging from a behavioural perspective and a lot more challenging in terms of expectations—their sophistication as young people now is significantly greater than it was before. That is probably reflected in our need to have smaller class sizes. It was relatively easy in the old days to stand up in front of a group of 50, because there were no significant behavioural problems in the group—and, if there were, we all know how they were dealt with, as horrid as that was. Yes, both from a behavioural perspective and from a knowledge component, that is true. Our students these days are very sophisticated. They have access to huge amounts of knowledge through the technology that we now have in our society.

Ms BIRD—I am interested in one thing: it strikes me that the other thing that has changed is that, if you left school and went straight into university and did three years—it would rarely have been four years—and came out into a classroom, there was a significant sense of maturity difference and that gave you some viability. I would suspect that walking into a classroom full of 16- and 17-year-olds, given how sophisticated they are these days, is now much more challenging for a 21- or 22-year-old than it used to be. Arising out of that is an issue that has come before the committee quite a bit about the great value of mature age students who are looking at a career change. I would like to give you the opportunity to make any observations on

mature age students, whether you see them quite a bit and whether the teacher preparation is appropriate for them?

Ms Ciccarelli—It is certainly one of the reasons that, in our discussion on the weekend, our members, while wanting to say that their experience was that the best sort of first-year-out teachers seem to come from three-year or four-year education and teacher training courses, rather than from the traditional BA, Dip. Ed. pathway, were also very keen to say that the BA, Dip. Ed. pathway should still be available for students who do not know what they want to do at 17 and also specifically for mature age students who want a career change. I think it would be fair to say that those kinds of mature age students are perceived as often being highly valuable recruits to the profession.

Mr Aldous—As someone who employs a significant number of mature age people who have made the choice to move, I would say that those people bring significant experience—some out-there experiences, whether as practising accountants or whatever—to the classroom that is just invaluable. That would be the most significant benefit that they bring to the classroom. Many of them do not have significantly fewer discipline problems than a first-year-out teacher, even though the age range is much greater between them and the students they are teaching.

Ms BIRD—Respect for your elders is a concept well and truly gone, is it not?

Mr Aldous—That is true.

Ms BIRD—Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence as soon as it is available and a copy of the transcript will be posted on the parliamentary web site. Thank you very much.

[4.18 pm]

GARNIER, Mrs Bernadette Anne, State Councillor for Fremantle South District and Vice-President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these public hearings are recorded by Hansard and a record is made available to the public through the parliamentary web site. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mrs Garnier—I am here on behalf of the President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, Mr Robert Fry.

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the 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 invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mrs Garnier—I would like to offer Mr Robert Fry's sincere apologies for not being able to make it today. He is based up in Port Hedland and he is unable to come down for this. I am representing the acronym WACSSO. It is recognised as the peak state body representing parents and citizens associations in government schools. Currently we have a bit over 634 P&Cs affiliated with our organisation.

We divide our organisation into electorates, of which each has a councillor. I am the councillor for Fremantle South. The role of the councillor is to get to know, at a grassroots level, the schools in their area and any concerns the parents have. The P&Cs are encouraged to have a member of their organisation on the school councils, so there is plenty of feedback from both streams of parental involvement in schools.

Our mission statement is to influence the direction of education for the benefit of students. For that reason, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our paper and to answer any questions with regard to the training of teachers. The WACSSO organisation recognises that our children's formal education is dependent upon many factors, one of which is their teacher. I do not think we can underestimate the importance that one teacher can play in a child's life.

CHAIR—You talk in your submission about the emphasis being placed on the initial selection process, particularly in the larger universities, and the focus being very much on TER scores. The universities have put forward the argument that the resources involved in an extensive interview process or some extension of that selection process would make such a change prohibitive. I am interested in your thoughts on that and whether you think it is a realistic expectation, given the large number of teaching graduates, to look at a more rigorous selection process?

Mrs Garnier—As we have identified in our submission, a teaching degree is seen as a valuable commodity for many other professions. We believe that many people enter the

profession with that in mind—it is a stepping stone. Given the current high attrition rate and the burnout rate, which we have shown is not just a reflection of the fact that the work force is ageing—newer graduates are burning out within their first to third years—we honestly believe that they cannot afford to get the selection wrong in the first place. Other professions have noted that their selection process for other degrees has to be looked at. For example, entry to training for the medical profession, which used to be based solely on TER, is now based on a combination of TER, interview and other criteria, and that has had a real reflection on the quality of medical officers coming into the work force. I think we would see the same impact if they got the selection criteria right with teachers.

CHAIR—Do you think, though, in relation to teacher burnout, that it is very much a function of perhaps feeling a bit isolated in those first years of teaching? Do you think the burnout issue could be addressed in other ways, such as through stronger mentoring programs for beginning teachers and through your organisation bringing these beginning teachers into the school community and the social community? Do you agree?

Mrs Garnier—I think mentoring programs have great value, and I have no doubt that they will help reduce the burnout, but we do believe—and I am speaking on behalf of the organisation—

CHAIR—The selection process.

Mrs Garnier—that, if they get it right at the selection point, it will be easier to mentor them.

Ms CORCORAN—I suggest that, if students realise during the university course that teaching is not for them, they are better off out of it, for their own sakes as well as for the sake of everybody else, but I see a difference between students leaving during their university course and teachers leaving within the first couple of years of teaching—I am not sure how I feel about that. During the course of this inquiry we have heard over and over again about the increasing numbers of 40- or 50-year olds coming into teaching after having had another career, and they are seen as valuable. If we are going to accept accountants in their middle 40s coming in to teach, I guess we have to accept teachers in their middle 40s wandering off to be accountants.

CHAIR—In search of excitement?

Ms CORCORAN—In search of excitement. I am an accountant, so that is the reason for the jibe. Do you see a difference there—that perhaps there is a place in our society for everyone getting up and changing places in their mid-40s?

Mrs Garnier—I think we will see more of that as the years go on.

Ms CORCORAN—Is it necessarily a problem?

Mrs Garnier—Only when we have already identified that perhaps in 10 years time there will be an acute teacher shortage, just going by the ordinary attrition rates. The next 10-year gap is a window of opportunity to get more teachers trained up and on board. Although you will always have some natural selection, as I would refer to it, where people swap jobs or come and go, in

the next 10-year period we need to get the core number of trained quality teachers up to speed to counteract the decline in numbers that we can already see statistically.

Ms CORCORAN—The people who appeared before you—and others before them—made the point that teaching is not seen as a desirable career and that a lot of teachers themselves, in fact, discourage their own kids from going into it. They said that teachers are not seen as professionals and that when we are not bagging politicians we spend our days bagging teachers. Do you relate to those comments? Is that a problem? Is it in fact discouraging some people from going into teaching; and, if so, what do we do about it?

Mrs Garnier—WACSSO has recognised that the public perception of teachers is not as positive as it could be. We think that if you change people's opinion at a grassroots level then that will eventually filter up to the top. Sometimes they do not get it at the top. So if individual teachers value themselves then parents will value them and the school community will value them. Once one or two school communities do that you build a wealth of positive public perception. That is our opinion. At a grassroots level we know how we can address it—by encouraging the teachers to become involved and familiarise themselves with school councils and P&Cs. That allows more parental interaction with the teachers, rather than just the formal classroom interaction. You get a whole-of-school, community strength coming from that and, without fail, it filters out to the community that the teachers at that school are good. It starts at that level and works its way up.

Ms CORCORAN—I think you make a good point. Somewhere in your submission you talk about the need for universities to develop relationships with schools for the purpose of practicums.

Mrs Garnier—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—We hear this a lot, but I am not sure what different people mean by developing a relationship. Why would a university develop a relationship with a school? What is in it for the university and what is in it for the school?

Mrs Garnier—I am not sure I can answer that as fully as you perhaps want me to. Can I get a written reply to you within the next seven days?

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, that would be great. I think there is plenty of time.

Mrs Garnier—We like to act fairly quickly.

Ms CORCORAN—Good on you.

Ms BIRD—I am interested in putting to you a question that we put to the Catholic school principals who appeared before us—on the idea of internship which, generally speaking, we feel has a lot of value. I did ask them whether they anticipated any problems from parents, given that we are talking about a significant period—perhaps six months of the year; two terms—where a class is being taught by a non-certified practising teacher. They seemed to feel that would not be problematic for parents. Would you agree with that?

Mrs Garnier—Under this internship idea, would there be a qualified teacher in the room?

Ms BIRD—Not necessarily. You would have a supervising teacher. In practicums you can be in first year uni and the teacher is not in the classroom with you—which is why I had a concern about how parents would react to that over a significant period of time.

Ms CORCORAN—Under the model that was put to us, the internship would be at the end of the course.

Mrs Garnier—So in the third or fourth year of their course?

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, in the last six months of their course—as the last thing they do.

Mrs Garnier—That is an idea WACSSO has never considered. I can give my personal opinion that that would not be very well received. If there were not a qualified teacher in the room, they would at least have to have one ear to the ground. Having said that, I do represent a very large organisation. We do have a very fast way of networking with each other and getting direct feedback from parents. I could certainly seek clarification from the entire body about what they thought of that. But I would imagine it would be in the negative.

Ms BIRD—The principals did say that, having said that they did not think it would be a problem, it would very much depend on the structures that were put in place, of course, around that. It might be useful for your organisation to take that away and consider—and we do not expect a reply in three days but perhaps you could consider it at one of your next forums—if there were a move towards an internship model, the requirements you feel parents would have to make that an acceptable model. That would be useful for us before we get to the point of making recommendations. It would be great if that could be done.

Mrs Garnier—That would not be a problem.

Ms BIRD—The other thing I wanted to tease out from your submission is that you talk about the fact that so often those who are delivering the training at universities are perceived—rightly or wrongly, I do not know—to have very little actual classroom experience and to be removed from reality. I am just interested in where that information came to the organisation from. In the discussion, were any ideas floated about how that could be addressed?

Mrs Garnier—In which part of our submission did we say that?

Ms BIRD—It is in the section on the educational philosophy underpinning it—the fact that there is so often that gap between the theory and the practice. Often, those delivering the theory have not done the practice for a long time. In the context of that debate, I thought you might like to comment on that.

Mrs Garnier—I think the basis of that information has probably come from an around-the-table discussion of state councillors saying that, when they have talked with teachers who are leaving or who are leaving the profession having not long been at the school, the teachers have said anecdotally and subjectively that they did not think that their instructors and preceptors and things like that through university had much grounding in real teaching—‘or, if they did, they

would have told us by now what it was going to be like'. I can definitely remember that, around the table, those sorts of comments were made. But there was no formal research; it was just a very large collection of anecdotal evidence.

Ms BIRD—It is a common comment to us in the information provided to the committee from the community and organisations—other than the universities, I might say, who do not seem to say that. Within the context of that conversation, was there any comment? Did people just feel that university lecturers should spend more time in schools or did they perhaps feel that they should draw more regularly from the school teaching population?

Mrs Garnier—As a parent body, we perceive that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the other teachers out there. They want to share that with the graduates. You see that reflected in fantastic relationships between graduates and an individual classroom teacher. I see it all over my electorate, which has 31 schools. I see it all the time. I hear lovely positive comments from parents that the graduate teachers were well supported and the teacher really imparted good, sound teaching skills to them. Then they add the comment, 'It's a shame the university lecturer didn't do that for them.' But we all can appreciate the workload of university lecturers, the enormous size of their student bodies and things like that and the many other contributing factors such as the age of the student, prior learning, cultural factors and perceptions.

CHAIR—WACSSO has been around for many years. I am interested in the thoughts of the organisation on the quality of the beginning teachers who are coming through our system. Has there been any detectable change over that time, for better or for worse, in the beginning teachers who are coming into the system?

Mrs Garnier—I will speak generally here. I am sure you will appreciate that I am not a professional teacher. I am an ordinary parent, I am actually a volunteer in the organisation and we have an official policy and research officer, who is a paid employee of ours, to pull statistics together to back up arguments. I am not sure if this answers your question directly but you often hear, 'There's not enough male teachers; there used to be more male teachers. There's more females.' The almost loud response from parents is, 'We don't care what the sex of the teacher is, we just want a good teacher.' I know that may not fit with what other research is saying but at ground level that is what people want.

Then you have the Indigenous communities. We have P&Cs that are affiliated with remote schools in Western Australia and things like that. They have other expectations of their teachers. So when they get young, newly graduated teachers into those areas, we have had feedback that the teachers have not been well prepared to come to those remote regions. As opposed to, for example, nursing, where in the orientation they would spend a whole day doing cultural orientation, graduate teachers do not seem to get that from the education department when they are about to be moved out to those areas. Or if they are getting it, they are not getting it!

As an organisation we think that the graduate teachers coming out are fairly high quality. We appreciate that teachers have to deal in class with the same problems which face us as parents—the enormous array of stimuli that comes from society. Unlike the family situation, the teachers do not even have the authority the way a parent would. So we appreciate that and it is not: 'Go out and hang the graduate teachers.' No lynching party is out there. Perhaps in the remote

regions they could be better supported with IT support and a physical presence—someone dropping in more often to give them that support—and a better cultural orientation. In the metropolitan area I do not know whether they could even be better supported with little microcosms of other graduate teachers getting together and feeding back to each other. They may find they are the only graduate teacher in a school of 40 staff. I would imagine that would be fairly isolating. You tend to find that the new graduates respond to parents. They do not have preconceived notions and they have a lot of sympathy for the parents. They tend to bond quite well. Does that answer your question?

CHAIR—Yes, it does.

Ms BIRD—Can I ask you—and I am kicking myself that I did not ask this earlier, and I might start doing so—what is a good teacher?

Mrs Garnier—One who your child loves and they come home and cannot wait to go back to school the next day. One who opens up communication between the parents at a face-to-face level. I am not talking about formal reporting issues here, I am talking about the communication, ‘I know your son because he always wears a red bandanna.’ Perhaps at a primary school level the teachers get to know the students very well but certainly at WACSSO a lot of our feedback from the parents who have children at high school is that they want to know that the teacher teaching their child actually knows their child. It is small things like that which reflect that they know the personality of the child. I know many people say a good teacher knows the personality of the child and the social situation the child has come from and they have the educational ability to impart the knowledge of their particular subject.

Ms BIRD—That is interesting; thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Bernadette, for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information, and we are looking forward to receiving the answers to the questions that have been placed on notice. A transcript of the proceedings will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 4.40 pm