



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL
TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2005

PERTH

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
Wednesday, 26 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 8.23 am**PATON, Ms Pamela Rosalyn, Director, Western Australian College of Teaching**

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training inquiry into teacher education. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Edith Cowan University for offering to host the committee today. We are aware of the considerable effort that goes into the preparations for a visit like this, so could I thank those responsible for the arrangements. The committee has visited a number of universities around Australia as part of this inquiry, including Central Queensland University in Noosa, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory and Flinders University and the University of South Australia in Adelaide. These visits proved to be very useful and we look forward to hearing about the teacher education at this institution and the challenges being faced by teacher educators today.

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 invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Ms Paton—Thank you for the opportunity and the kind invite. I have read most of the submissions on your web site and was delighted to be called. I have also been in contact with my colleagues on other teacher registration boards—most recently Wendy Hastings from South Australia, who I understand also presented to you. My background is as a primary school teacher, so I am up for anything. I have taught since 1968 and have just announced my retirement. I am going to walk the Bibbulmun Track end to end, starting in late March.

I have been a deputy principal, have worked at the department at all levels and have an enduring passion for teaching. On my good days, I can teach the socks off anybody, but I have had my shabby moments too. As the director of the College of Teaching, I have worked closely with five universities. This is a small town, but we actually have five universities. We began with a new piece of state legislation in September 2004, the WA College of Teaching Act, which created the first registration board scheme for teachers in the state. We had a go 30 years ago, and it was rescinded after a change of government and never came into operation. So, now the rabbit-proof fence is up in this state too in the sense that, if people are deregistered in other states, we are similarly alerted. To be without a teacher registration authority would put us and our students in grave danger, I would suggest. I am happy now to let you speak with me about what you want to know.

CHAIR—Would you be able to explain the processes of accrediting teacher training programs in Western Australia and the ways in which it is either similar to or varies from other states?

Ms Paton—We have not even begun. I am trying to register 40,000 teachers with five staff, and that will probably consume most of my activities up until the grandfather clause expires in March next year. There is already a committee through the board for accreditation, and we have already had some brought to us. There are a couple of examples of where, when we looked at the

transcript and credentials, even for people I knew, my staff realised that the practicum was limited, so we sought advice from our other registration board authorities. Some of them came to us from our local universities having had their practicum in a district office rather than in a school, which we severely questioned as well—although, in good faith, it was set up before our legislation, so we honoured those but asked that the universities try always to have teachers on practicums in school settings rather than district offices.

We have had forays into it. Notre Dame as recently as last week asked me for a look at a proposal they have for phys ed teachers. There is a push across the nation, as you know, for physical education teachers at the primary and secondary level, so they have already come to us to say, ‘Does this substantiate the credentials for an approved tertiary course?’ and at the moment it does. We have begun, but it is not a formal process, as it is in Queensland.

CHAIR—What is your view on the quality of graduate that is being produced by the universities in Western Australia at this point?

Ms Paton—I will be cautious with my feedback—my son is studying here in middle schooling, and we had this conversation last night. He is a science graduate who has come back, as many people do, as a mature age student. It is a year long, and I would suggest it is a careful balance of theory and practice, but it is a very short one-year course. The converse of that, as he would remind me, is that he has come out of the workplace for a year. There is this tension. I was delighted as a mother and educator to hear, ‘Mum, I’d like to come back, be a teacher and serve the community.’ It makes your heart sing, but there is a cost involved in doing that.

Our legislation as a teacher registration board is unique in Australia. I do not know whether you know that. We are an independent and autonomous body. It is not set up within a department structure; in fact, it is most likely modelled on the Scottish model. There are some threads and things in there you might like to know for your consideration, and things that I have aspirations regarding. At long last, through the College of Teaching, we might have a dinkum graduate process for teacher education graduates. In Scotland, if they exit a Scottish university, they are guaranteed provisional registration with the Scottish board—the equivalent of our college—and then they spend their first year on a lower teaching fractional time. They are assigned a mentor, and they must continue their training in situ. Having accomplished that, they move from provisional to fully registered teachers. I dream for my profession that we have a dinkum graduate process that links the education providers, like this university, to their first or second year of training in situ, whether they are part time, casual. There must be something more dinkum than a six-week break and then having to step up and be a teacher. The art and craft is much more complex.

Ms BIRD—Can you clarify how long that is?

Ms Paton—It is one year.

Ms BIRD—And that is a paid position?

Ms Paton—Yes. It is a paid position in Scotland.

Ms BIRD—It is on a reduced load?

Ms Paton—On a reduced FT—

Ms BIRD—Is it reduced pay?

Ms Paton—Yes, it is, but it is not markedly different. You could certainly live and support a small family on it.

CHAIR—We have heard a lot of discussion from a range of witnesses on the adequacy of practicum. What is the view of the College of Teaching and perhaps your personal view on the adequacy of the practicum arrangements that currently exist in Western Australia and the need for improvement or otherwise?

Ms Paton—It is adequate, but it will always depend on the professional engagement of both parties. It is not an operational issue, actually. It is about how one supervising teacher with some experience, skills and knowledge interacts and engages. I am experiencing that with my own son, as I said, right at this moment. I am sick to death of people asking me, ‘What am I getting for my 70 bucks to register as a teacher?’ I ask them, having never, ever encountered public life like that: ‘What are you doing for the profession? This is my demand of you—that you engage in leading the profession.’ The self-talk, self-image and lack of activity of engagement are damaging. One of the regulations for reregistration in this state has 13 things through which you can keep your commitment to ongoing PD. One of them is stepping up and supervising. It is honoured in legislation. That is one way you can contribute. You do not have to be always getting something for your buck. You have to do something. That is one of my answers. There is a requirement that you reinvest in the profession by taking on graduate students.

Ms BIRD—I just want to explore that Scottish model a bit more. We have had numerous representations made to us that, with the pace of curriculum change and the challenges of a modern classroom, it is difficult to get teachers, even when they are willing and have a sense that they would like to do it, to actually say they can manage doing it. Are the mentors in the Scottish model also on a reduced load?

Ms Paton—Yes, they are, so that they can align their time off together. I am watching two parallel things here. One of my sons is training to be a teacher and another is training to be a lawyer. I can actually see a real, marked difference in how they approach their training and their colleagues in their workplaces. It is fascinating to watch. In the Scottish model that first year is guaranteed employment. If you pass the teacher training course you are guaranteed a placement and a reduced load with another light person—an experienced teacher—in order to complete the other requirements of registration.

Ms BIRD—And then, when you have finished that, you become a fully registered teacher?

Ms Paton—Yes.

Ms BIRD—Taking out postgraduate type courses, what is the average length of their undergraduate degrees?

Ms Paton—It is a four-year degree.

Ms BIRD—In your submission you were talking about the standards professional practice and values statement. You did indicate that that framework does not specify requirements relating to our points 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7. Point 1 is literacy and numeracy. Is that not an item in the framework? Is that what you are saying to me?

Ms Paton—No, I am sorry—we wrote this in earlier days. We have adopted the MCEETYA standards of professional practice, or the board has—and why would you not, actually? That is the standard that will be achieved there.

Ms BIRD—Does that include voc ed?

Ms Paton—To the extent that it is over the K-to-12 curriculum—yes, it is.

Ms BIRD—Some of the dilemma, obviously—and it is reflected in one of our questions—is that sometimes there are quite different requirements on primary compared to secondary. I have some interest in the literacy and numeracy stuff in secondary. You get people who might want to teach in voc ed who are going to say, ‘What are my literacy needs,’ and so on.

Ms Paton—As a primary school teacher I share that big burden. That is an issue.

Ms BIRD—It is just getting them to understand that some basic standard level is required of all teachers.

Ms Paton—Yes, absolutely—I agree without equivocation.

Ms BIRD—When we talked to the Queensland registration board, the big issue was that they were moving away from an inputs based model to an outputs based one. What does your body think about that?

Ms Paton—That is by another act of parliament, the Curriculum Council Act 1997. All education employers ascribe to that, so we will take that on board. There has been a big debate in this state recently about outcomes based education. The college was reluctant to get involved in the sense that our push was to take the higher moral ground that teachers, whatever the curriculum requests or framework by legislation, are properly trained, resourced and given opportunities to experiment.

Ms BIRD—Did your own organisation use outcomes based measurements?

Ms Paton—No, not at this stage.

Ms BIRD—So it is all time servings based.

Ms Paton—Yes. The ground is very fertile and they will need to stop and consider. We have a 19-member board, which is a fairly large board. In state legislation, they must get up a registration scheme, which is highly mechanical and will finish up like belonging to the RAC. But the big thing is about the standards, the ethics and the conduct and that sort of work. They need to turn their heads to that in due course.

Ms BIRD—So that is at a very initial stage.

Ms Paton—Absolutely.

Ms BIRD—It does feed particularly into another big issue that has been raised with us about the amount of hours put into practicum. Your submission touches on it and so does the Notre Dame submission. Yesterday we heard quite a bit about it not always being about quantity, that it is about the actual quality of what is involved. In registering, if you simply go with an hours based type model it can be limited.

Ms Paton—We have a 45-day minimum, which is a very low threshold, as you would agree, to register as a provisional, a new graduate teacher. But that was to take into account the Australian landscape. By mutual recognition, we take everybody that is registered in another state too, so we were trying to cut back.

Ms BIRD—That is quite a few days if you are doing a one-year Grad Dip. Ed.

Ms Paton—Yes. You would want to go back to the regs and change that if the course were expanded to two years. More practicum time could be built in.

Ms BIRD—Or alternatively you could probably trial the internship model you were talking about with the one-year Grad Dip. Eds.

Ms Paton—I have been inspired by Edith Cowan placards out there. I must spend the rest of my life getting a decent intern practice. This is not good enough. It has not been good enough ever, so this needs to match the transition. It is not orientation. The transition from a university course into the workplace has to be decent. It is so fragmented. I have worked and lived in the bush too. It is all over the shop. People are welcomed, oriented, to the great and noble profession and there has to be some support there. My aspiration is that the college will insist on an induction program which is substantial. More than that, I would push the employers to provide an internship program.

CHAIR—Just to expand that question a little further, when talking about the obvious merits of an internship arrangement we see that a lot of the graduate or beginning teachers are having to go bush. They may end up at a school where their senior teacher may only have one year more training than them. How do you see that working as far as a quality internship goes, when many of the positions are in the harder-to-staff schools? Many of the positions are amongst staff who are not much more experienced than the new teachers.

Ms Paton—Like in Queensland, 20 per cent of our schools have less than 100 children and the turnover is every two years. My research at Murdoch was about leadership in those schools, so I know this patch very well. I have a real-life example, my son, in front of me every day across the Weeties. All the kids I have seen out there—and they are not all kids; some are in their 30s—are very adept at using an electronic mentoring program. The technologies out there should be explored more significantly than they are. Yes, we would have one-to-one mentoring in a dream world, but those kids deal with harsh realities. If you are at Warakurna, which is 20 kilometres from Giles, there is no other service but the school. It is as bleak as that. So they are very used to being on their own, contacting their mates by email and texting them using one

finger. This is their world and they can do this well. There are telecentres out there so they can get a visual image of these people. My belief is that we can do this decently and with dignity.

Ms CORCORAN—I understand the college is about 12 months old.

Ms Paton—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—You must be in the process of getting these thousands of teachers—

Ms Paton—40,000.

Ms CORCORAN—registered now. What is your initial process? Does every teacher in the place pay the \$70? You must have a start-up. Can you explain the process.

Ms Paton—Sure. There are two processes running simultaneously, one which will end with a grandfather clause expiring in March next year. As soon as the doors opened on 15 September, if you were a new graduate, new to WA or new to Australia and you had work rights to work in Australia, you needed to register as a teacher before you went out to the marketplace to seek employment. That will be the work forevermore. That is like the registration boards that you have visited. As for the grandfather clause, New South Wales is not doing this, and I have no idea how we will mutually recognise them—they will be stuck in New South Wales, actually. The grandfather clause says that if you are out there now, like my husband and I, and you have taught in the past in a WA school you are entitled in the period between 15 September last year and March 2006 to apply for foundation membership, as we have called it, on a stat dec—and we cannot check the quality from stuff like that—with somebody standing your guard that you did teach at a school. It is free. The minister at the time, wisely or unwisely, said, ‘There’s no money.’ So I am trying to do this job with five staff and \$500,000 and also create the business processes to register teachers. In the end, it will be quite mechanical. They will sit on a teacher register, which I hope will be web based so that both parents and employers can find out.

Ms CORCORAN—Does that registration last forever?

Ms Paton—No, it has to be renewed every year. When they register, they sign up to a commitment to ongoing professional development. As I said earlier, one of those ways to demonstrate ongoing professional development could be to step up and take under your wing a new teacher.

Ms CORCORAN—So are the teachers that are coming on board now for the first time going through some accreditation process with you?

Ms Paton—Yes, those things are listed in the registration.

Ms CORCORAN—So are you looking at what their qualifications are and where they have been?

Ms Paton—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—I do not know how you could possibly have done it, given the very short time and the lack of staff. At some point, will you be looking at all the courses that are available and judging them?

Ms Paton—Yes. There will be an accreditation process. We will look at how to do it and try to align that with what is required in the act and establish the minimum things. There needs to be some future scoping. Through my own past, I have lots of contacts with the major employers—the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office and the independents, through an organisation—about feedback from the schools about what they require. We directly responded to that. Sending out to remote locations people who are new to this state and who have poor English as teachers disadvantages the individual teacher—from India or wherever—and the students. So the ESL requirement in this state in front of this board is the highest in Australia. They must have that. That is one of the requirements: you must have English language competence.

Ms CORCORAN—I wanted to go back to the internship question that you were talking about before. Yesterday it was put to us that a model might be that the last six months of a student's study would be an internship at a school. The question was raised of how parents would feel about their children being taught by someone who was unqualified. Do you have any comment to make about that? It seems to me that this morning we are talking about the internship happening after they have qualified, in their first job. This model is a step before that.

Ms Paton—I bring all my wisdom and experience, and I say that there is time to learn and reflect in an institution like this one—and then a time to go out into the workplace. I think they are different things. I am not convinced about that model where it is tucked inside. It might save employers a lot of money and all that sort of stuff, but that is not my interest in pursuing my professional aspirations. It is about getting a dinkum course—a rigorous course, if you will—with some practicum, such as distributed pracs and some time in classrooms. But the internship I mean is when they are qualified; they can do it. Then you do not have to get engaged in the notion of what parents think about that at all. Both parents and kids deserve a qualified person in front of them.

Ms CORCORAN—My last question is about the pracs, which you just brought up. It has also been put to us that there should be a system in place where all schools are obliged to take student teachers in for pracs. At the moment I understand it does not happen that way. What is your view about that?

Ms Paton—Obligation.

Ms CORCORAN—That would come with time release or whatever.

Ms Paton—Sure. This has only happened in the last six months, after being in this job for a couple of years. I have taken off the cookie cutters so that I do not care where people in schools teach, and the school frame around them is of no interest. I simply want them to be in schools as their workplace. So I want them as individuals to step up to the professional responsibility of guiding someone through their traineeship. So I do not want schools to have to do anything, but I am hoping that, through a bit of pointy-edge regulation, there will be an obligation as a professional to take someone under your wing at some time when it is appropriate for you.

Mr HENRY—Just following on on the internship, we have had suggestions that the first year of teaching should be a mentored internship with some time for release for further study. How do you feel about that? We have heard a lot about the attrition rate, particularly after the first four or five years after graduation. Do you think that would help? The suggestion has been that classroom management and dealing with the class is a big challenge.

Ms Paton—That is the model I am proposing: after you qualify as a teacher, understanding that you are brand new and qualified but not yet experienced, the next stage is a mentored year, an internship. It is called an ‘Internship’ with a capital ‘i’. There are all sorts of practices in this state that I have lifted the lid on and found that they do not have any prestige or they just do not work; they are just ad hoc at best. I want people to know: ‘I’m going to do the teacher education course. It’s a four-year course’—or a one-year course—‘and after that I will be in an internship. I understand I will be on reduced pay and time, but that is valued by my colleagues, and I know that I will be with someone who wants to be with me and who will shepherd me through, whether that is face to face or by electronic mentor means.’ There are ways to do that.

Mr HENRY—From my perspective, from what we have heard, there is a resistance from schools and teachers to support that sort of process. Is that a reasonable assessment?

Ms Paton—I do not get that at all. That is my biggest play about belonging to the college—that we can realise this aspirational goal that is big-time for the profession, regardless of the employer, the school, the remoteness and all those things that are frameworks around our work. I will put this in the continuum. We can accredit the courses so that the college knows this is a dinkum course, the internship is honoured and valued and people move in a dignified manner into the profession and stay and the attrition rates stop. We need to have something to retrain teachers. People can drop out for five years and come back in—no problem. I do not want an obstetrician like that—trust me! We need to do something about the exit program. As a great and noble profession—and the biggest one—you would want something decent at the exit level so that I can have mentors that do not have to be in situ; they can be wherever. We lose great experience—heaps of it—which just evaporates. It is an awful, appalling waste of human experience and talent. All along the continuum, I have aspirational goals about how we could support the profession by a bit of top-down legislation, if you will.

Mr HENRY—You would be aware that lately there has been a fairly aggressive debate going on about OBE. How does that fit in with the curriculum framework that you speak about in addressing term of reference 9?

Ms Paton—All parties—teachers and employers—have signed on to the curriculum framework. I have lived long enough to have unit curriculum and so on. That is actually not the issue as a teacher. I can give you OBE and all of that. I have led schools. That is not the issue.

Mr HENRY—So what is the issue then?

Ms Paton—The issue is that they have said that this is the framework under which they teach and they have set the goals, mapped it out and they have scoped it out and have got assessment procedures et cetera. So that is over there. That is what a teacher takes on in the contract to teach at this moment. That would be the same as procedures at King Edward Hospital for the doctors of the time. That is what is in play at the moment. Will it change? Well, of course it will. This is

a profession; it is not about making a pot. It is about something bigger than that, so these things will come along.

Mr HENRY—Perhaps there is a shortcoming in that area of professional development for teachers in terms of the introduction of OBE, because there seems to be a lot of resistance from teachers.

Ms Paton—The college would say that, whatever you put in, as part of the teaching and learning program by legislation, you have decent consultation, planning, scoping, training, PD and whatever, so that there is a package that goes underneath that. I would suggest to you that great ideas are fine, but implementing them is something completely different.

Mr HENRY—Thank you.

Ms CORCORAN—I have a question about professional development. You make the point in your submission that one of your functions and powers will be to encourage professional development. You say:

Other agencies, such as the school systems ... are providing programs that not only encourage by—

you use the word ‘by’ but I assume you mean ‘but also’—

require teachers to participate

Is professional development of teachers a requirement at the moment or is it a matter of ‘it would be nice’?

Ms Paton—It is a requirement in most systems, I would suggest to you. But the college’s requirement, in law, is that, at the five-year renewal of their registration, they demonstrate to the college that they have participated in professional development. The regulations have about 13 things listed. They range from very formal things, such as ‘I participated in formal study’ right down to ‘I went to something, I read something, that informed my teaching and I went back and I did it inside my classroom’.

Ms CORCORAN—We can get hold of those regulations?

Ms Paton—Absolutely’ they are on the web site.

Ms CORCORAN—Professional development is probably happening already—

Ms Paton—Yes, it is a requirement.

Ms CORCORAN—for most teachers and will continue to do so.

Ms Paton—Yes. The best case scenario is that we do trust our colleagues that are engaged in it, in all those raft of professional development activities, and we will require demonstration and evidence of that at the five-year renewal stage.

Ms BIRD—On professional development, the one thing that strikes me as being a huge gap for the teaching profession is the capacity to share well-developed teaching programs, resources and so forth. Without going to registering bodies that are going to make it a level of required professional development, one would think that publishing stuff that you had produced would be an obvious professional development activity. Where do you see responsibility and capacity for running some form of either journal or online database that teachers could both contribute to and access?

Ms Paton—It is my dream, and I have said it to the board, that should I live long enough that would be a very valuable thing, regardless of OBE or whatever, because that, again, is not the issue for teachers. They are not thinking about OBE when they are sitting in front of 30 kids in year 9 with smelly shoes. Trust me: it is about the relationship—what I am trying to teach, which is the outcome, and how I am going to do it and present it. The PD out there is voluminous. That is not it, either—that you go to PD. It is a matter of what difference it makes to yourself as a professional and therefore to the outcomes for kids. So the college will never get involved in providing PD, for example—never.

Ms BIRD—Is there anywhere that you could see that currently sitting?

Ms Paton—I think a web site for a college could do that. It would have to be enormous, because of 40,000 people chatting, but there can be ways.

Ms BIRD—What about the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, the new organisation?

Ms Paton—I do not know that teachers are engaged in their connection with that. I do not have any understanding of that.

Ms BIRD—But you would see that as very useful PD?

Ms Paton—Absolutely.

CHAIR—I have one last question with regard to the mentor. What is the proportion of the load and salary that you had in mind—80 per cent?

Ms Paton—Yes, I think so. That is the Scottish model. You can read things and see things, but I would really like to know about that. I would like to get more figures about whether that was such a key thing that attrition—which was Stuart's point—is lessened. Maybe, because of our age, we can get our heads around attrition. People go in and out of careers. I have been a teacher since 1968. Maybe 'attrition' is not the right word any longer. I am just trying to be wise about that.

Mr HENRY—Some sort of tracking to follow people. Some people might step out and then step back in.

Ms Paton—Yes, and that is absolutely fine. No learning is lost, so whatever you have learnt, you bring back.

Mr HENRY—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 and a copy of the transcript will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

[9.03 am]

ANGUS, Professor Max, Head, School of Education, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

GARNETT, Professor Patrick, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Edith Cowan University

de JONG, Dr Terrence, Senior Lecturer and Program Director (Middle Years), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

KRIEG, Ms Susan, Senior Lecturer and Program Director (Kindergarten through Primary), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

LOUDEN, Professor William, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) and Executive Dean, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

McQUEEN, Mr John, Senior Lecturer and Program Director (Strategic Initiatives), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

MONKHOUSE, Miss Georgie, School Manager, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

SCHMIDT, Mr Lars, Faculty Manager, Edith Cowan University

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 introductory remarks.

Prof. Garnett—Thank you, and may I start by extending to all members of the committee a very warm welcome to ECU. I will just make some brief comments about the institution and education's part within that. We are a relatively new university in the Australian context, but we are of a reasonable size. We are the second largest in Western Australia, with about 22,000 students. In terms of our presence in teacher education, that is our history essentially: we have been a provider of teacher education, with our previous institution, since 1902. It is an integral part of the university and it is for us a flagship. The School of Education, as I understand it, is the largest school of education in Australia and it is a flagship program for the university. Over about the last five years—perhaps a touch more—education programs have been going through a significant renewal process. We are very proud of the suite of programs that we now have available. The majority of at least the leadership credit for that goes to Professor Max Angus, who you can interrogate later.

I would like to mention two features. One is that we see ourselves as providing job ready graduates for the market. We are deeply concerned to ensure that our students have the skills and the knowledge to be able to deliver from day one once they are in the school. Secondly, we consider ourselves to be highly engaged with the school sector, both in terms of that preparation and the involvement of school staff in some of our teaching programs and also in the research context. I will hand over to Bill, who knows a lot more.

Prof. Louden—I will make a few remarks about how we see ourselves and give you a sense of what we think we are doing, to guide your questions of us. We see the program that we run here as having these kinds of characteristics. We are highly explicit about what we are trying to teach. You will have heard some criticisms, I think, of teacher education—that it is too theoretical. We would see ourselves informed by theory but pretty tightly focused on the practice. We think we know what good teaching looks like and we think we give a lot of opportunities to our students to practise that and have some supervision in it. We are deeply engaged with schools and school systems. You will have a chance to talk to some of our colleagues and principals about that later today.

We are very focused on building the skills of young people so that, when they begin teaching, they are able to sustain themselves through the first couple of years. People might have spoken to you about what in the industry we call the reality shock or transition shock as people move from their one- or four-year teacher education program into teaching. The context in which they begin teaching is very important in their formation as teachers. There is a period of shock as they readjust from university life to the full responsibility of a class. One of the things we try very hard to do is make sure they have fast starting practical skills to get them through that difficult period as they mature as teachers.

A feature of the program that I want to draw your attention to is that, as we go through the program, we try very hard to develop in students a sense that they are a person who can make a difference to children. There are endless opportunities in the program—and my colleagues would be glad to talk to you about it—where, in addition to prac, students have a chance to work with an individual child or a group of children to see the effect of their instruction, so that they have a strong sense of what we might call self-efficacy, belief that what they are doing really can make a difference. That is what sustains people in those first difficult years.

There are a few things that you will hear people say are not right about teacher education. With my colleagues, I have just finished a large national study for Minister Nelson on the topic of teacher education. You might have heard him quoting from it; he has a favourite bit about phonics that he quotes—that young people, beginning teachers, do not know anything about phonics. That is one of the results of the study. But it is a larger study than that.

The sorts of things that we picked up in the study included that people think that teacher ed is remote from practice, that people think it is too theoretical, that people do not teach reading properly and it is all whole language, and that beginners have weak practical skills and weak personal literacy, are not prepared for the diversity of children that they actually teach and cannot manage classrooms. These are the sorts of criticisms that you will hear. I thought I might just say one or two things about each of those. Having identified those things, we are pretty energetic in making sure that those things are not true about our programs. Let me give you a few moments on those things.

With regard to literacy teaching, we think that in our programs we spend at least as much, if not more, time on literacy as any program in the country. Our students spend something between 11 and 19 per cent of their course time in units that are focused on literacy. That is as much as you will see anywhere.

CHAIR—Is that focusing just on the teaching of literacy or on the individual student's literacy skills as well?

Prof. Louden—We are interested in both those things. In the first year of programs, we focus very much on students' personal literacy. We do not want to graduate students who cannot spell 'sentence' when they write on the board. This has been known to happen, and we do not want to be part of that. So we have some elaborate procedures. Some of my colleagues might like to talk about how we make sure that students' personal literacy is strong. One of the things we are about to do in addition to the things we currently do is to have all students sit the ACER tertiary writing assessment early in the first year of the program so that we have a good sense of which students have difficulties. But we have a number of other things we do at the moment. So there is a lot of time on literacy, much of which is very practical, and there is a fair effort on personal literacy.

The second thing I want to talk about is the strength of the links between theory and practice. I could give you a list of 50 things, but let me give you a list of two or three things. For instance, we run a clinic in the building just behind the building over there. It focuses on literacy and numeracy. The reason we run the clinic—we bring children from schools into it and run the clinic out in schools—is that we want opportunities for our students to work with children who have difficulties and get very fine-grained supervision of that work. It is partly funded by a charitable foundation called the Fogarty Foundation. We run a very intensive program to make sure that the people in that program are really skilled. This year a lot of those people have actually ended up working in the \$700 tutorial voucher scheme. That is before they have graduated as teachers, but they have been picked off as tutors in that because of the highly developed skills they have. That sort of skill training, technical training, runs right through the programs—in the special ed program and the TESOL programs.

Another thing I want to draw attention to in relation to theory and practice concerns the value of going into schools. Sometimes when students go into schools—and we send thousands of students into schools every year—they go to classrooms which are not perfect for learning from. We try to bring excellent practice back into the university. We do that partly by employing people who are teachers in our program and partly by a very elaborate program of collection of digital video which we then run in lectures and workshops. We have a big digital video library that we are collecting at the moment. We build those digital videos into the instructional material so that students can look at something that works well and be given an assignment: 'Talk to your friend about that. What works? What would you do differently?'—that sort of thing. Not only do we go into schools a lot; we have a lot of school stuff back in the program.

Ms BIRD—Can you clarify if that digital video material is teaching practice in classrooms?

Prof. Louden—Yes. And we build it into modules. A student will be given an assignment to look at a piece of video. We will get a transcript of the video which is attached to the video so you can scroll the transcript or scroll the video, find a place, mark it, describe what is happening

there, go looking for examples and compare the examples with your friend who is doing the same assignment.

Ms BIRD—Is that through a partnership with a particular school or particular schools?

Prof. Louden—We have very elaborate partnership arrangements.

Ms BIRD—You would have to get clearance and approvals from parents and all that sort of thing.

Prof. Louden—It is something that we put a lot of time, effort and money into. There is a big digital library being created.

Ms BIRD—We will come back to money later.

Prof. Louden—No doubt you will. In relation to partnerships, in the second or third session this morning you will be able to talk to a few of the principals who work with us. The literature says that you should work in partnership with schools, and we agree with that. We have developed very rich partnerships which are two way: we are clearly offering something to the school in addition to the school providing an opportunity for our students to practise in their schools. We spend a lot of time in schools. The program that Susan Krieg runs, the K-7 program, has nearly 150 days in schools in prac in addition to a large number of other days when people have to go and do an assignment which requires teaching a child something or observing something.

Ms Krieg—That starts in first year, so from first year the students are in schools one day a week.

Prof. Louden—I want to make a final point. Behaviour management is one of the hardest things, especially for people who want to be secondary teachers, to teach in a university context. Universities are clean and orderly most of the time; schools are often not very orderly. There is some very bad behaviour, and how do you get a chance to practise dealing with bad behaviour? Often when you are on prac you are dealing with an experienced teacher who does not get any bad behaviour. How you deal with really exotic bad behaviour is something we have focused on a lot, especially in our secondary programs.

I would like to point you to Tim McDonald, who is on your list to appear later today, who you might like to talk to about the program that he runs. I think there is only one other in the country that is as intensive. But we run a semester long, skills based program on dealing with difficult behaviour. We have placements not only in schools but also in places like the Banksia Juvenile Detention Centre, where really difficult young people are. That same program is supported by a set of video modules where you can look at classroom behaviour and say what you would do. It is very skills based.

The theory of managing classrooms is very easy—you can write it on a couple of index cards. The practice of it is rather harder, and so how you get that to work is an enduring mystery for us. But I think we have got some things to talk about there. That is my overview of what I think the problems are, what sort of place we are and some of the highlights of our work.

CHAIR—Thank you. We heard earlier from the Western Australian College of Teaching, and they discussed the possibility of an intern year. Professor, you mentioned that you are focused on providing job-ready graduates, and the model that was outlined was basically reduced load and reduced pay but with strong mentoring for beginning teachers in their first year. I am interested in your thoughts on internship models, perhaps similar to the Scottish model, which was the one that was noted to us.

Prof. Angus—We currently do have an internship; it is not a full year internship. My colleague Mr McQueen is the person in the school who manages that. We would be supportive of the idea of that, but at the moment it is very difficult to put into practice. Certainly WACOT itself will need to work out its own position with regard to how experience of that kind counts. The general principle that we would hold on to, that Professor Louden has just enunciated, is that we do want to see our graduates have as much access to school experience as possible. But the problem usually is finding people in schools with time and capacity to provide that experience in a form that it is actually productive for the student. That is where we see the partnerships being a platform on which we would build that sort of relationship.

The internship could be terrific if it is placing the students under the care of staff who want the students, for a start, and see a professional role for themselves in tutoring. However, if the school saw it as a supply of labour at low cost and the students got a tough deal as a result of it then we would be going back to the old apprenticeship days, which we would not want to do. We like the principle of it. We would be encouraging students and WACOT to explore that with us. John might care to say couple of words about our experience with internships at the present time.

Mr McQueen—For about five or six years now we have arranged with the department of education that the students in their final semester, which was an elective semester, could assume full-time teaching positions, paid positions, and obtain course credit for that. They also were personally mentored from the university in the first year that occurred. Subsequent to that it has been electronically, through discussion boards and support systems. The students who have done it believe it is a wonderful way of entering teaching. Certainly the mentoring issue for them, trying to get sufficient allowance in the school and so on for formal mentoring, is a challenge for the schools.

But the experience these young people have had, and we have only sent our higher quality graduates, has been very beneficial in developing them as teachers. Schools regularly are in touch with us about whether they can possibly have interns to fill vacancies which come up in the latter part of the final year. WACOT this year relented and allowed the prequalified people to actually teach in the final semester. The concept, as far as this university is concerned, is quite well developed. We know that the students enjoy that type of practice, and it tends to set up a scenario whereby there is the potential for some of that model to continue with ongoing mentoring after they are fully qualified.

Ms CORCORAN—I think you said that the schools are asking for students to come in. Why is that? What is the attitude of parents? This was discussed a little bit yesterday, and someone raised the point that some parents might take a dim view of unqualified teachers teaching their kids.

Mr McQueen—We have conjured the term prequalified. In its initial year there was some concern. The contribution and the performance of these people have been so good that there has not been an issue raised from the parents in the last five years. Some of these young people have gone to very difficult situations and handled them very well. The school system now finds that, on the basis of that, the young people go in, they do a good job and the schools actually keep them. They have been retained in the government system in particular, where we have placed these people. I do not think the parents or the education system have an issue now because they would far rather have that intern in there who is trained contemporarily, knows what is going on in relation to outcomes and all of the current developments, than perhaps have some of the options that they have been offered in the past.

Ms CORCORAN—How many students are we talking about going down this track? Why is there a shortage of teachers and why are the schools seeking these students?

Mr McQueen—In the year that it started, we probably put about 45 people into those positions. We have probably averaged about 35 interns in any one final semester. It originated because we had discussions with the department about their difficulty from mid year on in relation to unexpected resignations and so on, and school positions which they did not fill. One of the things that we have done since the inception of our internship is to reserve the right to have some say in where they go. We like to try and match people up in those internships rather than have it become a system where we say, ‘There are a number of unfilled vacancies out there, so let’s just get the prequalified people in them.’

The students who have done it give feedback along the lines that it is the best part of their program, that it is the way in which they have a lot to do with the Indigenous youngsters whilst they are still in their course and that, if they having particularly difficulties, they have found it really wonderful to have the university in a position whereby we can still communicate with them more or less as an independent source of advice. It is a new way of entering the profession. It has been highly successful.

Prof. Angus—I think Mr McQueen was also referring to what you might call the marketplace and how it works in the final year of a four-year course. Students are quite active in looking for jobs in their preferred schools and so would trade quite a bit to get a leg in the door. If an internship was a way of doing that they would do that or if they could get part-time employment in some capacity they would do that. On the other side, schools are becoming very active in trawling for the best students, if you like, so they are quite keen to use this last year as a period when they can try out students. Of course, the students have their final longer professional practicum in that year, and that has often been used in some way as a way of measuring the student’s capacity for exactly that purpose. Although there is still a centralised staffing system in the state department, it is less so than in the non-government sector, so there is quite a bit of to-ing and fro-ing. There is a downside to it, of course, when that is happening outside a structured internship arrangement, and that is that if you have students who have their eyes on getting jobs and not on actually bringing the whole course together in its final semester, I think my colleagues would agree with me that that can have a quite negative impact in some cases, where you have students wanting to be away to pick up jobs and not paying attention et cetera. But is a marketplace out there, and I would say it is becoming even more so each year.

Mr McQueen—The other aspect of the internship, given that these people are taking full responsibility and they are full-time teaching in the schools, is the reflections they give us of that experience as being wonderful first-hand information that we have then been able to take back into our course design. It is a very good source of direct feedback and real situations that occur in the classrooms. So that has been invaluable.

Ms CORCORAN—It sounds really good to me. I am a non-teaching person. I am getting a picture of a cohort, some of whom are out teaching in the last six months and some who are here. So what happens to the coursework they are otherwise not doing, or is this replacing it? Do they do it in the evenings?

Mr McQueen—In the final semester of the Bachelor of Education programs the course that we are talking about has a four-elective structure. Therefore, we have constructed a unit equivalent to the internship, a reflection unit, so we are able to package together the experience so that it still gives them course credit for what they are doing. In that way they graduate in the same minimum time as those who either are unable to take an internship or do not want to and who are back here doing other units which they have selected to do.

Ms BIRD—I would like tease out the funding issue a little. It sounds to me like you have some really fantastic programs reflecting the long history you have in this field, but I noticed when you were talking about the clinic you said it is partially funded by a charitable organisation. Clearly some of those are innovative. I am interested, with the internship, in the funding of the supervisors and mentors for students who are not on campus. Lots of unis have said to us, ‘We would like to go down all these different tracks but the reality is that, the way funding operates, it is very difficult with such a large practical component in your courses to support these things in the way that they need to be done by staff.’ Could you reflect on that?

Prof. Louden—It is easy to think of ways of making teacher education more expensive. Everywhere you go, people will tell you that if they had a little more money they could do this or that better. I do not think this is the right way to approach the problem. It seems to me if we could establish that some things work better in terms of creating teachers who stay teaching, who teach better than those who have not been in more expensive programs, who can do particular things you are targeting, whose children do better, then it will be much easier to persuade the Australian people to spend more on teacher education. To take the internship as an example, this is more expensive. We cannot do this to scale. We can do this with 45 students. If we want to do that with 1,000 students it will be much more expensive. I would like to encourage the inquiry to consider funding some properly evaluated, evidence based interventions, which might cost more but which we could then have a look at. Do they work better? Do students become better teachers? Do their children become better at this and that? If you took that kind of focus it would be much easier to make the case for significant increases in funding.

Ms BIRD—Part of the argument we hear is actually that universities struggle to convince their own administration to give an appropriate allocation of funding to education.

Prof. Louden—I could sing you that song; I just wasn’t sure you wanted to hear me sing it.

Ms BIRD—You could just confirm or deny the tune, if you like.

Prof. Louden—I will just give you a single statistic that might be helpful to you. Professor Garnett runs a very transparent budget in the university. We are given, for our teacher education students, what he receives, essentially. Nevertheless, we have figured out that we have 130-something per cent of the students we had in 1994 and we have 67 or 68 per cent of the academic staff to teach those students. So that has essentially doubled—or halved, depending on how you look at it. That is not because the university has been stripping funds out of the School of Education; it is because we have been given our share of what the university receives. And obviously there have been some compromises as we have learnt to deal with fewer dollars.

Prof. Garnett—I would like to make a comment on the money side of things. I would be putting my hand up for a higher level of funding for education students. As you probably know, education and nursing are quarantined, in that you cannot increase HECS up to the 25 per cent that is allowed for other things. I am not arguing, necessarily, that those students should be subjected to higher HECS, because it could have a quite dampening effect on demand. But with an institution like ours, where we have probably 35 per cent of our load in nursing and teacher education, it is a significant cost impost on us and makes life more difficult.

Ms BIRD—That is basically what we are hearing.

Prof. Angus—I would like to add a comment to what Professor Garnett and Professor Louden have said, and of course I would not want to contradict either of them in this hearing. The only exception I would make to what Professor Louden said relates to the issue of the practicum and I would make it in the context—I think Professor Louden said this in his letter to you initially about the inquiry—that schools of education are part of a larger system. We are part of a university system—that is the point I think Professor Garnett was making—but we are also connected to the education system so we are tied to schools. There are limits on what we can do within our own confines, within the university, but when we deal with schools and call on schools to assist us to do things, if there is a financial burden associated with that we cannot necessarily always control that.

To put it into plain speak, essentially there are issues about teachers in schools who would take our interns and our students for the ATP who are feeling pretty weary at the present time and feel that the allowance that they are paid is pretty meagre. Were there a change to the award that required us to pay teachers significantly more, and if their mood were such that they felt there was so much going on that they could not be asked to do anything else, the School of Education, no matter what else we did, would be in serious trouble. I think the only way we could get out of it would be by providing schools with greater incentives than the incentives we are currently able to provide, some of which we will talk about in a later session. But there is an issue regarding the practicum and our capacity to fund that.

Ms BIRD—The other funding issue that has been raised with us that I would be interested in your comments on is the issue of experienced classroom teachers teaching in universities where the pay structures are very discouraging of that. Would that be your experience?

Prof. Angus—Indeed, if we were to second a teacher from a school to teach, which we do, there would be a financial penalty for the school to do that. Yet we know and you know—you have heard Professor Louden say—that we want people with recent experience to come into the university.

Ms BIRD—There is a financial penalty for the teacher, too, is there not, because they do not have the research background so the level at which they come in is often a lower paying level?

Prof. Angus—If they were to join us permanently, but one of the things we would like to do more of would be to bring practising teachers in for short-term exchanges or short-term appointments et cetera. We do that usually with the good grace of the education department or the Catholic education system. They are often a bit reserved in giving their approval, because they do not want to lose good people out of their schools, but you are correct: the cost of that secondment is substantially greater than the cost of simply advertising and filling a permanent position as a lecturer in the university. That is an imposition or a restriction on how far we can bring practitioners into the school except on a continuing basis.

Mr HENRY—From my perspective it is certainly pleasing to see schools such as yours appreciating the links between the theory and the practice. I am interested in the clinics that Bill spoke about earlier. Do all students get the opportunity to participate in those clinics as they go through the program?

Prof. Loudon—The clinic is one of a number of programs. We aspire to have everyone have that kind of experience, but we would not presently have every student. The particular program of the clinic has 128 students this year. But we do other things.

Mr HENRY—How do you select those students?

Prof. Loudon—In that case, they are choosing an optional unit which has that as a requirement. But we do other things that are parallel. We send 450 students a year on a program called Community Links. They have a chance to work alongside a person with a disability. That gives them an understanding of disability that you cannot teach. You have to actually do something. I could make a list. There is a variety of programs.

Mr HENRY—I wonder if you could expand on those programs. They are pretty interesting in terms of getting that interaction.

Ms Krieg—In the fourth year of our program, students in the ESL unit work one on one with a child who is a new arrival in Australia so has very limited English. All students have access to that. In our course we have two ATEs in the final year, so our students do 16 weeks of teaching practice in their final year.

Ms CORCORAN—What is ATE?

Ms Krieg—Assistant teacher experience. And they are called assistant teachers. I guess it is a ploy to overcome the issue of teachers in schools wanting to put their hands up. We really market our students as bringing competencies and new skills that are really valuable to them. We often have schools that have had students in third year asking for them in fourth year. I think that relates to your point about why schools are asking and whether that is because they are short. We have a lot of schools who have our students for four weeks in third year and then say, 'We really want this student back in fourth year.' They have seen the value of what they are doing; they want them to contribute to the school. That is very encouraging. But in the fourth year the compacted unit is eight weeks, so the ESL is eight weeks. During that time, they are out in

schools one day working with children who have very limited English. So it is hands on: 'What would you do with this child? Design a program and do it.'

Prof. Louden—A parallel example is a unit we offer for students who want to teach children with other language backgrounds. We offer it in Mauritius or, this year, the Seychelles. As part of the unit, you pick yourself up and take yourself to Mauritius in a group of students with a couple of our academic staff. We place—

Mr HENRY—That is self-funded, is it?

Prof. Louden—It is a unit, but they have to fund the travel. When they get there they are in an environment where, although English is a language of instruction in Mauritian schools, people speak French Creole. So they are in a completely alien environment. They have the fabulous experience of seeing what it is like to work on the other side of the language fence. There is a list of these things. We run the clinic partly on site and partly in schools. We take groups of our students into neighbouring schools and we work with children they have recognised to have difficulties. We give our students one-to-one supervision on the quality of their work. They have someone standing behind them. They have two-way mirrors on site where there is a classroom on either side of the mirror. We supervise the work that our students do with young children that are having difficulty. There must be 10 or 12 of these things in various parts of various programs. Each of them is more expensive than getting 227 students in lecture theatres—17 point whatever. That is what we struggle with. We know what a quality experience looks like, but we know what the difference in cost is between small group instruction and 200 people.

Mr HENRY—You mentioned that the Fogarty institute funded the particular clinic you spoke about.

Prof. Louden—Yes.

Mr HENRY—If that funding support fell away, how would you manage?

Prof. Louden—We often talk to the Fogartys about this. They are attempting to persuade us that they have made their point—that they have shown us what we can do with their money and now we should do it with our own money. We have doubled the scale of that program this year and added numeracy to literacy, but that has partly been at our own expense. We are a very big school of education. We can afford to do a variety of things. But we cannot afford to do what you were hinting at at the beginning, Mr Henry—give every single student that quality of experience.

Ms BIRD—Can I just expand on something. Most of the examples you gave seemed to be primary education based. Does much of that happens with the secondary?

Prof. Louden—It reflects my biases, I am afraid.

Ms BIRD—As an ex-secondary teacher, I have a double bias.

Prof. Louden—Terry, do you have a view?

Dr de Jong—I can say something about middle years, which we at this university define as years 6 to 10, though out there there are a lot of different definitions. My area is really in the grad dip field, although I have worked in the Bachelor of Education programs as well. Grad dips are very different from the four-year teacher education degrees because of the intensity that faces both staff and students in terms of preparing them adequately to become teachers. The way we have tried to make stronger links between theory and practice has on one level been by trying to give students experiences both in schools and here on campus. For example, we have brought students onto campus and they have spent time with middle-year students, talking about issues that those students face in their daily lives and in their school lives. We have spent quite a bit of time in terms of mapping the grad dip courses, looking specifically at how we can create a learning experience for students that is strongly related to what it is that they are experiencing in schools.

To be a bit more specific, the kind of thing we would do in our planning would be to sit down and say: ‘Right. This semester we’ve got four units. What is it that you are planning to do in your unit that would make stronger links between theory and practice? What are some of the exercises and activities? Is there a lot of overlap between this unit and that unit? Where are the gaps?’ With the middle years diploma, we have marketed the diploma—which is only four years old, so it is pretty young—initially as being something where we were really trying to make much stronger links between theory and practice. Even in the confines of a one-year grad dip, we are very conscious of trying to strengthen those links between theory and practice.

Ms BIRD—I just asked because one of the things we put to the College of Teaching was a potential pilot with an internship as an adjunct to the grad dip. I am a one-year Dip. Ed. grad, so I do not have any biases about them. It would seem that as a starting point that would be a logical one. If we were looking at a way to pilot this internship thing, would that be a valuable thing?

Dr de Jong—I think it would. Based on what you said earlier, I think there is a lot of value in that. It would have to be very carefully thought through and designed. One of the catches with any kind of internship program is the resourcing of those who are going to be doing the mentoring within the school system. Even with the current partnership programs that we have, which, as has been said already, you will hear a lot more about later this morning, we do come across some difficulties in terms of teachers not feeling that they have the capacity to mentor correctly. We try to support that, but there is another side to that coin, which is about resourcing schools so that they can really profit.

Ms BIRD—Because you can see the type of student to do the grad dip.

Dr de Jong—Yes.

Ms BIRD—You would see that as a viable option for them.

Dr de Jong—Yes. But, having said that, I just need to point out too that, within our grad dips, taking middle years in particular, in total we have 15 weeks of school based experience, which, in a year of 35 weeks, is quite substantial.

Mr HENRY—I want to explore the issue of attrition. We have had evidence from other schools of education about high attrition rates in the first five years of graduation. My assessment of that was that in a lot of cases they did not have the same focus on the practice and they did not link the theory and the practice as well as you appear to be doing. Do you have any assessment or idea about the levels of attrition in the first five years?

Prof. Loudon—It is a tricky, technical question, because no-one keeps statistics on attrition outside a school system. People overstate the problem of attrition. When a person is employed in the first year by the government school system and then they move to a three-year contract in a Catholic school, that would be counted by the department as attrition. There are three categories of attrition: people who move between sectors, and there is a lot of movement between sectors as people look for more secure contracts; people who take their teaching qualifications overseas, as many people do; and people who find themselves unsuited to teaching, and it is good that we have attrition then. You need to have those three categories in mind before you panic about attrition. We were having a talk about this just before we came in. People who track their own groups of students are saying, ‘Most of students that I was teaching are still teaching, but they might be teaching in London now.’

Ms Krieg—We set up an electronic discussion board for our first lot of graduates. When we last talked to them—we kept it going for two years—all of those students were still teaching. In my doctoral research I am working with a group of students who graduated in 2002. All of the students I tracked there were still teaching: some of them overseas, some of them in remote schools, but still teaching.

Mr HENRY—You made the point about suitability for teaching. Do you think we can improve the selection process in terms of that particular issue? Does that help provide resources then for positive programs?

Prof. Angus—It is very difficult to pick someone when they walk through the door and say, ‘This person is going to be good.’ In fact, sometimes people get it completely wrong. I would like to think of my own case when the principal at Perth Modern suggested I look somewhere else during my practice. He got it wrong.

Mr HENRY—It is often the challenge, as you know.

Prof. Angus—It is difficult. It is even more difficult when you have a large cohort of students who come into the university ex school or as mature age people coming into the teacher education program—more than half of our students in their first year come from mature age backgrounds—to identify what the characteristics are. One of the reasons we try and provide a professional practice early on is to make sure the students get a signal as to whether they are going to like what they are doing and feel confident that they will see it through.

We find the other issue is that the students we are teaching these days, particularly while they are paying the fees they are paying, see teaching education as a commercial contract as well as a professional contract. They expect to get through if they are paying the money, and so that raises issues for us. We are getting students who in my day would have been very docile and willing to accept direction from the lecturer at the teachers college who are pushing things and making it hard for us when they are in schools. In fact, they want the school to look after them according

to their needs, not the other way round—that is, they fit into the school and they have a professional obligation. Mr Henry, I do not have a simple answer to that, except we do have an eight per cent attrition rate throughout our course. It is probably about right, given the kinds of students we see in our professional practice.

Mr HENRY—That seems to be reasonably consistent during the course itself. It is the postgraduate aspect of it—

Prof. Angus—The test is in the professional practice, usually.

Mr HENRY—It is good to have that early first-year practical opportunity. The classroom management issues seems to be what are coming over as the biggest challenge for students once they graduate as teachers, meeting and being confronted by that environment and how they manage that and survive in it.

Ms Krieg—Certainly that one day a week in schools in their first year absolutely breaks down the division between the theory and practice. At university we are saying: ‘All right, when you’re in school on Thursday we want you to have a look at what sort of questioning the teacher is using. Bring that back to the tutorial and we’ll talk about it.’ Right from the start we are absolutely linking what we are talking about with what is happening.

Mr HENRY—That on-the-job training, if you like, is an important element of it all, although Professor Angus did talk about apprenticeships. That is essentially an apprenticeship, in a sense, even though you might not like it in the context of teaching.

CHAIR—It has been a very interesting introductory meeting. We have questions that could probably go on all afternoon, but we have many more witnesses to hear from. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will certainly be contacting you if we need further information. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence, and a copy of the transcript will appear on the parliamentary web site.

[9.53 am]

ANGUS, Professor Max, Head, School of Education, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

LOCK, Dr Graeme, Senior Lecturer and Program Director (Primary), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

MALONEY, Associate Professor Carmel, Associate Professor and Program Director (Early Childhood Studies), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

SHARP, Mrs Sue, Professional Practice Coordinator, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

CHESNY, Mr Ronald, Principal, Bayswater Primary School

ZEID, Mr Philip (Lou), Principal, Joondalup Primary School

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of Edith Cowan University, and associated schools. 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, as such, warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Professor Angus, would you care to make some introductory remarks on behalf of this group?

Prof. Angus—I will keep my remarks to a minimum because I have had an opportunity already to meet the committee. With our professional partnerships, we have two main partnerships: one associated with our Mount Lawley campus and one associated with the Joondalup campus. On Joondalup, colleagues refer to it as the compact—it began first. The one on Mount Lawley campus is called the Swan partnership because the district down there, the education department district, is known as the Swan district. So if in our comments we refer to the Swan partnership or the Joondalup compact, we are talking essentially about the same kind of arrangements that we have developed in collaboration between the university and the government school system to build stronger relations between the two sectors.

I will give you very quickly my construction of what it is about. I should preface my remarks by saying we think that what we are doing here is high quality. It is still developing. We are proud of it. We think it is the way to go, but it is not without its challenges. The idea of the partnership arose from a rethinking about how we placed our students in schools some years ago. It was a highly centralised activity where someone in the university took a particular course, identified a particular student and found a school that would take the student. We employed someone to come in and supervise the student in conjunction with the school. It was a fairly mechanical kind of process, and the rest of the university went on its way.

We felt as a community at the university and in our discussions with schools that the practice had to be better integrated into what we were doing and not seen as a one-off. Further, we were aware that, given all the pressures on schools and how difficult it was becoming to place our students, particularly in schools where we were confident that those students would have a very productive experience and it would connect with what we were doing within our university courses, we had to have a less anonymous kind of arrangement; we actually had to have a partnership. To persuade the schools to participate in this, there had to be clearly some benefit to the schools over and above a fairly nominal kind of award payment that was made to the schools.

The idea of the partnership was to invite schools to join it initially through their districts because the district had its own structures—I should add as an aside that we sought to do a similar thing with the non-government sector, but they are not a system and they were not all that keen on joining anything as a connectivity although some of the same principles that we operate apply to the non-government schools, particularly the Catholic system, as well. We wanted to build this relationship and have a university staff member associated with a particular school so that there could be some continuing contact between that school and the university and to try and find ways in which, with the work of the university and the work of the school, there could be some common mutual advantage. Some of that mutual advantage came from the professional contact between the school and ourselves. Some of it came from people from the university being able to provide some resources either via professional development or PD or just availability of staff to connect to the school and to find from the school staff who could teach and assist us with our programs, provide us with advice and help us out in other different kinds of ways.

This partnership arrangement is now in a sense firmly established. Not all of our students are currently placed in partner schools, but we expect that progressively the whole relationship between ourselves and schools will take that particular form. I do not want to say any more because I want you to have the opportunity to hear from my colleagues—one from the Swan district and one from the Joondalup district, Mr Zeid and Mr Chesny; Sue Sharp, who knows how it all runs; Carmel Maloney, who manages the whole practicum experience; and Graeme Lock, who has been instrumental in setting up the Swan partnership. My final comment would be that, in talking with my colleagues, fellow deans in other parts of Australia, there are a small number of universities that have gone down this path—the Victoria University is one. There are some others that we link with, and we feel that it is providing a framework for building quite strong relationships, not just nominal relationships, regarding what the university does in the school, with all kinds of additional benefits.

CHAIR—I will start off with a fairly general question. Say, as a student at Edith Cowan, I end up at Mr Chesny's school. I arrive at the school gate. What happens before I get there and what is my experience when I get there under this partnership arrangement? I am probably sitting in your office waiting for you.

Mr Chesny—There is always pre-service contact with the schools through the university colleague. We are briefed about the students—obviously, their names and so on and where they are going to be placed. Often this occurs many months before the placement arrives.

Ms BIRD—That is an achievement.

Mr Chesny—From my perspective, I make a point, as I am sure many of my principal colleagues do, to meet with all of the students, yourself included.

CHAIR—I am encouraged straightaway!

Mr Chesny—I try and go through the practice brief, the documentation they have received, with them. I make them aware that they have particular criteria to address in terms of their practice and that their mentor teacher is always available to speak with them, as am I and the uni colleague should any issues arise. Then you are shown to your respective classroom and away you go.

CHAIR—Good. I am there at the school and things are happening. How often am I contacted by my university supervisor, for instance? On what basis does that occur?

Mr Chesny—In my experience, the university colleague is in fact there twice a week. In a two-week practice, they might be there three times a fortnight, but generally four times a fortnight. But they are always contactable. In my experience, the particular uni colleague that I have is on the phone to me every second day about any issues that I might have regarding any of the prac placements.

CHAIR—If I, as a student, am struggling a bit, the class is a bit daunting for me, do I put my hand up and say to the mentor teacher that I have a problem? Does the mentor teacher identify problems? How does that work?

Mr Chesny—The answer to both questions is yes. Indeed, I believe it is incumbent upon the pre-service teacher to identify their own issues, because they should be keeping a reflective journal. It is then incumbent upon the mentor teacher to assist that particular pre-service teacher with any issues they are experiencing. If they are major issues then I might be called in or one of my experienced teaching staff may be called in to assist the mentor teacher and the prac pre-service teacher. The pre-service teacher always has the capacity to contact the uni colleague if it is needed.

CHAIR—I have come to the end of the prac rotation. Do we have a debrief with your staff or back at the uni? How does that work?

Mr Chesny—The debrief really occurs with the uni colleague. If any issues are identified with particular students or within the prac itself, then that information is taken back by the uni colleague to the school of education. And, yes, I have a debrief with the students themselves.

Ms BIRD—I will identify that I have a son who is doing first-year science teaching. In his first semester prac he was placed at a school, a week before the prac was to start, in the wrong subject area. The placement was a maths placement when he is a science student. I was horrified. I think it was the old model you described, Max. He had no contact from the university the whole time he was there. I was conscious, as he was, of the level of pressure that put on the teacher who had agreed to take him on. I thought it would have to be pretty discouraging to this teacher, to continue to do this sort of thing—not to mention the maths teacher who had originally volunteered to have someone and who then had no-one. I am interested to hear from the schools what you think is better about this model and what the key factors are that make it work.

Mr Chesny—I am interested in that you said that teachers are forced to take them on. That is not the case in my school. I am pretty judicious in who I appoint pre-service teachers to. My staff can turn over markedly in the course of a year and some teachers are not attuned to taking particular pre-service teachers. I think there are specific qualities required in a mentor teacher and if I have five on the day then there will only be five pre-service teachers appointed to those five teachers. I will not take on seven pre-service teachers and farm the other two out to other mentor teachers. They just do not have the capacity.

Mrs Sharp—I support what Ron was saying. One of the strengths of partnerships is the building of relationships between the university staff and the school staff. When we started four years ago—I am talking of Joondalup as an example—our academic staff were attached to schools, and they might have had two or three schools each. Most of them have had four years and they have built up relationships with those schools over that time, which allows you to get to know the teachers and the admin staff in the schools very well. Sometimes the admin staff themselves are very good at deciding who will be offered student teachers, and sometimes it is very helpful to have that information yourself so you can support the students who may have less support from mentor teachers, or know that in that class that student is going to have a wonderful experience and you can take your hands off and let them get on with it. It is very much about relationship building. I think that is the strength.

Ms BIRD—I apologise that I am focusing on secondary but, to be honest with you, when we talk about the shock experience of initial students, it tends to be much more severe in the secondary than in the primary. What is the relationship built there? Is it built between subject faculties or do you identify a method of, for example, a lecturer in science who deals with science faculties across schools? Is that how you manage it?

Prof. Angus—It is not a coincidence that most of us here are from primary. Nor is it deliberate; it just happens to be who is here. It is harder to make this model work in secondary.

Ms BIRD—Yes, I wondered.

Prof. Angus—We do have schools that are nominally partner schools. A lot of it depends on the structure of the school and, if you like, the culture and orientation of the school. In schools that are highly subject oriented with fiefdoms around subject areas, with heads of departments who run it who do not talk across their discipline areas, it is hard to build the kind of model that we are talking about in those kinds of schools. It works best in schools, for example, like Ron's school, which is a lot looser, because of the kind of leadership they have there and the fact that the whole school takes something on. Secondary schools do not always work that way. So it tends to be more fragmented in secondary schools, and it tends to be the case that you are less likely to get a perfect result across a whole school. It will be a bit patchy, depending on who the head of the department is and what kind of relationship there is between our subject person.

Ms BIRD—So the model is still to establish the relationship with the school, not to have one person establish a relationship with three science faculties across three different high schools?

Prof. Angus—No. It is still with the school. The school is the administrative unit. You cannot do any business in a school without the school principal giving you the nominal support, whether it is a primary or a secondary school. But, to be honest, we are still feeling our way about the

best way to push this into the secondary schools. One other thing that has not come up yet about the partnership is that no-one likes a difficult student, and no-one likes a student who has the prospect of not passing or who needs a lot of help et cetera. So in this relationship we are trying to provide support from the university where there are such students. But where there are not, and where we have every confidence in the school's staff to be able to run things, we trust the school because of that ongoing relationship. That is a bit about how we divide some of our effort et cetera.

Ms BIRD—That makes sense.

Prof. Angus—The other thing to say is that earlier on we approached the professional practice as though each time it occurred during each year of a four-year course—if we set aside the grad dip for a moment—the student was on trial and the whole effort was to perform as a teacher. We want to break that down. It is true that, at the very end in the ATP or ATE—whatever we call it in the university—a student does have to demonstrate that they are capable of teaching. But, in earlier pracs, there are opportunities for the student to be in the school and to be actually learning things that are connected to the course rather than being totally as though they are performing fully as an autonomous teacher, a professional et cetera. So more things become possible. We can actually send into schools people who are very good at things that school staff would like to have around them and available to them. That is where a kind of partnership can come into place.

For example, to go back to an earlier question this morning before this panel arrived, quoting my own experience, I was in a partner school to see a student. Everything was fine—the teacher was fine and we had another person helping us with that student; there were no problems with the student—but I bumped into the principal, who said: 'What I'd like is some of your graduates who were really good at literacy skills. I've got some students in year 6 who really need some help.' To go back to the comments that Philip made, bingo! We have students who would love to be in that school, who are highly skilled and who would benefit from that experience. So there is a win-win. If you take these kinds of partnership models to their full extents, you can put those things into effect. It does not happen every time, in every school in that particular way, but it is the prospect of that that I think is the real power behind the model that we are trying to use.

Mr Zeid—You were asking what was different about the partnership. I think one of the significant differences is that the schools see it quite differently. When I arrived at the school, the partnership had already been established. It is seen quite differently. It is seen as part of the school's program. It is something that we know is going to happen each year and each term, we negotiate how many students we can take on and we have a person who coordinates it within the school—this is in a primary setting—so the teachers themselves do not feel isolated. In my previous experiences, when we had prac students come in, it used to be that you would allocate them to a teacher and that teacher was responsible for them, whereas they now get allocated to a school and the school takes some responsibility for them. Even though they have their supervising teacher, we have the coordinator that runs it and there is that linkage. But, as a school, we know it as part of a program we offer. That is how we look at it.

Ms BIRD—Does your coordinator have a release to do that or additional payment?

Mr Zeid—Yes, for the coordinator at our school. I do not know about all schools. We release her. She basically has, on average, half a day to run that.

CHAIR—Do other schools in the area who are outside the partnership see this as a status thing—a big positive—that you have this partnership with the university?

Mr Zeid—I do not know. I could not answer that. I really do not know whether they do as not. I know that the number of partnership schools has increased.

Mr HENRY—I think that was a great example, Max, of a value-adding—developing partnerships and relationships and developing that relationship that Sue was talking about earlier. From a personal point of view, they are the sorts of things that I think are critical to ensuring the learning experience of both the student teacher and students in schools as well as the schools themselves are maximised and magnified. That sort of interaction is going to be critical in ensuring that we get teachers in the future who really appreciate the learning process. I want to know how many schools are in the Joondalup compact and the Swan partnership?

Prof. Maloney—In the Swan partnership we have over 80 schools that have partnership status. But, to add to the previous point, more and more schools are now asking to come on board and become a partnership school. They do see that there are added benefits to being a partner, and the numbers are increasing each year. We started with 20 schools as a trial. Over three years, that has developed. Over 80 schools are now in a partnership arrangement with us.

Mrs Sharp—On the Joondalup campus, we would have pretty much 75 schools that we are in partnership with. We would have started with 35 to 40 in our first year. One of the interesting factors of partnerships for us has been that, even though we have increased the number of schools coming into partnerships, what is really significant for us is that we have increased the penetration into the schools that we had. So, instead of taking one or two students a year, some of our schools take up to 30 students a year. As Lou said, they really are part of the school culture. We even have schools now that put us in their school development plans. They look at our prac timetable for the following year and say: ‘Which one of these pracs would contribute most to our school this year? Where can we use these students most effectively?’ They are really thinking along the lines that Max was talking about. We get a lot of requests, as well, for students with specific talents—for example, ‘I have a music specialist who would like student; is it possible to have someone with a music background?’ and so on. We often send our students, even before university starts, on school camps. I just put out a call. They have to apply to me to be allowed to do that in their own time. The partnerships have opened up those sorts of possibilities.

Mr HENRY—So do you see the potential to expand beyond these two disparate areas?

Prof. Maloney—We certainly hope that every school who is currently attached to ECU will eventually be a partnership school. Over the next two years, we are hoping that that will include all of the schools that are attached to the university. It is a slow process. We need to do a lot of groundwork with each of the individual schools before they come on board. If a school decides that they do not want to have that partnership status, that is their decision, but we hope that over the next two years every school will be a partnership school with ECU.

Mr HENRY—I have a point of clarification. Professor Garnett mentioned 22,000 students. That is across the whole university. How many are there in the teacher education faculty?

Prof. Angus—About 4,000.

Ms CORCORAN—I have a couple of questions about this partnership business. What percentage of your students would be going to schools that are in a partnership at the moment? It is a developing thing, I understand. So would it be, say, half your students doing pracs at partnership schools or a third?

Mrs Sharp—In our courses at Joondalup, pretty much all of our students are in partnership schools, except for the ones that go rural. We send about 30 in third-year and fourth-year pracs to rural areas. Apart from those students, virtually all our students are in partnership schools.

Ms CORCORAN—I am picking up a big range in attitude towards taking students into a school for pracs. Some schools seem to think of it as too hard: ‘We don’t want to do it; go away.’ Other schools are obviously looking for prac students. There is a whole pile in the middle. Then there has been the notion put to us that, really, all schools ought to take on prac students; it is part of your professional obligation to further yourself. I would not mind a comment on that.

Prof. Angus—I would like to comment on that. I have been in discussion with other deans. They have said that, as far as the government system is concerned, what we need is the director-general to tell people that they have to take them on. I used to work in that place, and I know that that is not going to get you anywhere. All you are going to do is get people’s backs up. What you have to do is work, as we have tried to do, with our colleagues in schools and respect the work that schools do and the teachers in schools, so that there is some benefit. It has to be a positive thing rather than a compulsory thing.

I do want to make one comment that is pertinent to the earlier discussion. As you can imagine, doing this is quite demanding on academics’ time. In the rewards systems in universities, I think this hard work is often not properly acknowledged. People who get promoted to associate professor and so forth usually put forward screeds of academic papers and things that they have written. The only way we have been able to do this work is to do less of that. So there has been some trading here. Perhaps another university might not have employed the same arithmetic, and maybe they would have had a higher research output than we have. We will be talking about research later this morning.

It was our judgment that this activity was so essential to a teacher education program that we would just wear the extra cost in time and the extra pressure that goes with it. It is hard to balance, because we do not want to let our colleagues in the schools down. We know they could use more of our time in different kinds of ways by going into partnership to draw some of that energy in that direction. The traditional university academic direction is still rewarded much more generously in most universities than the kind of hard work we do in the partnership.

Ms BIRD—We had a presentation from two academics yesterday—I cannot remember which university they were from—seeking some capacity for government to direct research funding into active research, what they called inductive research, and saying that that much of what academics are doing in terms of relationships you are talking about is actually a form of

research: it is informing and they are learning from it. If there were funding to translate that into a reporting process, do you think that sort of model would help overcome some of those issues plus provide really good research data for schools to use based on observational research?

Prof. Angus—I will refer that question to Graeme or Carmel. Before I do I will just say that I believe the answer to your question is yes. But I also think it runs directly counter to the government's push towards the AQF, which is going to reward a different kind of research and basically make no provision for what you are just talking about.

Dr Lock—When we started the Swan partnership in 2003 Max asked me to manage it and get it going. A colleague and I actively undertook some research in the second school term of that year. We went and interviewed 14 of our partnership principals. We were very open, saying, 'How is it going? What do you think works? What do you think doesn't work. How can we improve?' One of the features of this partnership is this continual conversation we have with our schools saying 'How can we improve? We listen to our schools and resources permitting, we shall do so.' As a result of this research—we actually had a refereed journal article published, which really pleased us. It was read by a university in another state who visited us this year to ask us how our partnership had developed. So it is seen by a fairly established university in the eastern states that we have developed a model on which they can also develop relationships with the school.

We have also been involving, this year in particular, teachers from our partnership schools in our course reviews. Each semester we review our courses with respect to improving what we can do. For the primary course this year we invited practising classroom teachers who are teaching in the program and three deputy principals. They felt very valued in coming in and made some very worthwhile contributions, which will continue to improve the courses which we deliver and continue to improve the structure our in-school experiences for our students.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to go back to the partnerships. At the risk of sounding crass, what is in it for the schools? Why do you go into the partnership? I can see what is in it for the universities.

Mr Chesny—From my perspective it is an additional resources that I can tap into.

Ms CORCORAN—To do what with?

Mr Chesny—Human resources.

Ms CORCORAN—You would not get that if you were just an attached school?

Mr Chesny—Under the old arrangement, not necessarily; under the new arrangement, most definitely. I could contact my uni colleague or contact specific people within university and say, 'I am a partnership school.' Max alluded to a particular experience that he had. I might be saying, 'Look, I've got a number of children here I need some special work with. Can you find for me an appropriate student that is prepared to take it on in their own time? Either credit them with something or, if it is only through them gaining experience, please locate a student for me to help out?' Likewise, I know the university often sends out fliers, either through email or hard copies, to say that there are presentations by visiting academics my staff are invited to attend.

Ms CORCORAN—So there is a bit of PD going back the other way?

Mr Chesny—There is the offering of PD to my staff, yes.

Ms CORCORAN—Thank you. That is all.

CHAIR—It has been very interesting. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information—I think we certainly will be. The secretariat will be providing you with a proof copy of your evidence and a copy of the transcript will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

Proceedings suspended from 10.25 am to 10.42 am

BAILEY, Mr Christopher, Student, Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Edith Cowan University

COCHRANE, Mrs Susanne Lee, Student, Bachelor of Education (Kindergarten-Primary), Edith Cowan University

FAIRCLOUGH, Mr Scott, Student, Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), Edith Cowan University

FRASER, Mrs Fiona Jane, Student, Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), Edith Cowan University

MANGANO, Mr Cono, Student, Bachelor of Education (Kindergarten-Primary), Edith Cowan University

MATTHEWS, Mr Stephen, Student, Bachelor of Education (Primary), Edith Cowan University

MORGAN, Miss Marisa, Student, Bachelor of Education (Primary), Edith Cowan University

SNOOK, Ms Roxanne, Student, Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Edith Cowan University

STONEMAN, Mr Gary James, Student, Bachelor of Education (Kindergarten-Primary), Edith Cowan University

TITTUMS, Mrs Rhondda, Student, Bachelor of Education (Primary), Edith Cowan University

WHITE, Ms Rebecca, Student, Bachelor of Education (Secondary), Edith Cowan University

CHAIR—Good morning and welcome. We really appreciate the time you have taken from your study schedules to join us. We have had a range of interesting student forums around the country. It has been a very great experience speaking to our students. I will start off with a very general question: what do you like about the teacher training that you are getting at Edith Cowan and what do you think could be done better?

Mrs Cochrane—I like the practical experience that is involved. We are out there first year, one day a week. We are not expected to know anything, but we are getting mentored by the teachers on the ground floor. I think it is a great experience to get out there. A teacher asked me, ‘Would you like to learn by sinking and then learn to swim?’ That was a great experience to be able to just get out there and get hands-on experience. From then on we have had practical experiences, in year 2 and year 3, and in our final year we do two eight-week ATEs in early

childhood and in upper primary. The practical experience where we can apply our knowledge has been wonderful.

CHAIR—Did you find it a daunting experience to get up in front of a class for the first time, or did it come easy to you?

Mrs Cochrane—My mentor teacher made it easy, in that she allowed me to experiment. I think it has a lot to do with the mentor teacher that you are given. It was daunting, yes. I could not say that I was not scared, but she made it easy for me to learn by trialling.

CHAIR—Anyone else?

Ms Snook—I am doing my graduate diploma—a 12-month course.

CHAIR—What was your discipline before?

Ms Snook—I am a qualified veterinary surgeon. I have done that for 12 years. I think the thing about ECU was their behaviour management program for us, because our course is crammed into 12 months, which is a very intense 12 months. In first semester, one of our foundation units is purely on behaviour management. We do things like role plays within our tutorials, which are important. We watch videos on how good-quality teachers manage their classrooms in subtle ways, which is important. Also, we are given rules of thumb to deal with students who are getting a bit out of control. The other thing that they offered us was an alternative prac. I did two weeks at an alternative education unit for children who did not fit into mainstream school. I did two weeks working with those children, basically on a personal level so I could see a worst-case scenario, so I could take that back into a mainstream classroom and realise that they are still kids and you can still relate to them. It was about learning ways of dealing with these kids when they are one of 30, which is tough.

Ms BIRD—What method are you doing? It is secondary school teaching, is it?

Ms Snook—Yes. Science major, maths minor.

Mrs Fraser—I am a fourth-year student in early childhood studies. What I really liked in our third year was what was called the Community Links Program, run by Elizabeth Stamopoulos. A lot of students had expressed fears about going to the classroom where a lot of children with special needs have been mainstreamed. This program had us out in the community working, not necessarily in a school context but in a community context, with children or adults with special needs over a period of time. Although I have a bit of experience, having cousins with cerebral palsy and things, I went to the Riding for the Disabled Association and developed a really good rapport with children who perhaps may have frightened me if I had to get to know them in the classroom for the first time. It was very helpful that I got a perspective in the outside community of how people deal with them and how they deal with people in general. It certainly took away a lot of the fear for me. I found that that was really useful.

Ms White—I am a fourth-year double degree student studying secondary education and a Bachelor of Arts in social sciences. Chris Bailey and I were able to take part in a preservice teacher program. We came to Canberra for a week in September and worked with the

Parliamentary Education Office learning how to do role plays with kids and how democracy works. We sat in on a few inquiries and got to see how parliament actually worked. I found it helpful because we could take it back to university and tell other people how parliament works and that it is not all you see on TV. I think that that is a major problem for kids in schools—they see question time and they see fighting and debating, maybe argumentatively, and think that that is all it is, but it is not. I found it really helpful that we were able to get involved in that, especially as I am a politics major, so I could help kids learn about democracy and things like that. I do not know if Chris wants to add to that.

Mr Bailey—From the experience working with the Parliamentary Education Office, the biggest thing we got was an understanding of the system of government and the democratic process. We have been involved in doing professional development sessions with some of the second- and third-year students so we have been able to take those skills and give them to other students, which I found to be a really positive experience.

Ms BIRD—Did you fund that yourself—accommodation, travel et cetera?

Ms White—It was funded by the university.

Mr Bailey—It was funded partially by the university and partially by the Parliamentary Education Office.

CHAIR—There are a few parallels there. My state parliamentary colleague has been in the news for a few behaviour management issues so there are a few parallels perhaps between teaching and the parliament.

Mr Matthews—I am the chair of the student-staff liaison committee at Edith Cowan for primary studies. You asked what we enjoyed about university. The university has tried very hard to ensure successful outcomes for students. There are a lot of programs and ideas in place to encourage and help develop students to become better teachers.

The committee is elected by students and provides an interface between lecturers and the student body and an ability to appear in order to express any concerns or problems you may have. Not everyone is comfortable speaking to their lecturers or their tutors, because there is still that element of teacher-student relationship rather than lecturer-student relationship. The ideas and the problems addressed in the committee are taken very seriously and acted upon by the university. The feeling I have from my lecturers, although I cannot speak for all of them, is there is a real willingness to get us through. They do try very hard in order to give us the best tools we need as teachers and to see a completion. They do not want to have people dropping out; they want to see people get through and complete their studies.

Ms BIRD—It is very useful feedback; thank you for that. I want to explore with some of you a concept that has been raised with us by the College of Teaching about a Scottish model whereby people do a one-year internship post graduation from their courses. The model is basic: you go into a school for a full year as a teacher, but on a reduced load, supported by a mentor teacher in that school, who is also on a reduced load in order to provide support. Of course that also means you are on a reduced income, commensurate with the level of the teaching load,

usually of about 80 per cent. If anyone would like to make a comment, I would like to know if you would see that as a useful model for you and something that you could have an interest in.

Miss Morgan—I have explored the possibility of internships. I believe that yes, that is a great idea, but on top of a four-year course I do not think that is practical. On top of a three-year course, I think that is more practical. Of course this does come down to money. There does need to be more money injected into the system to foster this mentor relationship, because there is a fear in schools of having these prac students taking on that extra work. I believe there could be a system set up to do that, but we need to be very careful how we implement that in WA.

Mr Bailey—As it stands at the moment, as far as I know when you go out after your final ATP and once you have finished your final year you are probationary. As it stands at the moment, the system is that in effect you are, in certain terms, in that model already. You are not a permanent teacher; you have got probationary status. You are mentored through the head of the learning area and various teachers in the school as it is. I think the reduced wage idea is going to make a lot of people cringe after doing, as Miss Morgan said, a four-year degree. People will be going out and saying, 'We're going to have a reduced wage right from the beginning.' Again, as it stands, you already do have a lower wage because it is staggered. Your wage increases as it goes, and you are mentored right from the beginning until you get your permanency.

Mr Matthews—Frequently the conversation around uni would be an apprenticeship. I am originally a chef; I come from that background. The suggestion is that, as with every apprenticeship, a component of the education is theory and another component is practical. However, having had apprentices, I know the restraints put on the mentor teacher. It seems that the university tries to provide us with as many opportunities as possible to have practicums. But the resistance is not with the universities, it is with the teachers' willingness to take on students, because they see it as a task—and it can be a reasonably onerous task. Occasionally you have situations where the teacher does not really want the student. Perhaps development may not necessarily need to be made within the university; maybe it is a systemic problem within the school environment to encourage more opportunities.

Ms Snook—Coming from the grad dip program, which is only a 12-month program, we go out on prac and the first thing teachers say is, 'You guys don't have enough prac before you're qualified as teachers.' The idea of going out in your first year and being on a 0.8 load is a good one, because a lot of teachers burn out after 12 or 24 months. Starting off on a 0.8 load sounds like a good idea.

We have the advantage of not already being at university for four years, although some do a three-year degree and then a grad dip on top of that. The financial side personally is not such a big issue for me. I can see that that system would have its advantages, but the big disadvantage is that a lot of new grad teachers end up in the country. They are going to be working in remote areas where they are probably not going to have mentor teachers available. So you would need to make enough positions available in the city or in big high schools to place all your graduates, which would be difficult.

Ms CORCORAN—I notice, looking along the row here, that there is a mix of what I am guessing is those of you who have come straight here from school and those of you who have been somewhere else first and then come here. I do not know how typical you are of the rest of

the students in education here, but does anyone know roughly what the split is between older students coming in and students coming straight from school? Would it be half and half?

Mr Matthews—I can give you the statistics. The breakdown of male to female in primary is 20 per cent male to 80 per cent female, and the ratio of school leavers to mature age is 25 per cent school leavers to 75 per cent mature age.

Ms CORCORAN—That is huge.

Mr Matthews—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—Would that be typical of other universities in WA?

Mr Matthews—I would only be speculating.

Ms CORCORAN—I doubt whether it is.

Ms BIRD—Do you know the breakdown for secondary?

Mr Matthews—No, I am sorry.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to talk a little bit about the practicum experience that you have. We heard earlier today about partnership schools that the university has and other schools who are not partnership schools—I think they refer to them as attached schools. I do not know how many of you have had pracs in both of those. I am just trying to work out what the difference is. Do you see a difference between a prac that you have in an attached school and a prac that you have in a partnership school?

Mr Fairclough—Yes. This last prac was my ATP, my final prac, and that was done at a Swan partnership school. That was the first one, I believe, that I have been involved in. I think the main difference is that the teacher, because you are spending virtually all of the time with her, is the one who is essentially assessing you and providing the majority of the feedback, and the university tends to take a bit more of a back seat. There are still supervisors available for you to liaise with if there happened to be a clash or if the mentor teacher was having an issue or problem that she needed more guidance or reassurance on. But I think the university link is stronger; I believe that the teachers from those schools actually come down to the university and do a bit of PD related to the expectations of the university and what is required from a prac student to meet certain requirements within that. So it seems to me to be a better, stronger link. With other practicums I have been involved in it was fairly grey. The teacher seemed to be a little unclear of what the expectations were of her to meet the university's requirements and the supervisor also seemed a bit unclear as to what their role or function really was.

Ms CORCORAN—Do you have to find your own places or does the university do that for you?

Mr Fairclough—Within the practicums leading up to the ATP, you can put down a series of preferences which are supplied by the university. That system still applies with the ATP, but you do have the opportunity, if you want to teach at a specific school, to approach that school

independently, but that has to be cleared through the school and then fed back through the university.

Mrs Fraser—Can I just clarify that. With the ATP you can only approach non-government schools independently; otherwise, you have to use the government school list provided. But, as Scott said, if you wanted to work at a private school you could approach the principal and ask.

Mr Bailey—My experience was that we were distinctly told that we were not to approach schools independently—I am doing the double degree education secondary. They said to us: ‘Do not approach a school independently. Go off and list your preferences.’ They will do everything they can to give you your first preference, but you are not to go and approach a school independently. That is just what I was told; that is my experience.

Ms CORCORAN—I have a question which is directed to the students who doing the three- or four- year course: do you feel you get enough prac? Is it too much or not enough?

Miss Morgan—Overall, I have done 20 weeks prac and 5½ days. Under my own initiative I have taken up volunteer work in Kim Beazley School, which is a school for children with disabilities, as I feel I have not had enough experience. Under my own bat, I have done that. I have also kept in contact with my ATP school and have gone back for periods of volunteer work there, because I feel it is important to keep up that experience. I cannot relief teach now but I feel that it would benefit me to do that. I think students should be able to take charge of their own learning in that way, keep up relationships with schools and volunteer their time. We do not have a lot of time but if we volunteer it is for our benefit.

Mr HENRY—In terms of the prac, have you felt that the schools and the teachers in the schools by and large have been generally responsive to your needs and supportive?

Mrs Tittums—I am a second-year primary student. In the schools where I have been the teachers have been wonderful. They are under a lot of pressure in the classroom. The last prac I was on was a two-week one and we were responsible for taking so many lessons a day. It was full-on for the teachers, and I congratulate them for taking us on. It is so busy with the amount of work they have to do and the interruptions to the day, and I found the teachers really good.

Ms Snook—We all talk about our prac when we get back to university and, across the board, the quality of the pracs seems to vary extremely. We do two weeks initially after we have been at university for about three weeks. Again, it is a sink or swim type situation. Some of my colleagues taught two lessons in two weeks whereas I was lucky enough to be in a position where I was teaching two lessons a day. It depends so much on what your mentor teacher is doing, what their teaching load is, how much time they have got to give you and how suitable they feel you are for what they are teaching.

Mr HENRY—What about feedback and constructive assessment of what you have done during the particular prac?

Mr Bailey—With every prac that you do, whether it is the two-week, the four-week or the 10-week ATP that Rebecca and I have just finished, you get a performance evaluation feedback sheet at the end. Depending on the quality of your mentor teacher, you have the opportunity to

have some fantastic feedback, both positive and constructive criticism, which I found to be of great benefit.

Mr Fraser—All along our university degree for early childhood we have been constantly told to reflect upon our own practices. At the beginning of my ATP, I found that I was not getting enough feedback from my mentor teacher. I had set myself a goal to get ‘outstanding’ and I wanted to know what I needed to improve on. Once I liaised with my mentor teacher, she came to the party, so to speak, and really helped me. I found that being a little proactive myself, which I had been encouraged to be throughout my degree, meant that I had a successful outcome.

Ms White—I also found that during my practicums I was evaluated on each lesson—I am sure it might be similar for everyone else. After each lesson, if the mentor teacher had time to discuss it we would read through the page of information—constructive and positive feedback—so I had a goal to work on for the next lesson. It was particularly helpful as I had two year 10 society and environment classes, and there were constructive things that I could work on for the second class. It was good to see the differences that the feedback made to changing the lesson in a positive or negative way.

Mr Fairclough—I think, as has been said, there is a wide range of feedback that you can get. It leads back to what we were talking about earlier regarding the partnerships with the universities. A lot of teachers, in my experience, were very unsure of what their requirement was. That could make it difficult to provide the feedback that the students were looking for. Also, completing my ATP this year, I got very involved for the first time and got an in-depth understanding of the workload that teachers are up against. It is one more thing on top of so many things. Until this year I did not really have a clear perspective of the sheer enormity of the workload.

Mr Mangano—We have already done an eight-week extended ATE this year, in second semester, and now we are into our second one. I found that to have to go and do a second one was a bit daunting—all the other universities only have to do the 10 weeks—but, having had the first opportunity and getting your grades at the end, going into the second one has been a breeze. You can use all the experience you have had in the first eight weeks—you have brought it with you. Your mentor teacher has extensive specifications. They have an interim report halfway through, which is at the four-week mark. They can go through that with the student and find out where you might need some support. We have the university colleagues who come in every fortnight. If you are having any problems, they are always there to support. I feel that the practice for me personally has been fantastic. We have been able to have so much practice from first year right up to fourth year. I feel very well prepared to go out there right now and teach a full-time class.

Mr HENRY—How do you feel overall about the practice and the theory? Do you think it is a good balance here with the program that you are running.

Mr Matthews—I can see one problem that is currently in existence. On completion of the ATP in fourth year, students used to be able to take temporary and relief work in schools for their final semester while still being at university. It gave students an opportunity to have contact with their lecturers and with their peers while experiencing teachers in their own classroom for the first time. So it provided a valuable network of lecturers and peers whom they can sound ideas

off. Unfortunately, in Western Australia there has been a change with the Western Australian College of Teaching that sees students unable to do any teaching until the completion of the complete fourth year. That issue needs to be addressed. It is state level, but I put it on the record that it needs to be addressed within Western Australia, as it is very important.

Ms Bird—This is the only state where you could do that for a long time. In most other states you have never been able to do that.

Mr Matthews—There is such a large focus on providing more practice experiences for teachers and for emergent teachers. The Scottish model is an opportunity where you will be more closely supervised—the school is aware of your limitations because you are not fully qualified yet. It also gives you that network back at university—because you are still regularly attending university—to do two or three units during that same semester to bounce ideas and problems you might be having off experienced people whom you have dealt with for the previous four years.

CHAIR—Thank you for your enthusiastic contributions today. It has been very interesting, as our student forums have been in the past. A copy of the transcript of evidence will be placed on the web site. Thank you very much and good luck in your teaching careers.

[11.11 a.m.]

HACKLING, Professor Mark, Acting Program Director (Postgraduate), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

NEWHOUSE, Dr Paul, Senior Lecturer and Director, Centre for Schooling and Learning Technologies, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

RIVALLAND, Professor Judith, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) and Director of the Fogarty Learning Centre, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

CHAIR—I remind witnesses 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 proceedings are legal proceedings of the parliament and as such warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Prof. Hackling—Thank you for the opportunity to meet you. I appear as Acting Director of Research and Higher Degrees in the School of Education. The School of Education has a focus on research which is applied in nature. It is research that is conducted in very close collaboration with the professional bodies, our partner schools and key players both within the state and nationally within education. We work in a very collaborative manner. Most of our research is actually funded by industry partners. That research is focused on particular types of outcomes, those being generating evidence that will inform the development of more effective education policy and more effective education practice and research and evidence that will lead to the improvement of teaching and learning by schoolchildren.

Prof. Rivalland—About five years ago, I developed a new teacher education course here at the Joondalup campus. At the time, I had just finished a national study called *Mapping the territory*. We were looking at children with learning difficulties. I was very aware that this was an area where undergraduate education students probably were not as well prepared as they might be. I designed the course so that it had a lot of literacy, special needs, Indigenous studies, ESL and linguistics in it so that we were preparing the students well for their course. As a result of that we had the opportunity to establish a reading centre here where we could do clinical work. At the same time, we were able to offer some scholarships for a graduate certificate in learning difficulties. All of them coalesced together to set up this learning centre. We now have our undergraduate students working with our staff to work with students doing clinical supervision of literacy and numeracy coaching. Some of that takes place in the schools. In some cases the schools bring the students in here. Around that, we have a number of research projects that are now looking at early literacy development and teaching, looking at middle and upper primary students who have learning difficulties or literacy difficulties and how we can work together with teachers to develop the teacher skills and fine grade analysis of assessment and matching that teaching to their assessment. We have about five different projects looking at the

teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy that are all matched with the coaching that goes on in the clinic which in itself serves us as a research base. All of that work is done in conjunction with the partners, either the Mount Lawley programs or the partners here at Joondalup. We have external funding from some of the private sector here and we are also working with the department of education in another major study that is a growth study based on the effect of teaching—a program we have just completed for DEST.

Prof. Hackling—That is one very good illustration of where national research projects funded by DEST have been downstreamed and integrated into our teaching programs here to improve the way that we work with our own students to ensure that they have the clinical skills to implement the findings of that research when they go out and teach. We are doing that very strongly in literacy. This university leads literacy education research nationally, producing eight DEST reports in that area. Work is coming on in the area of numeracy, with the research also feeding down through the Fogarty learning centre through the coaching. We have another major focus on science education research and one with improving the use of learning technologies.

In science education this university has led the last five DEST funded national projects, doing the national review on the status and quality of science teaching, running a national professional learning program to improve the teaching of secondary science, providing the conceptual framework for national benchmark testing of scientific literacy at year 6, developing a national resource bank of assessment resources for teachers to use to improve their assessment practice and finally—the one that is running at the moment—doing the Primary Connections project. We are running a national professional learning program for primary teachers, giving them professional learning support plus curriculum resources to help them improve the teaching of science by linking science to literacy. There is a strong focus in science education. And the research centre that Paul is the director of focuses on improving the use of learning technologies. Perhaps you could talk about that, Paul.

Dr Newhouse—Our research is mainly applied research in schools and also research with our own programs. The biggest one at the moment is evaluating the 100 Schools project for the Western Australian education department, which is a long-term, four-year project looking at the impact of the use of ICT on a range of criteria that they are interested in. We are also working at the moment on a Western Australian component of strategic partnerships in ICT for teaching and learning, which is a DEST project, and we are combining that with some of our partner schools, providing professional development for them as well as looking at the research aspect.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. It is interesting that you made the remark that there is a strong focus on applied research. We have had evidence from other sources—and these are pretty much their words rather than mine—that much of educational research is not resulting in actual change in the classroom: that it is more theoretically based. That proposition was put to us by another witness—put quite strongly—that the research was, if I paraphrase, pure research rather than actually resulting in practical outcomes at a classroom level.

Prof. Rivalland—Our history has probably led us very strongly towards applied research. Because we have the nexus between the teaching program and the research centre, it has been the natural thing to do applied research. All of our projects are run with classroom teachers. It is about refining their skills and then getting them the fine-grained analytic skills to actually match that with teaching.

One of the really interesting things that have occurred is that the big national study we did looking at effective literacy teachers in the early years demonstrated to us that it is not the program or the strategy but the skills of the teacher that actually makes the difference. The teacher we saw that had done the most value adding in the classroom was outstanding. She was an artist, but she also had enormous knowledge. When she first graduated she worked in a big project in New South Wales that looked at children who were disadvantaged in learning. She had done a graduate diploma in TESOL. She had worked in a language development centre. And with all that knowledge, she was now teaching year 1.

What is very apparent to us is that, to be a really skilled literacy teacher, you need a lot of knowledge but you also need quite a lot of experience. Out of the teachers we saw who had done considerable value adding over the year during which we assessed the children, there were no teachers who had just graduated who had done that level of value adding. My view is that, because we are working with children in the centre as well as doing our research, it is absolutely essential that we work with the teachers. That is the only way to change practice in schools.

Ms BIRD—This follows on so you might want to combine your comments. I think part of that reflection is the fact that dissemination is a huge challenge. We raised today with the College of Teaching that good resources that might be developed in one place are so difficult for your average teacher sitting in a classroom in whatever state to even know about, let alone access. There is no central bank that they can go to to actually find out what other people are doing to try to handle a particular issue or what other resources are out there. I would be interested if you would like to comment—and, Mark, I know you wanted to comment on the previous issue—on that question about the actual dissemination of some of that good work that is done.

Prof. Hackling—I will deal with the previous issue first. One of the concepts we have is teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. It is this very complex knowledge that teachers have—knowledge of children and their learning, knowledge of curriculum outcomes, knowledge of progression in learning, knowledge of their discipline subject, knowledge of teaching strategies, and knowledge of the culture and context of the learning situation. Teachers have to bring this complex knowledge together to enact teaching and learning, so a lot of our research is focused on teachers working with teachers. In particular, a lot of the work I do is focused on teacher professional development or professional learning to actually build the knowledge and skills so that they can improve their practice, because ultimately it is the skills of the teacher that are most important in determining learning outcomes. We are very practical and focused in that sense.

Prof. Rivalland—After we did two or three of the DEST projects, we became very aware of dissemination. In the Mapping the Territory project, we actually produced a poster for every school in Australia that had the main outcomes and suggestions from that project on it. With regard to the effective teaching in the early years project, called In Teachers' Hands, we are waiting for that to be released. We have developed a web site that has a huge number of video clips of teachers who were found to be very effective at work. There is enough professional development in those video clips to do PD in a school for a year, I think. We have done a lot of presentations at conferences and got very good reactions from the teachers, who are desperate to get hold of it. At the moment they cannot, because it has not been released.

Ms BIRD—That is very good to hear.

Prof. Hackling—The Primary Connections project is currently being trialled in 56 schools around Australia. This is the one to do with improving teaching of primary science through links to literacy. The professional learning resources and the curriculum resources that are being developed from that are being diffused quite effectively, in that the individual jurisdictions, which of course are on the reference groups, are engaged in the next phase of actually rolling it out through schools in the jurisdictions. Queensland is going to roll it out in 100 schools next year, for example. The curriculum resources are going to be made available on the Australian Academy of Science web site so that teachers can download them for free or can purchase a hard copy. With the previous research project developing science assessment resources, we worked with ACER and Curriculum Corporation. Those resources are available as a searchable database that is online on the Curriculum Corporation web site. The sort of work we do tries to make the resources available basically at no cost to teachers.

Ms BIRD—Are you confident that preteacher training teaches potential teachers how to access that sort of information?

Prof. Hackling—What we doing with Primary Connections, which I think is quite unique, is that we have convinced DEST to fund a preservice teacher education resource pack representing sets of curriculum materials and all the professional development videos to be supplied to all the faculties of education in all the universities and to provide a one-day professional learning workshop for science education lecturers across all the countries. Initially it was a program for in-service training, but now we are complementing that by infusing that into pre-service training around the country so that new teachers will be familiarised with the teaching-learning model and the resources before they graduate. That will occur over the next two years.

Prof. Rivalland—We have been using the video bank we got from the project, which has not been released, with the permission of the teachers internally, with our undergraduate students. In Paul's centre they are building a much bigger video bank to be used in our undergraduate program. It has been a major initiative of the School of Education over the last three years. I do not know whether you want to talk a bit about that, Paul.

Dr Newhouse—Part of our role is not just research; it is providing the ICT infrastructure for the school and having some oversight over the use of ICT in our programs. There have been a couple of initiatives over the last few years. One is the use of a lesson lab learning management system which focuses very much on analysing digital video. The digital video we have used is teaching practice, so we have lots of digitised video of teachers doing things in different school situations and then our students analyse that and reflect on it and so on. We have also just about finished building a digital video library that our staff will be able to search through to find appropriate digital video content that they can include in their web sites for the units in their slide shows or whatever.

Ms BIRD—Could you provide some information afterwards, because it is a bit off the topic. I am particularly interested in the impact on much more technology savvy young people—on how they learn. I am talking secondary here—still industrial age classrooms. I have a view that so much of the disengagement is driven by the fact that their experience of the world just does not reflect the classrooms they walk into now. I would be interested if you have research papers or

anything you could provide—some pointers to the committee, who will get it to me—on stuff that is available in the discussion of that area. It is something that, with the indulgence of the committee, I am interested in pursuing.

Dr Newhouse—Yes, certainly.

Ms BIRD—That would be great, thank you.

Ms CORCORAN—You said that your work is funded by industry partners, and you referred to them. Who are they, generally?

Prof. Hackling—For example, in the science education projects a lot of our research has been funded by DEST. Basically we spent five years building up a collaborative consortium of partners to support bids for DEST funding, and key players in that are the Australian Academy of Science, as the peak body for science; the Australian Council for Educational Research, which has the educational measurement expertise in the country; the Australian Science Teachers Association, which is the professional body; and the Curriculum Corporation, which is the curriculum development agency for the states and territories. They are the key players in science education at the national stage. All those partner groups have been involved in all five of the DEST funded projects I have mentioned. At the state level we strongly partner with the state Department of Education and Training and, particularly with the Fogarty work, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools, so we are strongly linked to the sectors within this state. The state department, the national players and DEST are our main partner groups.

Prof. Rivalland—We have two quite large grants from the department of education. The Student Growth project and the Pipeline Project, which is looking at behaviour, are projects that will be extended, plus Paul's 100 Schools Project. So there are three of them. They are funded over time and involve working with classroom teachers.

Ms CORCORAN—My second question is about the research. I do not understand who drives the research. Who has the good idea that we must go and look into X, Y and Z? Does it bubble up from below? Is it someone's good idea that they had in the bathtub last night? What happens?

Prof. Rivalland—In terms of the Fogarty centre, it has been a passion of mine. I began working many years ago with children in middle and upper primary who were unable to work with literacy effectively. When we had a new building, a new course and the opportunity to develop a centre there, I put it forward and it was funded. That has made opportunities available for us to work in the research areas that we are working in, linking the teaching of children, the teaching of our undergraduate students and working with graduate teachers in the area. So I guess that history and the right moment have led it in some ways.

We have also been very fortunate in having some public funding from the Fogarty Foundation to support that research, which has been absolutely wonderful. They take a great interest in how the money is spent. They come into the centre and watch us teaching the children. They are very concerned that the work we do actually makes a difference to children who are not in as fortunate circumstances as their children have been.

Prof. Hackling—A lot of the ideas in science education have come from the fact that we as researchers are very much engaged in schools and are doing a lot of professional development work with teachers. You begin to recognise the needs and the limitations in their practice. A lot of it is needs driven, and that is why the outcomes are so practical and that is why we have been so successful in continuing to win funds from our industry partners. Our research makes a difference.

Ms CORCORAN—So you are actually seeing needs at the coalface.

Prof. Hackling—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—Do X per cent do research and Y per cent teach, or do some people teach and do research?

Prof. Hackling—There is a very strong ethos within the school that good teachers, both at the university and in schools, are reflective on their practice. They inquire into their own practice, so that most of the staff will be engaged in low-level research and inquiry into their own teaching within the university. Probably half the school of education staff actively publish research papers and win research grants. The major projects, of course, are run by a very small group of people who have the luxury of sufficient time and resources to devote themselves more strongly to research. It is embedded across the school, but ultimately the big projects are run by a small group of elite researchers.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We will certainly contact you if we need further information. I would ask that you provide that material to the secretariat as quickly as possible. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence, and a copy of the transcript will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

[11.35 am]

BROOK, Dr Chris, Lecturer and Post Doctoral Scholar, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

HAIG, Dr Yvonne, Lecturer, Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

McDONALD, Dr Tim, Senior Lecturer and Program Director (Secondary), Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

CHAIR—I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard and a record is 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 the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and, as such, warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Dr McDonald—I am the program director, secondary, which incorporates the number of double degrees we have in our secondary program and also our diploma of education, which is one of our largest programs in the School of Education. We have about 305 students in our one-year course and we also have about 1,000 students in our secondary double-degree program. My lecturing interest, research interest and teaching interest is classroom management, in which we in the secondary program have dedicated a whole semester because, as you can appreciate, it is one of the main concerns for in-service teachers and preservice teachers.

CHAIR—It has been said that there is some significant difficulty in teaching behaviour management in a university context. Your colleagues spoke very highly of your work, and I as a non-teacher on this committee am interested in you informing us about how you teach behaviour management, the sorts of strategies you use and maybe some of the techniques that you inform the trainee teachers about.

Dr McDonald—It is true, and those who have taught know this, that this is one of the most difficult areas. It is certainly one of the areas of concern for practising teachers, and the cause of much fear and trepidation for people in preservice education who are going out to teach in schools. It is difficult to replicate a classroom within a university setting and to get school age children there et cetera. In the program we offer we use a lot of partnerships with our teachers in schools. We use people trained in classroom management. The government here has put in \$92½ million over eight years. We have just finished the first four-year phase of \$29 million and we are into the second phase. They have trained 92 teacher consultants in classroom management and structural strategies, and we use them as tutors for our students in our course.

I think the unit is very different from previous units in classroom management in that it is skill based and it has to be practical. The students have to actually have the language in their head and have practised the language of how to discipline a student and how to organise the environment so that kids are actually learning. We have gone away from getting a textbook, cycling through

the theory and retelling who the theorists are. Rather, we use an approach where we break down what a classroom does: you have got to get them in, you have got to quieten them down, you have got to teach them something, you have got to pack them up and get them out again. We would basically run through that process of how to start a class, what do you say, how do you do group work, how do you form groups, how do you make an accountable classroom where everyone is paying attention, attending and answering questions. We teach them the skills to do that.

We have quite a bit of focus on what you do when students misbehave, so we teach our students various methods using the language of attribution and giving choices to students: ‘I would like you to work here and stay and contribute to the group, or you can move over here’—et cetera—‘and these are the consequences.’ We practise that. We do a lot of role plays in the workshops—structured role plays, because students like to act and act, and they are probably worse than the students in the class!

Ms BIRD—They will end up on the stage or in politics!

Dr McDonald—There you go—well practised! It is all very scripted: ‘You are a student misbehaving in the back of the room, playing with your mobile phone. You are talking to someone et cetera. When the teacher says this, you will respond this way. Your role play is now over; thank you.’ It is a very safe context for people to do it, but they have to get up and do it. You cannot get out into schools and think, ‘Now, what was that theory? What did we do?’ You actually have to do it, say it and know it. So I believe, the more that I hear.

We have filmed WA teachers in secondary schools over the last couple of years, and we use a lot of video, a lot of digital technologies. Particularly—and Chris will talk about this—we are using new technologies in there. It is just a way of bringing the school context into the university and the class: what did that teacher say? What did that teacher do? How did you feel? Would you like to be in that class? When they disciplined their student, what did you see? What did you hear? How did they do it? What were the techniques? What were the skills?

For example, when you start a class, what do you say? What happens? Well, the teacher normally moves to the centre of the room. They stand there, so they have this proximity thing happening, then they say something. It is usually a short, minimal verbal, so it is just one sentence: ‘Students, eyes to me please. Pens down; eyes to me. Face the front’—or whatever it might be. They have to say that. Then what do you do? You pause, you then scan. You wait. You then remind a student, who is not paying attention, with their name and always finish with politeness: ‘Thank you. And today we are going to learn this.’

That is how basic the skills are. It is right down to the specifics which you do every day. But if you are new into it you do not know that you are doing it. It is very much skill focused, and that is what we do. And then we back it up with what theory talks about this. The students have to write their own sort of plan, what they believe about students, how they learn and the level of control.

With the video, it is just great to get WA teachers teaching. We use that video: ‘How did they get them into the class? Did they start them outside? What did they do with the lining up? They gestured to a student to get their hat off, so it is not confrontational.’ And so on. In the last part of

the unit, we do a three-week suite dealing with defiance—when a student says, ‘No, you can’t make me.’

Ms CORCORAN—Can parents have a copy of that?

Dr McDonald—I am struggling with my four as it is, don’t worry!

Ms BIRD—You could have a real market there!

Dr McDonald—Yes! Again, it is very practical. Actually, that is one of the comments the students make: ‘I can use this in my outside life, not just in teaching.’ It is actually personal life or with your own kids. We draw upon what that literature is saying as well. It is not just that you have to go on what Dreikurs or those traditional people have said. The three weeks on dealing with open defiance is, again, very skill based, looking at the acting-out cycle. What happens when a kid wants to stand up and push the chair back, throw a chair, slam the desk and walk out? And, of course, they always slam the door, or they tell you in their own language where to go.

CHAIR—Where would that be?

Dr McDonald—Not on a written recording! So it is very practical as to what you say, what you can do, what some of the openers are that you can use to get a student talking about how they are feeling, what is happening et cetera. It is all in the context that you still have to teach the lesson. You cannot stop. This is not a counselling session. We are not psychologists or social workers; we are educators. Our business is about learning. The kids come into your class to learn, and by the end of the year they have achieved academic progress. That is what we are about. But part of that is to manage that learning and part of it is the students’ behaviour. So it is very practical. All the tutors are practitioners. We do not have people who have been out of classroom for a long time. It is very much flowing through.

The feedback from the department—we provide them with teachers—is very positive, because at least they have a language. When they go to schools, they have a language of management that they are training their teachers in. The department have done 800 so far, out of the 24,000 or so that they have, but we have also cycled through about 500 of our own. So we are adding to that pool of people who have a common language: ‘What did you do then, when you did that?’ They actually talk the same language. So that is part of what we do. We keep it practical, and it is skill based.

CHAIR—One of the schools in my electorate is a very disadvantaged school. A teacher of some experience was transferred to that school and came across a situation of a totally dysfunctional class which was basically World War Three. This 30-year veteran said it was virtually an all-in brawl all the time and, despite 30 years of experience, that teacher went home and wondered, ‘How am I going to deal with this situation?’ I would imagine that a lot of beginning teachers are transferred to a range of hard-to-staff schools and may well, in isolation, be faced with something similar to what this 30-year veteran had. How do you train a beginning teacher to deal with World War Three when they walk in the door? I would imagine, though I am not a teacher, that when many of those classes see a new recruit come in the door they think, ‘This is our opportunity to behave very badly.’

Dr McDonald—It is very hard. How do you train and educate them for that, except by giving them the skills and the realisation that this is what it is like out there in some particular areas. I think we prepare the students for that by getting them to look at the dignity of every child. No matter how much they throw at you, it is not a personal attack. A 14-year-old does not know you. If your self-esteem is wrapped up in what a 14-year-old says to you on the first day, possibly teaching is not for you anyway. We talk to them and prepare them for that. We tell them: ‘There are difficult schools and difficult kids out there and there are problems that you can’t solve, but you can still try to manage the learning,’ because that is our business and it is what they are there to do. Also, with the skill based approach—because it is collegial and they have to stand up and talk and do stuff—we would say: ‘When you get out in the workplace, there will be colleagues you can talk to about this. Have someone sit in on your class and talk about it. Do some peer coaching or conferencing with each other.’

Dr Brook—Another strategy we will try with this particular unit next year will be to engage the students in a simulation using video. We will use a point-of-view camera. The camera will see the child’s behaviour in a classroom setting. Then we will position the preservice teacher in the situation of needing to make a decision. There we will engage the students in reflective practice—we will ask: ‘What decision will you make? What is informing that decision? What beliefs and values do you hold that cause you to respond in that particular way?’—so that we can unpack what they believe about classroom practice before they go out into that situation. We will use the video to give them a simulation of what a classroom is or could be like. Hopefully, it will not be like World War Three too often, but students could be faced with situations like that. That is a very safe environment in which to do that so that they have some perception of what it might be like.

Ms BIRD—It sounds fabulous. I suspect that it is such a good program here because of the personnel. At each university, you see reflected the priorities and interests of the personnel. I wish we could clone and extend your group. I am a one-year Dip. Ed. secondary English background person and I have a son who currently is doing a four-year Bachelor of Education secondary science. Having put that on the table, in terms of classroom management, my observation of both my own training and still, sadly, what he is experiencing is that he is getting a better level of practical skills. But what seems to be missing—and you touched on it, which I found heartening—is an understanding of your own response within that circumstance and how overpoweringly daunting your own fear of failure and feelings of disappointment can be.

My son did his first prac a couple of months ago. He told me of a class he had, which was 10B. They were not a problem class and everything had been going smoothly. He turned up one day to find that they had changed classrooms. He said to me: ‘Mum, it was like a different group of people. I thought, “What’s wrong with me?” I felt as though the car had suddenly run out of control.’ There is the component of understanding yourself and how you react. Also, there is how the prac experience in itself creates a range of behavioural issues and challenges. It is a bit like Luke saying that a class with their standard teacher will behave in a particular way in which they will not act with a first-year-out or prac teacher. There must be an understanding of what those challenges are.

Dr McDonald—I would like to respond to the first part about the student’s own response and then the prac. It is really hard to do. I think it is true to say that we are grappling. In the role plays and the lectures and in talking to our students, we would tell them that there are times

when I have felt—as has Timmy—that if, when I was driving out of the car park at the end of the day, a particular student was there and happened to be hit by my car, possibly that might be okay for next day's lesson; I would plead guilty. But there are students that are incredibly difficult and you are confronted with your total powerlessness. We are successful learners. We have done okay. Why don't they just listen? Why can't they just learn? There are students that do not have that understanding or that internal capacity to control themselves to do that.

So part of the course is to work out: 'And what did you feel? What did you see, hear and feel?' We tell them, 'You will be angry and you will have bad days—a fight with your partner on the way in, something might have happened, there was no milk in the staff room fridge so you had not been able to get your coffee beforehand—simple little things. You will go in there and the same student will say the same thing or will not have brought their homework again and you will want to snap and react. How will you feel?' We know that in dealing with the very difficult kids in particular you must be aware of what your own temperature is. You say: 'I can feel that you are getting a bit angry now, so what are you going to do about it? Anger is great, there is nothing wrong with it; it is what you do with it to the kid.' You do not have to blast that kid and think, 'I feel a lot better now—this is my own therapy that I can get with my year 9s!' We try to do that in the role plays.

As Chris was talking about, the new filming we are doing next week is in a class with the camera where you do not see the teacher and then we can use that as a supplement to the skill based training: what would you do in this instance? For example, one of the scenarios is where a student is meant to be in a group and starts ripping the page that they are meant to be doing, so: 'I can't do my work anymore.' You have prepared that. It is a good cooperative strategy. You have spent time doing it. All your resources are there. How would you feel? Most teachers would say, 'Really annoyed,' and you would want to go for the jugular—sorry, Tim McDonald would. Others probably are better and calmer about the whole show, but I would. So then you say to them, 'Well, what would you do with that?' So with the video where you cannot see the teacher I think we have a lot more access to bringing the real life context and that sort of practical integration into: what would you do? There is a whole series of responses and then we can work out: well, is that the best way? What will happen? And then we can play the tape: 'This is one way to go.' I think the use of the technology will help that. What do you feel? What about 'you' in all of this? But, using skill based and role play, you cannot get away from not doing that, by the way. It is really hard.

CHAIR—With the video, it is sort of like teacher-cam, I suppose. In the sample class that you are filming, are you getting the same response from the class with a camera obviously in place as opposed to a standard classroom situation or have you had to modify it in some way?

Dr Brook—We are trying a number of strategies here. Generally speaking, what we would do is video a class in operation. This is a typical class setting and we are just looking at, for example, a science lesson. Our intention is to use that as a modelling video for students and a analysis video for students so we can go through and look at what is happening and when. But ethically we are not in a position to portray students or teachers in a bad light. So our behaviour management unit is carefully scripted and we are making it very clear that this is not typical behaviour of students, we would hope. In this particular instance there will be a difference. Generally speaking though, no, the students quickly get used to the camera and the teacher quickly comes to terms with what is going on.

Dr McDonald—I will be the teacher and I am going to teach a normal history class. We have given kids naughty cards: you have to do this at this particular time. They will misbehave.

CHAIR—They would love that, wouldn't they?

Dr McDonald—They think it is fantastic. But how they interpret that is up to them. I would imagine that it would be relatively natural. Having been filmed before, the students do get into it quite quickly. The behaviours chosen, though, are taking from three of us, two teachers who are teaching at the moment in the classroom, and it is: let's run through a normal lesson. So everything is very real, because we have the practitioners there, but also we know what they do and we want a range from really minor misbehaviours—just talking when I have asked them to have their eyes to me and not talk and two kids keep talking—right up to where we have an open confrontation with a student in a group. We will film that. What happens when the student does that and how other students react is not scripted. That is the best we can get to. It is during the school day and it is a normal class. So it is not a handpicked group, it is not necessarily a leafy-green school, but it is a group of kids that we think will be on board with this. During their normal social studies class, the teacher will hop out, I will come in and there will be a camera there and away we will go and we will see what happens.

Ms BIRD—The second thing I want to ask about is that we hear a lot about behaviour management with kids with problems. It strikes me that a great deal of behaviour management is bright kids disengaged and bored. Do you cover that as well?

Dr McDonald—That is a really good point. Part of the behaviour research that we are doing in 32 schools in WA is called the pipeline project, which is about academic achievement and behaviour. What the teachers are telling us is that it is not the students who do not understand that are always misbehaving, but that there is also a group that are quite bright.

Ms BIRD—That can be more challenging and aggressive.

Dr McDonald—Absolutely, because their language is really good and they know how to play the game. They know how to wind you up. They know the buttons to push and they are brilliant at it. They are more of a problem because they can engage you in a conversation. It is really hard to fob them off and say, 'That's a really interesting point. I would really like to discuss that further with you. At lunchtime I have 10 minutes. Would you like to meet me to discuss it, because we haven't got time now?'

Ms BIRD—They say, 'No, I'll do it now.'

Dr McDonald—You say, 'We haven't got time now, but it's a really interesting point.' We are always affirming the student by saying, 'Let's make time later.' But they are challenging, incredibly so. We try to give the range, but three hours a week in classroom management for 12 weeks is only a beginning platform for these students. We try to give them the skills—can you get the class in, settle them and teach them something—because that is what we are about. Then, if the students do misbehave, can you use corrective strategies to get them back engaged? If a student wants to take you on in open defiance or a clear power struggle, have you got the skills and the language to keep that student's dignity in tact and get the rest of the people back onto learning? It might be at the exclusion of that student—that is possible—but the rest need to get

back onto learning. There has to be order in that class for learning to happen. That is what we teach them. You just have to do that.

Ms BIRD—Very interesting.

Mr HENRY—As Sharon said, it is great to see the work that you are doing. This institution is addressing a lot of these critically important issues of classroom management and the practicum. We have seen other institutes tend to shy away from that area of responsibility but teaching obviously has to be the whole package. I was interested in your comments when I came in—I am sorry, I missed your earlier introduction. Maybe in some cases teaching is not for some of these students anyway and some of these programs might help flesh that out earlier rather than later, although the attrition seems to be fairly high after graduation and not so high necessarily during the course. Are there ways that we can select students for their attitude to or aptitude for teaching earlier than getting them committed to the course?

Dr McDonald—How would you test them? What instrument would you use?

Mr HENRY—I am asking you.

Dr McDonald—It is a hard one. We will face this problem in a couple of weeks when we have about 500-odd applications for our graduate diploma for secondary course—I am only talking about secondary. The process is that they come through a tertiary clearinghouse—they go there and their files get to us. The students put their degree down plus a two-page summary of what they can bring to teaching—‘What skills and abilities have you got that you think would make you a good teacher?’ It is a fairly imperfect system, because we do not know the people based on two pages, as you all know with CVs.

Ms BIRD—It is not skills based, is it?

Dr McDonald—It is not skills based, no. It is really hard. The only mechanism we have in secondary is their school experience. Even if they are brilliant and they are a high-distinction student, if they cannot teach it in the schools—if they have not got the instructional intelligence to organise a class so that the students are learning in a practical way and they are progressing academically and they can manage the learning environment discipline—they fail. That is our only tool. We suggest to people, ‘Possibly this is not the career for you, because it is so difficult. That is actually your bread-and-butter. No-one wants to go to a job and wake up thinking, “Oh my God. I’ve got year 9s today.” It is just awful and you get wound up. It is just not the right way to go.’ It would be difficult to do something pre that, but I am open to suggestions. The volume of students is really difficult. We have 300 in the graduate diploma for secondary teaching. It would be great if they had more classroom experience during their year, but with 300, it is very difficult to individualise a program with a lot more school based programs. All we can do is offer those students who want to challenge themselves alternative practice arrangements in juvenile justice institutions, students in foster care, wards of the state or those students who have been kicked out of mainstream schools and are in different units. We can place them there to test them even more. I would love for everyone to have to do that sort of placement.

Ms BIRD—That would test most teachers.

Mr HENRY—You mentioned you cover the secondary area. We heard earlier today about the pretty high success rate you have at the primary level in the schools with the compacts and partnerships but not the same extent with the secondary schools. Will that change and evolve? Will you get more support from secondary schools?

Dr McDonald—We are committed to the partnerships. The partnerships we have with teachers coming into our courses is good; we would love more. The difficulty that we have in WA at the moment is that we are in our 10th or 11th year of curriculum change. We have a whole new course of study coming on for next year. I think teachers in schools are working incredibly hard and have had enough. And then we are asking them: ‘Can you do more one more thing? Take a student. Take another student.’ Some schools will take 30 to 40 preservice teachers in the year in their schools. We have one that had 50-odd, which is an awful lot of students floating around during the year. Because we have double degree courses in second, third and fourth year when they go out on prac plus the Dip. Ed., we basically have people out all year in schools. I would like to see more, and I think there is an appetite there and we are working towards it. It is a high-cost approach, but we are committed to it and we have proven that in secondary. But I think we are fighting against the workload of people in secondary schools.

Mr HENRY—From where I sit—and I do not come from a teaching or education background—it seems to me that that form of collaboration is mutually beneficial and that we should be looking at developing that culture as part of the norm. I cannot understand why it is not there.

Dr McDonald—It is there. There is the fact that we have people who are given time off to come and tutor. We are talking at the moment with the department about negotiating workload for some of these consultants to have one day based at ECU as part of their teaching load. So I think it is there, but we would always like more if possible. Our partnerships with some schools place hundreds and hundreds of students.

Mr HENRY—But I think you guys have been very proactive in building that relationship whereas, in other circumstances we have heard about, there seems to be a level of resistance both from the faculty of teacher education and from the schools themselves. It seems to me that that is a culture that needs to be put behind. But it is like any relationship: both sides have to work at it.

Dr McDonald—And both sides have to get something from it. Often institutions have taken a lot from the schools but have not given much back. I think—and Yvonne can speak to this—the primary program has done a wonderful job. What the secondary program has learnt from that is to see our students as learning resources and that what we do benefits student learning. It is not about, ‘I’ve got a student—not another praccie! Hell, how do I take them?’ rather than, ‘We’ve got all these resources sitting here in lecture theatres for a significant amount of time. What do you need in the school?’ Secondary are responding that they need some help for PE people at certain times of the year. We have had a request, ‘I would like to run a specialist literacy program; can we have some students for this particular time.’ As we are starting to change that view within secondary, which I think is taking longer than primary, they are seeing our students as learning resources. They are now requesting students from us: ‘I would like this.’ That is great.

Mr HENRY—Professor Angus this morning cited a couple of great examples where there was a real adding of value and a real benefit to the schools from having that partnership and that relationship.

Dr Haig—I teach in the primary program here. You made a point about the students having the opportunity to work out if they are really suited to teaching. In our program, students are in schools one day a week for the first year. I think that, more than anything, helps them to see. Because they become very much part of that school and they are treated as professionals from the day they enter the course, they do have an opportunity to see if this is the job for them.

Mr HENRY—We spoke with some students earlier and they were complimentary about that program as well.

CHAIR—When you are providing student resources from the university into the schools, do you ever reschedule any of your lecture programs to allow them to do that? How is that actually managed?

Dr McDonald—I can give examples from last year and an example from this year. At one school that I am the liaison person for—so I spend time whenever I can in that school, just being there in the staffroom and talking to staff, and we have students placed there—they have a unit for students who are not that successful in mainstream classes and are not doing very well. They are taken off into another classroom and run on a separate program. The school struggled getting these students into work experience—structured workplace learning—and doing some shadowing and doing some work in the workplace. I said, ‘We’ve got students; why can’t they run the program?’

One student had done a placement at that school, had gone voluntarily a day into this program and said, ‘What a great program—I would like to do this.’ So I said, ‘Why not do it full-time?’ So, with the 12-week course that I was running—not the behaviour management one; the other one—I said: ‘That can be your unit. Why don’t you work with those students, develop a program to benefit them about workplace skills—for example, time-keeping, self-management skills, what it means to be a team member and all that sort of stuff—work out a program with them and don’t come to my three hours a week, then you will write up your experience once I talk to you about students learning, you as a teacher and yourself.’ He took four others with him in that. That was fine—that was their assessment.

I think they learn more about it, honestly, working with these students than they do listening to me. We did it last year. Other students have done a similar thing based at Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre in the lead-up to NAIDOC week celebrations. We then worked with another group of students who were disaffected with school on a merchandising project. They produced their own can and labelling and tried to link it into TAFE’s certificate I instead of coming to uni. That was their placement.

Ms CORCORAN—I have just a couple of questions. I am not teacher so I do not know anything about anything, but—

Ms BIRD—Don’t believe her!

Mr HENRY—That is on record now!

Ms CORCORAN—I know. Thank you for your support! I am guessing that the learning a person does in order to be a teacher must cover their subject matter, how to teach it and then how to manage the classroom. You all nodded, so that must be about right. I am interested in the balance of those three. I am also interested in how you deliver this to a student who is here doing a three-year or four-year course and to a student who is here just for 12 months doing their grad dip.

Dr McDonald—There are tensions there. There are always tensions with subject specialists in schools where they do not know enough of their subject area. I think that has been around for a long time. We have remnants of that still with staff in schools and, I think, the press and others. At ECU, in our secondary principles that guide the courses, we aim that our students are subject specialists because we educate up to year 12. They have to teach TE or the new courses of study, so they have to know the content. Then, I would say, they have to know how to deliver it and how to manage the students that are getting it. In our double degrees they get a degree in their subject area. If I did English I would get a degree in English. Then the other half—the curriculum studies part—is how to teach it, how to manage it and how kids learn.

The Diploma of Education people come with a degree. You would hope, since I read them, that they actually have a degree in their particular area. If they do not then they just do not get in. Because we have such a high application rate to acceptance rate, we have that choice. Those who have a very integrated degree that might not match up to what happens in secondary schools just do not get in. But it is always a tension.

Ms CORCORAN—So, for a student who is in here who already has a degree and is just here for 12 months before they get sent out into schools, a large part of their year here would be spent doing the sorts of things you have been talking about this morning?

Dr McDonald—Yes, it is. They do a curriculum unit, which is a ‘how to teach’ unit, in their major area. If English is my major area, I would do a unit in the first semester and a unit in the second semester on how to teach it. It would usually be years 8 to 10 and then higher up in the school. That is the breakdown. Then also our students are required to have a second teaching area where they can teach years 8 to 10—the lower school. They also do a ‘how to teach’ curriculum unit in first semester and second semester. So they do two units in their major and minor areas. Alongside that, in the first semester they do two core education units—the behaviour management unit in their first semester and then ‘how do students learn’ and ‘how to teach’ units.

Ms BIRD—So they do not do philosophy of education or psychology of education?

Dr McDonald—No. That could be a valuable approach. We want a practical approach—that is, this is what schools are about, do you understand the system you are going into and do you understand the dynamics of 30 different kids in your class. There is a huge range of diversity. There are lots of reluctant learners and lots of students that love learning. How do you cater for both? It is an amazingly tricky group that they are working with and we have to prepare them and educate these guys so they can all progress.

Ms CORCORAN—We were talking to the group before you about research. I am wondering how much research informs what you do. The way we behave has not changed for umpteen years. Is there room here for lots of research? Do you have time for it?

Dr McDonald—I am project managing the Pipeline Project about behaviour and academic achievement in 32 schools. We have about 1,800 students who we are tracking over four years in relation to their academic progress and their behaviour. So the reading, and what we are finding in talking to staff directly, informs the unit that I teach into and how we go about it. It is also a good way of meeting really good staff that we can bring in, because we are always on the lookout for those. I think in our learning approaches and in our teaching stuff, we are very evidence based. I think it has been a big shift for us to get away from the previous possible approach that you mentioned. Now we want to look at what the evidence says about classrooms and young people—what adolescents are like today in 2005 and what we know about them. If that is what they are like and those are their characteristics, we want to know how we can get them to learn and facilitate their own learning. There is always a tension to doing the research and the reading and all the rest of it, but I think there is an acceptance now that that is just part and parcel of your job.

Dr Brook—I think, too, that that connection can be described as theory and research informing practice but practice informing theory and research so that we have a cycle where, yes, we are informed about what we are doing because of the research and the theory but practice is informing the theory and the research as well—so there is a connection between the two and the two are not seen as separate.

Ms BIRD—Some of the researchers from another university made the point to us that it is very difficult to get funding for inductive research; that, because there is not a huge literature base, you put up your proposals and they go, ‘Oh, well ...’ I worked in New South Wales juvenile justice, writing the training program for youth justice conference convenors. I wanted some stuff on moral development and how that affected behaviour, and it was impossible to get anything that was remotely useful. That was the first time it struck me that there is not a lot of research material out there on that inductive approach. Would you agree, and have you experienced those difficulties as well?

Dr McDonald—Can I say that it is really good that there is not. We are looking at behaviour and academic progress in the Pipeline Project. We found oodles of literature around special education and oodles of psychological literature about behaviour but that, from a practitioner’s point of view, there is not much practical information about misbehaviour that is not overly attributed to a syndrome—in the sense that a kid has ADHD or whatever. We do not want to go down that route. I do not think that is helpful to the majority of students in a classroom or to teachers. There is a group of students that misbehave that get special services—and they deserve them, they need them and it would be great if there were more services—but there is that 20 per cent group underneath that do not fit into that funding band that are equally as difficult and troubled. We do not know much about them, but we do not want to slap a syndrome on them, saying that they suffer from conduct disorder or oppositional defiance disorder. That does not help me with my teaching or to get that kid to learn just because I know they have ODD. So I quite like that there is not, in a sense, because then I think we have to grapple it—what does it mean for us in practice and, if that is the case, how does that help me on a Friday morning at eight o’clock when I have the second years and I have to lecture—

Ms BIRD—But doesn't that mean we are reinventing the wheel every day in the classroom?

Dr McDonald—I do not think so.

Dr Brook—I think the connection would be that, after engaging a practical situation with a student of that nature, it would require the teacher to publish the results and make known what happened so that we see that cycle happening. Otherwise, I think you would be right: if they keep that knowledge to themselves, we are in trouble.

Ms BIRD—Is there much capacity in the system for that sort of thing to happen?

Dr Brook—I think that capacity is growing. I think once upon a time we were perhaps too research focused and there was a separateness between research and practical experiences. But that gap seems to be bridging, and we are now seeing a connection. In fact, the obvious answer is that there needs to be a connection.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. Your material has been very fascinating.

Proceedings suspended from 12.15 pm to 1.01 pm

GARDINER, Ms Diane (Di) Lynette, Director of Teaching, Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia

O'NEILL, Associate Professor Marilyn (Marnie) Heather, Dean of Faculty/Head of School, Graduate School of Education, University of Western 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 and, as such, warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading statements is a serious offence and may be considered a contempt of parliament. Would you care to make some introductory remarks?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—I will start by briefly describing the parameters of our program and then Di will give some more detail about the program itself. It is important to understand that at UWA we offer only pre-service preparation for secondary school teachers; we have no primary, pre-primary or TAFE type coursework at all. It is a postgraduate program—that is, all students have to have completed an undergraduate degree with two substantive teaching areas in that degree, which can be offered for second school teaching. We offer eight major curriculum areas and a corresponding number of minor areas. We also include preparation of school psychologists, which is one of the few programs in Australia. The program is a one-year end-on—that is, the graduate diploma is a one-year end-on—extended academic year, where they do a 10-week semester on campus followed by a six-week block practice placement. There is a similar pattern in the second semester, which is, unfortunately, five weeks on campus and six weeks of practice, followed by two weeks of vacation and a further five weeks back on campus. This is dictated by the times at which we can actually place students in secondary schools and assure at least a measurable quality of professional experience. I would now like Di to speak briefly about the detail of the program.

Ms Gardiner—We are very fortunate in the sense that we have a large number of applicants for our course, so we have the ability to select them fairly carefully. We use academic transcripts as evidence of high-quality graduates, and we take them into the course. The fundamental principle is one of reflective practice, so throughout the course we encourage them to always be problem-solving teachers, to understand the theories of pedagogy and the structures of the curriculum and to develop the teaching competencies that they need and, through those three things, to continually be reflective about what they are doing—how they could do it better, what the theory tells them about something and how can they improve on what they doing.

We think we have a really nicely integrated course that has a very strong connection between theory and practice. Certainly watching the students develop over the year does indicate that to us. We model very much what happens in schools during the course and give them a chance to learn not just the theoretical foundations but all of those practical aspects that they need, to try them on each other, to try them on us, to enter their schools in a fairly close relationship with their mentor and to get feedback. We supervise them during the teaching practice. The university makes two visits to the student in each block practice. They get weekly reports from the mentor in the school. On the basis of that information we do our grading of the students.

It is a very heavy course. It is a 60-point course, which means it is a quarter of an overload on a standard university year. We keep the students very busy. We do not make any apologies for that because we believe it is preparing them for the really tough life they are going to face as beginning teachers. As much as possible we try to present what we are doing in the context of the realities of being a professional in teaching. I am fairly proud of the graduates that we produce. The feedback from the community of practice is that they are prepared, they certainly are experts in their discipline areas, they are good problem-solving teachers and they are prepared to grow throughout their years in the profession.

Regarding the terms of reference, there are a couple of things I would like to comment on before you, no doubt, would like to ask some questions. The criteria for selecting at our university are fairly stringent, as I mentioned, in terms of academic background. We are also tied by where we can place them in teaching practice. So our selection procedure is based not just on academic grounds but on how many we think we can accommodate in reasonable quality placements in the field. That, unfortunately, is our single most serious problem at the moment. We have tried various ways of addressing it, not totally successfully so far. I think we do attract high-quality graduates. We get more than twice the number of applicants for the places we have, and we get a lot of inquiries from people who are attracted to the University of Western Australia and believe through anecdotal conversations with friends et cetera that they will get a very good preparation in teacher education. Certainly they are well regarded in the schools.

In terms of the preparation in secondary teaching for the specifics that you have listed under term of reference 7, I think our course is really well balanced to prepare them in all of those areas. So literacy and numeracy is a fairly significant part of what we do through pedagogy. We encourage all of them to consider themselves as teachers of literacy and numeracy, not just the English and maths graduates. That is integrated into a number of areas throughout the course. Some of them do vocational education courses in more detail than others, but they are all aware of the sorts of offerings in secondary schools. Certainly we do a lot about effectively managing classrooms, but nothing will prepare them for it until they hit that first year of teaching, and then their learning curve will be enormous. We do our best to prepare them for the beginnings of learning to manage their students.

We have an exciting way of introducing IT to the students and integrating that across the course. They are currently preparing an electronic professional portfolio, which is both challenging and exciting for them. They are doing a great job on that. We deal with issues to do with bullying, disruption and dysfunctional families through our special ed unit, which is a core unit. The students are really engaged with the variety of learners that they are going to find in their classrooms. They are aware of it and they know where to seek help and how to go about dealing with those students, again in a beginning teacher sense—certainly not in a totally accomplished sense. Our course is accredited by WACOT, the Western Australian College of Teaching. They are well regarded within the local community and across Australia. We do know that our graduates travel widely throughout the world with their UWA degrees and easily find employment as teachers.

The final point under term of reference 7 is the one that they have the least ability to deal with, and that is to experiment with dealing with others in the educational community outside the school. So much of that depends on what experience they get during their teaching practice and whether or not the school will actually involve them in the kinds of activities that are listed there.

So we do recognise that that is a limitation. Also, one of the things past students sometimes say to me is, 'The one thing you didn't tell me how to deal with was an angry parent.' I think those kinds of things, unfortunately, are partly to do with our orientation into the profession later. I would like to finish by saying that the two most serious issues for us at the moment are to do with the practicum places and, I believe, the way in which the funding comes through to education faculties.

CHAIR—Thank you. Quite a number of the education organisations have established strong partnerships with schools in their area. What is the status of the partnerships, if any, that you have established and your approach to placing those students in practicum places?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—We do not have any formal compact arrangements that ECU, for example, and I think also Curtin university have engaged in. The university as a whole has links with Shenton College and we have just signed a memorandum of understanding with Belmont City College, which is one of the low SES, disadvantaged schools in the metro area. It does not always translate into the close connections that we would like. Aside from that, we have a historic association with a considerable number of schools who have for many years offered us teaching practice placements. We do not have a professional development relationship with schools on a site-by-site basis. It is one of the things that we are currently looking into because we are quite happy to deliver part of our formal graduate diploma or masters courses on site but we need to have a reasonable mass of staff sign-up for that.

Ms Gardiner—We do have a number of very loyal non-government schools with whom we have close relationships—the coordinators in the schools are very supportive of our program. In fact, I think for the last teaching practice we used 53 non-government schools and only 24 government schools. Part of that is to do with the demographics of where the university is for local schools. There are a number of government and non-government schools that have initiated conversations with us about trying to establish some kind of arrangement. One of the northern government schools has been very keen to teach the IT students in a collaborative way because there is a very big IT program at that particular school. One year we did go to great lengths to try to get some funding from the Department of Education and Training to see if we could set up a coordinator for this to engage our students with much more on-site experience. The logistics of it got difficult, the money was not provided and we also needed a school south of the river, because our students come from the four corners of the metropolitan area—the university is centrally located—so to base the teaching of one curriculum area in the northern suburbs was going to disadvantage another group of students. Similarly, I have had a couple of non-government schools contact me wanting to make arrangements within curriculum areas. For example, there is one that wants society and environment students to be able to wander in and out of its school and to have some very strong connections with after-school activities with its students. So we are in discussion with them but we have not come to any firm agreement.

CHAIR—How many graduate training places do you have for teaching?

Ms Gardiner—We have about 15 schools that are allocated through the formal arrangement we have here in Western Australia that you have probably heard about from other universities, called the Western Australian School Experience Committee. Then we have another 50 or 60 non-government schools. Each year we need somewhere in the vicinity of 430 to 460

placements, and we have to beg for half of those. Half of them are offered when we do our first round of requests. Then we have to make phone calls requesting the others.

Ms BIRD—Is there any particular reason you just do the graduate stuff? Does the university not have a history in education?

Ms Gardiner—No, we have a long history in education. We do actually have a small combined degree program which does have bachelor of education students—undergraduates who are doing both their BA, BSc or BEc with the BEd. There are only 30 students in the first year of that. The attrition is very low, so we have, say, 30 in the first cohort and then 28 or 29 or whatever in the next three years. Back in maybe the 1970s, the BEd course became less popular than the grad. dip. Philosophically, I do not think we have a preference. I think the students who come to the grad. dip. bring some more worldly experience with them—certainly it is a very diverse cohort—and so we have tended to concentrate our efforts there because that is where the demand is. The BEd program is great and the students are really enjoying it. They are typically school leavers—a slightly different profile of students—in that group.

Ms BIRD—You alluded to the issue about funding, and I am picking up from your comments on the partnership issue that immense hours need to go into organising, supervising, assessing and giving feedback on pracs and partnership relationships. Can you expand a bit on that? Are you uncertain from the tracking of funding whether you are getting back what you are putting in?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Do you mean with respect to the teaching practice, specifically?

Ms BIRD—With respect to the faculty overall, and the practice specifically.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—The university has a relative faculty funding model. In 2003, I put a cost-base analysis case to the university and had our formula increased. That was partly an argument about the fixed costs and partly an argument about the overload that we deliver. At that time, the fixed cost for our teaching practice component in schools was about \$900 per student. It has since gone up considerably, and we are quite anxious about the industrial negotiations on payments to teachers. We are now in the situation where, I think, the WEFTSU and the combined additional funding for teaching practice that went in at the last round of DEST revisions have left us in the situation where we are actually underfunded again, and we would be cross-subsidising inside the faculty from our transnational program. We have to earn half a million dollars offshore—clear profit—in order to keep our doors open onshore, and that will be exacerbated next year by the university's decision to advertise externally and appoint a dean under different financial arrangements.

We value appointing full-time academic staff to our preservice teacher education program. That is firstly because we think that a full-time staff member is more available to students, and the preservice teacher education students are extremely demanding. Most of the curriculum staff do a lot of one-on-one and small group counselling and additional teaching at the point of need, over and above the face-to-face formal classroom teaching that they do. If you employ sessional and part-time staff, you cannot provide that quality of support.

We are also very keen that all of the academic staff, including those in the preservice teacher education program, should have the opportunity to be both academic teachers and researchers. Personally, I think that the preservice teacher education staff still have a tougher run there because of the day-to-day demand from their students and the big teaching practice blocks. When they are out supervising their preservice teachers in schools, other academics have the opportunity to go to conferences or write papers or do whatever. So the preservice teacher education staff are still disadvantaged, despite what I have tried to do about the workloads.

That said, there are still two areas in which I feel quite strongly that we are understaffed. We have sessional and postgraduate students, who are qualified and experienced teachers but, nonetheless, are paid only at sessional rates, teaching in some core areas. I am not happy about that, but my budget projection for next year shows me that the school is 110 per cent committed on academic and general staff salaries.

I do not think that we are any more disadvantaged than other faculties in the internal university allocation of funding, although the DEST weights are reflected to some extent in the internal funding. So the heavy lab type science courses get higher funding than we do. I think that would be true across every university in the country. So there are three issues. One is that the decision to fix the HECS fees for national priority programs at the lowest of any of the university sectors was an abysmally misguided decision. It has adversely affected every teacher education program in the country.

Ms BIRD—So would you recommend uncapping?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—I would recommend uncapping the HECS.

Ms BIRD—You do not think that will influence the mix of students you then get applying?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—It will not affect the mix of students that we get applying at UWA.

Ms BIRD—In a grad dip type program?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Yes, or even in the combined degree program. I can understand and I have a good deal of sympathy for the notion that it may adversely affect career changers, particularly of women. I think that women, particularly mature age women, would be reluctant to take on a course in which the HECS fee was subject to, say, the SuperHECS charges. At the moment the SuperHECS in our university is 25 per cent. There is no guarantee that it will stay at that level, but a HECS fee of \$4½ thousand, by the time it comes through to a faculty, is just not a realistic sum on which to provide teacher education.

Ms BIRD—Would you say that fixing HECS for nationally targeted areas, such as teaching—the intention being to encourage people into them—might in fact have the opposite effect?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Absolutely—without doubt.

Ms BIRD—That was the first point. I just wanted to understand that a bit more fully.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—One is the priority funded cap. The second is that the way in which the funding formula is structured in our university is to set aside funding to support university level infrastructure—for example, library provisions, ICT provisions and some of those things. You simply cannot argue against the necessity for those things to be funded properly. It would be stupid. Nonetheless, it means that by the time those things are taken care of you look at the amount of money that comes down to you and you think, 'There's no way that I can actually function.' And we cannot. As I said, we need to earn a clear profit of at least half a million dollars to survive, and we are the smallest faculty in the university. We have 16 full-time academic staff to do all this stuff as well as to be active researchers and win large ARC grants and do our community service professional development delivery. Do you want to weep?

The third thing is the cost of the practicum. The cost of the practicum is very difficult to quantify accurately. As I said, in 2003 we said the cost of putting a student in a school was \$900 per head. Sue Willis, for the ACDE, said last week she thought it was closer to \$2,000 by the time you added in everything—we are talking 60 days and I think she is probably talking 100. So there are variations from site to site, but those are the three key costs.

Mr HENRY—You mentioned the Western Australian School Experience Committee. I have not heard about that. Could you elaborate on that and the relationship the university has with that group and with the private schools. How do those relationships work in regard to placing graduates in the program?

Ms Gardiner—In the early 1980s there was a call from the principals of government schools in particular for the universities to get organised so that they were not all beating on the doors of the same school requesting prac places. It had become totally unmanageable for the schools. So the universities formed this committee, and it has a proper constitution and form of action. It is with the supervision of the Deans of Education in this state, so they are the ultimate voice on it. Every university has a member. The terms of agreement are that we will allocate schools to universities based on need and location and that kind of thing and that we will endeavour not to use each other's schools. Every school will only be contacted by two universities at the most in order to request places.

This committee meets four to five times a year. It started off a very acrimonious committee. I have been on it for a long time now, not always as director of teaching but in a previous capacity as well. There was a lot of fighting about who deserved to have which schools and why and that kind of thing. Over the years, it has evolved to be a very collegial community. It is great to see it emerge from those early days. That has been due to some very good leadership early on from a couple of the chairs when it was in a transition phase.

One of the local government schools has closed because it was too small. They shut it down. It happens to have been one of our schools. We have lost a school which, in theory, was supposed to provide us with prac places. So at the next meeting there will be some discussion about how we might be compensated for that by perhaps being able to share one of the other government schools. The exception to this is that Notre Dame refuse to be part of this agreement, and they have in fact approached all schools, regardless of any agreement that the rest of us have.

We are pretty keen to try to respect the rules of WASEC and there are times when we do need to access another university's school which is not ours. We first try to contact the person who is

responsible and ask permission. We try not to use the school for the same learning areas that we have—for instance, we do PE and some of the other universities do not. So we might access a school that belongs to a place that does not do PE. Every couple of years there is some renegotiation of that school allocation. Certainly in the secondary it is less problematic than in the primary. Those universities that have primary students seem to quite frequently need some discussions about how to reallocate those students, and that is because they are dealing with early childhood centres as well.

The non-government schools are not part of this agreement. We all have access to any of those that we like. This puts UWA in a very fortunate position because a lot of the non-government schools are very close to UWA and a lot of the teachers in those schools are ex-UWA students, so there is a very strong sense of loyalty to the university. However, we access non-government schools all over the metropolitan area—the full breadth of it—with great success, fortunately.

Mr HENRY—Are you happy with those sorts of relationships you have with the schools you work with or could there be any improvement? Are they responsive to your needs and you to theirs?

Ms Gardiner—Yes and no. Some of them are very loyal and they are wonderful. A lot of it depends on the coordinator in the school. In every government school there is a coordinator of teaching practice, and our communication must formally go through that person. We are not allowed to contact the teachers direct. There are very good reasons for that, like keeping tabs on how many student teachers there are in a school at any one time. If the teachers responded to us, the school could find itself with 20 with no accommodation for them at all. Indeed, that might not be good for the students at that school to have so many praccies.

Some of them are very loyal, very organised and very effective. In schools where the coordinator changes regularly, we have enormous problems. For instance, one school that has been a fabulous supporter of ours for the last 10 years took not one student this year. The new coordinator there was not too sure how to go about it. I subsequently discovered, just through a casual conversation with a staff member I knew at the school, that in fact the paperwork had not been distributed to the teachers at all. So there is nothing you can do. You cannot ring and complain.

Ms BIRD—Did you say that every school has a coordinator of teaching practice? Do they have a release to do that job?

Ms Gardiner—Typically, it is the deputy who has responsibility for that. I believe, no, they do not have any compensation in their workload for doing that. It is another job for them to do, and that can be a problem.

Ms BIRD—Does the department require every school to nominate? Are they able to not comply with that?

Ms Gardiner—They can not comply, but most schools would find it a lot easier to have one coordinator who is handling those inquiries and who is overseeing what is happening in the school. I have never come across a school who does not have a teaching practice coordinator. Some of those people take their role very professionally. It goes beyond just answering the

university about prac places. Some of them provide PD for the students. They have two weekly meetings with the students allocated to their school. They talk to them about school discipline policies. They might give them PD in other areas. If there is any PD happening at the school, they are invited to attend that. So some of the coordinators are absolutely marvellous. They take a really professional approach to it for no extra time whatsoever. It is not always the deputy. In a few schools it is the school librarian. I suppose that is because they do not have quite the same demands on their time through classroom teaching. To my knowledge, it is not a regular classroom teacher in any of the schools that we use; it is somebody with some status in the school.

Mr HENRY—I think the professor mentioned a six-week block placement. How is that managed and how does that work? Is there a review process for the student?

Ms Gardiner—In the first instance, we send requests to the schools for placements and then we try to match the students as close to home as possible. The very first teaching practice of the year is a five-week block which is preceded by five single Wednesdays. On those five single Wednesdays, students are attending their school on one day and are back at university for the other four days. So it is a wonderful opportunity to provide connections between theory and practice over those five weeks. When they come back from their visits, there is a lot of discussion about what they have seen and how that matches with the theory that we have been talking about and how they can see practical strategies that we have been dealing with applied in the classroom and what the problems are. All those kinds of discussions happen. The students find this a marvellous way to become familiar with what is going to happen. It is not nearly as frightening as arriving on day one and having to deal with the block prac. During that time they get good orientation at the school. Typically they become familiar with all of the facilities—the library, IT and all those kinds of things—and how to order materials, books or book the computer labs. On the last Wednesday, we ask them to have a go at teaching a class and then to come back and talk about how that felt and what it was like.

Then they start the block prac on the Monday and they do their five weeks. During that time the mentors are encouraged to have after-class discussions with the student. They have a gradual increase of their load. They are only required to take one class a day for the first week, so there is lots of time to reflect. We ask them to write a reflection after every lesson and to discuss it with the mentor. When the university supervisor goes to the school, we look through those reflections to see that the student is actually problem solving—not just describing but analysing what is happening—and their reflections might match what the teacher feedback has been, and that we can see some progress, that their reflections go, ‘Wow, I tried that and it worked.’ We also ask them to keep a log. This then forms the basis of an assignment when they come back to the university. Every day they reflect on the whole day and what has happened, not just in their classes but in classes they have been watching with experienced teachers, making some connections to the theory again and how it matches and mismatches and how this might influence the development of their own teacher persona to make them the most effective teacher they can be. Then they pick a theme that recurs in their log—something that has obviously been a problem that they have worried about—and they prepare a written assignment on that.

In addition to that, they have to take a video of themselves teaching. We analyse those back on campus in small groups. That forms the basis of another assignment in which we ask them to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and then to develop an action plan for moving forward

on the weaknesses, so that by the time they start the second prac they should begin from a higher level and not just repeat the same mistakes. That is a really rewarding moment, especially for the staff. It is a joy to sit and watch the students. They get a great appreciation of the diverse locations that they have been in. We do it in small groups so it is not too intimidating. They get to watch each other's videos in small groups of four. That is facilitated by a staff member. Typically the students say it was one of the best learning experiences. Somebody had been telling them that A, B, C or D needed attention but it until they watched their video they did not agree.

Mr HENRY—So mostly those experiences are in high schools?

Ms Gardiner—They are. Our BEd students—that is, the combined degree students we were talking about earlier—have one week in a primary school. That gives them an opportunity to see where their secondary school students are coming from. We talk quite a bit about the way in which students are demotivated into secondary schools, given their love of learning in primary schools, and how we might address that. So they only get that one week experience in primary.

Mr HENRY—We have heard from others that they have a greater difficulty in arranging placements with high schools. Is that your experience too?

Ms Gardiner—Sorry, I missed the beginning of that.

Mr HENRY—They are able to place student teachers in primary schools without any difficulty but that it is a lot harder for secondary teacher students to be placed.

Ms Gardiner—Yes, that does seem to be the case. Primary teachers probably see their students as assistant teachers. They are in the one classroom, facilitating them throughout the day. They take a collaborative team approach to it. To a large extent, the secondary teachers see this as more work. I am not sure how we can change their thinking on that. Certainly, some students are hard work. Typically, if we know that, we are in contact with the school a bit more often—‘Do you need more support and how can we help?’ We do send supervisors to the schools, as I mentioned before. These supervisors are very experienced and wonderful people who work for very little. We pay them only \$50 a visit and sometimes a visit can take between three and four hours. Marnie and I have often commented that our cleaning ladies get more money than that, yet these people do this fabulous job of nurturing students who might be having problems and supporting the mentor in the relationship.

The schools typically do not realise that if they get a weak student this is their moment to help us in partnership counsel that student out of the course so then we do not have the weak people out there in the profession. I had the experience just a couple of weeks ago where a mentor rang me and said that the student was not going to make it. I said: ‘That is fine; we have given them an opportunity. Let us watch the lesson, let us provide the feedback and let us counsel the student.’ We have sent this person in a different direction, still with their self-esteem intact I hope, but not out there in classrooms where they were not suited to be. I think the secondary teachers are incredibly overworked here in Western Australia at the moment, with new curriculum implementation as well.

Mr HENRY—That is always a bit of a challenge.

Ms Gardiner—Yes. I think they have shut down on anything extra while they are dealing with that.

Mr HENRY—We have heard that there is a shortage of science and maths teachers in particular. What are your experiences and appreciation of that?

Ms Gardiner—Certainly, I know there is a shortage because I get the principals ringing me asking whether I have any graduates that they can employ now before the rest of the schools get a go at them. The shortage is alive and well in maths, physics and chemistry. We have tried to compensate by boosting those classes in our grad. dip. and certainly our BSc program—not so successfully in the BSc-BEd program. This year we overloaded our maths and science classes tremendously to try to boost the supply. It was not 100 per cent successful, because you boost it by taking more applicants and then you have to take those who are on the fringe that you might not normally take.

Mr HENRY—And then you have to convince them to do a Bachelor of Education?

Ms Gardiner—Then I have to tell them that they are not a terrific teacher and this is not going well for any of us. Typically, those whom we have had to fail this year have been in maths and science.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Sometimes they make that judgment for themselves. They have already invested at least three years in their undergraduate degree, so they may invest another year and then go out into teaching thinking maybe they will get better at it. They are doing tremendous damage to kids for the time they are there and they are doing damage to themselves. It does not do you any good to get up every day and go to a place where you do not want to be. The function of counselling people out ought not to be seen necessarily as a negative version of attrition. You do not want them in the schools if they are not good at what they do and happy to be there.

The university has also tried to address the maths-science-technology issue. The Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences has started up a program where their undergraduate students go out and work in schools. It is called various things. In some places it is called STAR, at some places it is SEEK. I think ours is SEEK. These kids come from across a range of disciplines. The engineers had a couple of people out there this year, which really quite surprised me. The students were very positive about the experience. We have also worked with the life and physical sciences faculty to offer a pathway through their science degree which better equips students for the realities of secondary school teaching.

Initially, the program required students to specialise quite early. People who wanted to do physics would do physics, chemistry, maths and maybe one other unit in their first year, and then they would just do physics. The reality is that very few schools can afford to employ a full-time physics-only teacher or even a physics-maths combination teacher. In their first year they will be asked to teach biology or human biology, where there are slimy things to deal with and you cannot just talk to your computer. So they have offered a pathway called science education, with the idea that, if you choose that, you would have a slightly broader first and second year combination, which would mean that at least you had done a dissection of something before you got out there. We have a reasonably good relationship with our undergraduate faculties. They are

willing to make sure that the pathways are clear for students and that it does actually make a good undergraduate preparation for an end-on program.

Ms Gardiner—One of the problems with the maths shortage is that not many students do a maths major in a degree.

Ms BIRD—To start with.

Ms Gardiner—That is right. What we typically get are students who might have done an engineering degree with mathematics in it. They are often mature age students. Sometimes they are students for whom English is not their first language, so they do struggle to stick with it. The maths shortage is not one that is going to go away in a hurry because we require a major in order to take them in to be a maths teacher. We will not take them unless they have six units of mathematics. I think sometimes the engineers can earn a heck of a lot more money doing something else.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—It is a fact of life that, if the economy is booming, the number of people who choose teacher education is much lower because they can earn a zillion dollars with the built-in career pathways and professional development that the private sector can provide.

Mr HENRY—Science graduates, for example, are taken up by industry fairly quickly?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—That is right.

Ms Gardiner—We get an enormous number of human biology and biology graduates because it is not industry related, but the physics and chemistry students can usually find reasonably well paid jobs.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—A young man who had a double degree in chemistry and environmental engineering—he had first-class honours, certainly; he was quite an interesting person—was juggling bids from two petrochemical companies, one in Melbourne and one in Kwinana. They were upping the ante about accommodation, transport and whatever else was in the package. Finally, he said, 'I'm staying in Western Australia; go away Melbourne people.' He started on \$80,000. A first-year-out teacher with a double in physics and maths will start on \$40,000.

Mr HENRY—It is a big difference.

Ms Gardiner—Yes. The other thing is the rural problem here in Western Australia. We had a very talented young maths teacher in the cohort of the year before last. He had come from an engineering position, but he decided that he wanted a lifestyle change and he would come and do the Dip. Ed. Then he was nervous about having to go and teach in the country. He had a wife and a small child. The company he had been working for contacted him just as he was finishing his degree to say, 'We still have your job if you would like it back again.' Rather than risk having to go rural, he went back to his old job. There is a real fear of going a long way from Perth. A long way from Melbourne is nowhere near as long as a long way from Perth.

Mr HENRY—Distance is a big issue here. Not only that, we do not have the same infrastructure in our regional centres or smaller towns that they have in New South Wales or Victoria, or even Queensland for that matter.

Ms Gardiner—That is right. It is very expensive to travel anywhere.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Quite a number of our students—an increasing number—are mature age and they do have young families. Sometimes those families are subject to a joint custody arrangement, which means that it is very difficult for half of the family to pick up and go. The other thing is that, if they go to a small rural location, they do not have the benefit of their family network or their friendship network that they have relied on as they have come through university to get through the day. Child care and even after-school care are major factors. Then there is the fear of being trapped out in a rural location at the same time as your own kids want to access at least secondary or post-compulsory secondary education. That is a real factor for teachers not just in their first year or two but also later on down the track if they are looking for promotional opportunities as well.

Mr HENRY—Could we see fly-in, fly-out teachers?

Ms Gardiner—We actually have them. The department of education has a fly-in, fly-out relief teacher. He is an ex-student of ours. He gets flown all over the state to do—

Mr HENRY—Obviously the placement of teachers into country Western Australia will be an ongoing issue.

Ms Gardiner—We encourage our students to do a rural practicum. The local Department of Education and Training has a program in place to encourage students into rural placements by way of offering them some monetary support. Unfortunately, it is not quite enough. They have to find their own accommodation, and that can be quite difficult. Indeed, we have had some very unpleasant experiences on that score. But it is doing a little bit to encourage them to have a taste of it and go, 'Yes, I could live there; that would be okay.'

Ms CORCORAN—Professor O'Neill, you talked about your course being 'one year end-on'. What does that mean?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—It means that they do their undergrad degree first. They have to have completed that before they come into the Graduate Diploma of Education, which is, technically, a postgraduate qualification. So we talk about a teacher education qualification being a 'four year', BEd a 'three plus one'. The 'plus one' is the 'end-on'.

Ms CORCORAN—How many students do you have doing the post grad?

Ms Gardiner—About 187 this year. We have had up to 230, which is a bit of a nightmare to place.

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Now that we have the combined degree students pipe-lining through as an additional 30 or so, we are in fact routinely looking for 210 or so places. Typically, out of 180 enrollees, we would graduate 150 or 155.

Ms Gardiner—Some of those go part time. They decide during the year that they cannot carry the full-time load.

Ms CORCORAN—I assume you have a mix of full-time staff, part-time staff and sessional staff. Is that the case? If it is, what are the numbers roughly of each of those?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—We have, as I said, 16 full-time academics. We have one person at 0.7, who is our science education person. That is one of the areas which I am not happy is on a fractional appointment.

Ms Gardiner—The bulk of them are full-time staff members.

Ms CORCORAN—So the majority are there full time?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Yes. When I said that we use postgraduate students and sessional staff, we use them to cover the seminars in particular and one or two of the courses like the intro to teaching at the third year combined degree level. Those people are qualified and experienced classroom teachers. So we do not employ just any old warm body or any postgraduate student who has their hand up and is saying they need financial support. The people who teach curriculum are required to take 10 students and visit them twice during the five-week block. If you have a class of 30, that means we need two other staff. They would be sessional staff—the visiting mentor teachers that we pay such abysmally low rates to.

Ms CORCORAN—I am assuming your staff do research as well as teach. Do you think that should be the way it is for all educational faculties? Should education faculties undertake research as well as teaching?

Prof. Marilyn O'Neill—Clearly, there is divided opinion on that. A good teacher education faculty could draw on research done by others to inform their courses, their teaching and their presentation. I think that is true, but I do think there is an additional edge you can bring to the academic classroom through the research you are currently doing where it has application to the theory-practice interface. I think it also keep academics' minds alive in a different kind of way.

Currently I do not do very much of my own research, but I do supervise 25 higher degree research students. Because we supervise by paradigm rather than specific content area, it means that I have a much broader base of understanding of current research because through the Ed.D. we do a lot of professional research into what is going on in schools and what is being done there. I bring that to the classes I teach in pre-service. I teach an elective in teaching literacies. I have in the past taught the teachers work program. Next year I will be teaching the youth culture program. If you do not do that, I think it is easy to stick with what you are comfortable with—the stuff you did 15 or 20 years ago—and as we get older that time kind of stretches out.

Ms Gardiner—I think we have also been very keen on educating our students, not training them. If you are going to do that, then you get a broader understanding of education.

Ms CORCORAN—Thank you very much.

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

[1.55 pm]

BERLACH, Associate Professor Richard George, Head, School of Teaching, University of Notre Dame Australia

O'NEILL, Associate Professor Michael, Dean, College of Education, Fremantle Campus, University of Notre Dame Australia

CHAIR—I welcome the representatives from the University of Notre Dame. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and the record is made available to the public through the parliamentary web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that these proceedings 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.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—We have prepared a statement and, with your permission, I will read from it.

CHAIR—Please do.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Feel free to gong me if I go over the 10 minutes that we have been allocated. I have chosen to concentrate on a few of the terms of reference which we think probably hit the mark a little more than others and that we feel a little stronger about. The University of Notre Dame applaud the initiative of the federal government to hold this inquiry and are grateful for the opportunity to present our submission. We are of the firm belief that teacher education should be responsive to the needs of its stakeholders, and it is our view that this process of inquiry and reflection can only aid that response.

I would like to concentrate on the first term of reference, which asks us to examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses. Teaching requires vigorous standards of entry. The traditional pathway for entry via the TER should not be compromised, but it can be complemented by alternative pathways. We believe our submission addresses this very thoroughly. At the University of Notre Dame, interviews are a process—that is the difference between treating potential candidates as a number versus their personal qualities. The interview has the capacity to value-add to the judgments about a candidate's suitability. Last year our college alone conducted close to 500 interviews for potential applicants. Schools also have the capacity to play a vital role in the selection of candidates. We believe no-one is better able to make a judgment about a student's suitability to teach than their teacher or principal. Their references are vital, as is the personal statement of the student when they submit to Notre Dame. Flexible mature age entry is important, recognising prior learning where it has a close correlation to the degree which students want to study. There is a strong case to recommend some minimum standards in literacy and numeracy also—we believe that very strongly. Prospective students who have marginal levels in literacy and numeracy at UNDA must not only sit a test but achieve a standard of 70 per cent in the pass rate. If they fail that test, they are then required to do extra units through their degree.

I will now move on to term of reference 2, which asks us to examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high-quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This is very much governed by the fact that the status of the profession is sometimes adversely affected by remuneration. I do not think we can get away from that. Starting salaries are sound and very competitive, but they plateau very quickly. I think you are all aware of that. As we said in our submission, tradesmen can sometimes earn almost twice the salary of a teacher.

Ms BIRD—What about a parliamentarian?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Maybe you should have an inquiry into your own particular needs.

CHAIR—I doubt the wider audience would be too sympathetic.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—We teachers find the same. One of the problems with this is that we have a problem in attracting young men into the profession. I have no doubt that you have heard that right around the country, and it is a significant issue that has to be faced into the future, particularly for young kids in primary schools, who can sometimes go through years 1 to 7 without having a male teacher. By the way, can I refer to the very good inquiry into the status of the teaching profession done in 1998, which examined this whole issue very closely. It was also complemented very well by the other document, *Australia's teachers: Australia's future*, which I hope you have had a look at.

We are also facing a crisis in the ability to attract strong candidates to maths and science—and the press has gone over that in great detail—precisely because they are finding pathways to commerce and other courses like engineering far more lucrative and rewarding. Again, we need also to attract candidates who have backgrounds in the trades to possibly move into teaching to meet the demand and lack of supply in the area of design and technology. Notre Dame has embarked on a new degree, the vocational education degree, and you would have heard one of our representatives, Sonja Bogunovich, address you yesterday. It is precisely to meet that demand and to give credit to people who have a trade and give them advanced standing for the first year of a four-year degree course that we can attract them in and then send them out to the schools.

We need to examine the previous reports on this very term of reference. They supply us with excellent data and are referred to in our submission. The report I have just mentioned had no fewer than 54 very good recommendations. Other reports, *Who's teaching science?*, done in 2005 for the Australian Council of Deans of Science and the DEST report, *Taking schools to the next level*, must be referred to, as should the Victorian government's recent report, *Step up, step in, step out: report on the inquiry into the sustainability of pre-service teacher training in Victoria*.

Regarding term of reference 3, examining attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition, we argue that we do not see high attrition rates in our undergraduate teaching courses. Where we do see the attrition probably being of concern is in the early years of teachers' experience in schools, and the data will back that up. The first five to seven years of teaching can be very demanding for many young teachers and we do see a high attrition rate there. It is important to note that where attrition exists it is often based on the school experience

practicum where a student makes a decision that teaching is not for them. For many reasons I would argue that this is often a good thing. There is nowhere to hide in front of a classroom and we do not want teachers in a classroom who cannot cope. We need to nurture them but at an early stage in their career choice if this is not a career for them they should be advised not to go into it. There are many other alternatives. For those who do want to go into it and want to further their career, we are there for them and we believe that the school should be too. But there are sometimes some wise reasons not to further that career.

The notion of attrition in the early years of teaching raises the need for processes to be in place which nurture the professional development of young teachers and provide a transitional phase to ease them into a very demanding profession. Perhaps a program similar to articles in law would be useful or even the process of chartered accountancy for accountants. Another possibility is a reduction in class contact time for first-year teachers, and I have seen that done in schools very effectively. That is a decision taken by a school where it prioritises its budget and funding to meet the needs of its young teachers. In that situation they can spend time in reflective practice with a senior mentor in a school. It works exceedingly well but it does require funding and/or the school's ability to make the cuts themselves.

Another reason for the high attrition rate can be a lack of significant practicum experience. UNDA provides a very extensive practicum experience to overcome the intensity of the first few years of teaching. Our Bachelor of Education students graduate with 32 weeks of practicum experience done over three 10-week blocks in the second, third and fourth years. In the second, third and fourth years they are literally getting close to three months experience in the classroom. We think that there are not too many other universities that can match that. It is one of the key distinctives of our course. Disenchantment with salaries and a lack of promotion opportunities is another real reason for the attrition rate amongst some young teachers too, and I think that that needs to be looked at.

Term of reference 7 is another key area. I think by now you would know this term of reference well. I will not read the list of competencies that you require to be inquired into. The very list itself exposes the incredible demand on teachers to be competent across a wide variety of area and, conversely, the enormous responsibility of teacher education programs to equip them with a broad variety of skills. Literacy and numeracy units are strong components of the UNDA degree. We strongly encourage the focus of this inquiry in that area. UNDA also offer the VET program, as I have alluded to. We offer behaviour management units in all our degrees in education. Dealing with disruptive students and dysfunctional families is covered in a number of the behavioural management units that we run.

However, I would have to say that systems and sectors need to work in collaborative programs with the tertiary sector to provide the highest quality of professional development once graduate teachers are in schools. The incidence of violent, disruptive students and, very sadly, parents is on the increase. It has never been higher in Australian schools. Only this morning as I was walking out the door I heard on the news a report being referred to that said that in New South Wales there were 5,000 suspensions this year. A large number of them related to violence in the classroom. The federal government's safe schools program, developed in 2004 through the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program, has been a very welcome contribution to this professional development. These sorts of initiatives are to be applauded. It can only be properly done, though, in the context of the school site after graduation. We would be very naive to think

that we can equip all students perfectly to meet the contextual problems that arise in a wide variety of different schools.

Working with students with special needs and disabilities is a complex subject. However, our belief is that in the main students who graduate are equipped through some exposure in undergraduate units to dealing with students with special needs in the classroom, but they are far better served after they have had time in the classroom with special needs students in a mainstream context and then go back to some postgraduate study. We believe that works far better.

Dealing with senior staff, school boards, parents and parent bodies is ideally a situation better dealt with in induction programs that are run by schools. Many schools provide fantastic induction programs in this area. We have applauded them. However, we also believe that the importance of interpersonal relationships is examined very well and in depth in many of our UNDA introduction to teaching units. But it is something that is honed in years of experience and engagement with others in the school community. It is clear from all of the above that teacher training courses simply cannot do everything. To try to cover all of the above would be superficial at best. There must be some limits to what we can do in the four years that we have students, or in the one year in the graduate diploma in education.

Term of reference 8 links very closely to the earlier terms of reference, and it asks us to examine the role and input of schools and their staff in the preparation of trainee teachers. This is very important and quite topical. As discussed above, there are many roles for capacity building in the ongoing professional development of both young and even mature teachers. One significant area that needs close examination is the impact on schools and teachers in the preparation of trainee teachers during practicums. The University of Notre Dame prides itself on the duration of the school experience given to its pre-service students, but it comes at a cost to staff in schools, who are working under enormous pressure. In Western Australia in particular, teachers are swamped by reform. We have one of the most comprehensive post-compulsory reviews ever seen in this state. They are suffering from reform fatigue. It is not my term but a term coined by Hugh Mackay. I think you might at least empathise with it a bit. On top of that is the enormous debate about outcomes education in this state.

With the increase in student teacher numbers and no commensurate increase of staff in university faculties of education, there is also an increasing tendency for schools to take on more responsibility for the supervision and assessment of student teachers during their school practice. This area requires significant financial support from both state and federal government departments. Teachers need to be properly remunerated to take on this onerous, yet vital, responsibility on top of an already demanding, ever increasing workload. We are very appreciative of the job they do, but we are also very aware of the cost. Taking on this role is a very positive experience in terms of their own professional development, renewal and modelling of best practice, and for personal self-reflection. It also gives them enormous potential to be future leaders within their schools, but we need to help them through it. They are the key terms of reference we wanted to emphasise, but we are more than happy to take questions on our submission and on any other terms of reference you would like to address.

CHAIR—Thank you. You raised the issue of using the interview during the selection process. It is an expensive process to conduct with regard to resources and funds. When you are selecting

those students whom you are going to admit to the university, are you allowing in students whose TER score might not have been quite up to scratch, or are you interviewing out those with a higher TER score who would appear unsuitable for the job of teaching? How does the mix work?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—I suppose the best way to describe it is that—as I alluded to in the opening statement—we do not want to treat students as a number, so we do not want to have this arbitrary cut-off at 70 or 80 in terms of a TER, because how good an instrument is it, or could it ever be? So if a student is just on the margins of the lowest point of entry we would be happy with, we take into consideration a lot of other factors, such as if their principal says 'This kid has the character', or the experience in service roles within their school. I interviewed a girl the other day who had 240 hours of work-based school experience in an early childhood setting and had a fantastic review from that early childhood teacher. She was just at the cut-off point, but the reference from that teacher and her principal, and then her performance at the interview, assured me she would make a wonderful teacher. The proof will be in the pudding, as she goes through the course. But at least we are giving her the opportunity.

Prof. Berlach—At the lower end, I have certainly seen during my experience that people who do not appear to be as good as others, perhaps, over that four-year period scrub up quite nicely. It is amazing how, when individuals who earnestly want to be teachers are given an opportunity, they can rise to the occasion. I guess as far as the top end is concerned, even though they may be strong academically it is certainly worth having a look at students to make sure they have the requisite skills in other areas. I remember not so long ago in a fellow university here in WA they were looking at medical students and there was a student there with a TER of 98 point something or other who was rejected from that course because, even though they were very bright, they just did not have the bedside manner or something. I guess we are looking for those things in education as well. We want people who are passionate about wanting to teach, and who like children—that always helps—plus a few other criteria. The interview process is excellent for getting people at both the upper margin and the lower margin.

CHAIR—The Western Australian College of Teaching this morning raised the issue of an intern year as a tool of perhaps reducing attrition in the early years of teaching. What are your views on an internship process that may be paid with a reduced loan, or something like that?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—It is not a simplistic solution. Sometimes those solutions are fairly simple and easy to provide, but they can be more complex. There are a couple of factors there. First and foremost is the comment I made earlier. What sort of workload will that impose on teachers in the schools who will be looking after that student for either a six-month internship or, if it was put forward, a 12-month internship? Are they comfortable? Are they confident? Do they feel they have the prerequisite skills to nurture and advise in areas of pedagogy, in the theories behind the number of points your inquiry is looking at? If it can be complemented by a sound mentoring from a theoretical foundation, it could certainly be looked at.

But it is often a solution proffered by bureaucrats and/or administrators, who are not going to have to do the hard yards in the classroom with that particular student. In my experience—and I have had 20 years in schools—working with student teachers, even for a five-week or 10-week period of time, is very intense if you want to do the job well. It requires an enormous amount of

work on your part, on top of your existing heavy workload. I would have a degree of reticence and I would be a little circumspect about it.

Ms BIRD—To be fair, they were indicating a model where the mentoring teacher also had a release and support.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—It requires enormous support in terms of time and consequently money to fund a program like that. I will give you an example: one of the things that we do through our teacher training program, which is 10-week program, is have what is called a head of professional practice based in the school. We bring that teacher in from the school and we train them to be a head of professional practice and to be a mentor. We give them the theoretical foundations to adequately assess, mentor and supervise. They get advanced standing towards our master's degree—they get three points towards it—for undertaking that training program. Then they go back into the school and they are a wonderful central figure in that process. It is not as if some of those issues have not, in a more diluted form, been tried. I would not throw it out of the context of the whole debate.

Ms BIRD—The interesting thing for us is that those first years are in classrooms anyway, and somebody is trying to deal with the fact that they are first year out teachers, and often it is them by themselves. So I am a little bit attracted to the model just in terms of support from that perspective. Did you want to make some comment?

Prof. Berlach—It is the college's position that we would not throw it overboard without looking at it more closely. But I would certainly want to see the fine detail as to exactly how it was going to pan out. One of my concerns is that at one end we have just introduced in this state a College of Teaching that is very focused on making sure that people have appropriate qualifications and are trained and so on. At the other end, we are now talking about a minimalist kind of approach which can become a dike-plugging approach rather than something that substantially supports what is currently happening. How those two are going to interface is something that I would like to explore. That does concern me.

Ms BIRD—The college was pretty open with us that they were willing to go and lobby government to fund it appropriately. That may play out in an interesting way; who knows? We all take on board your comment—and similar comments have made to us on numerous occasions—about the number of inquiries into this area. We are more than hopeful that we will have some impact, at least, on government direction. I found your stuff about the intake particularly interesting, along with the stuff about the capacity to incorporate an RPL approach. I have a view—and it is only vague and experiential—about the fact that so many of our boys are disengaging from school. They are regularly the kids who potentially could perform very well, but they disengage, leave school and go off and try work or whatever. To some extent, the TER will keep out people like that, and mature age people who want to return to university and so forth. So I was really encouraged by your much broader approach—but it is very resource intensive.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—It is.

Ms BIRD—A number of universities have said to us that they do not have the capacity to undertake that. Is it just commitment that enables you to persist with that?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Without blowing our own trumpet, I would have to say yes. We do not get any time allowance to do these interviews in our university. We do it because we think it is so important and, dare I say it, because it is underpinned by an ethos of a Catholic university that says that that interpersonal connection is at the heart of everything we are doing. It is what we are about. It takes its toll, but I have to say that it is an incredibly rewarding exercise.

Ms BIRD—If you are advertising the TER cut-off for this course as a certain level for this year—

Prof. Michael O'Neill—We do not advertise the TER cut-off.

Ms BIRD—Otherwise you would have students getting quite irate. So you are saying it will be a basket of things that we look at.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes.

Prof. Berlach—We look at an indicative score rather than that being the only measure of entry.

Ms BIRD—The reality is that the TER is a supply driven thing too. It depends on the range of kids in that year.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Absolutely.

Ms BIRD—I have one more question. I take what you are saying—and we have certainly been expressing this as a result of what we have heard so far—that designing a 10-year pre teacher training course, which one could very easily end up with if we took on board all of the things that everybody wants in courses, does not negate the fact that there is still a lot of feedback from students that some of the subjects they do are too theoretical and not embedded enough in the reality of practice in the classroom. Pardon me if either of you lecture in this still, but I always quote the examples of philosophy of education and psychology of education—two subjects I did in my Dip. Ed. and the most useless time I ever spent. Five or six years later, looking back, I would have found it very interesting and it would have informed me, but not at that point. So I would be interested to know whether you are actually tackling some of those comments from the student bodies within what you are doing.

Prof. Berlach—Yes, I think we are. We are looking all the time at trying to make our courses and units a lot more relevant. Just to pick up on something that you said, Sharon, I do not think we should simply do something or not do something because the students demand it. As educators we have a deeper and a more global understanding of this whole enterprise. In the 25 years that I have been in this business, students have said to me, after a certain period of time, 'I had no understanding of what was going on in college but now it makes sense.' That is probably not a bad way of looking at things. Everything does not need to have immediate relevance. It can be something that gives them a bit of scaffolding, a bit of a background, which later allows them to engage in deeper interpretive processes.

Having said that, I would also say that I think we have found quite a nice balance between the theory and the practice. The fact that we have longer teaching experiences in the schools allows

us to build in more of the relationship between the theoretical and the practical. In fact, we have units where they do part of the unit at university and then they attempt to interpret what has happened; they try to reflect on what is happening to them while they are in the school. We have a number of units like that, so we are conscious that that is a problem, but at the same time we are not only going to submit ourselves to student demands because they make those demands.

Ms BIRD—I understand that. It is probably getting more problematic in that students are paying for stuff.

Prof. Berlach—Sure.

Ms BIRD—That often requires an immediate sense of value for money, if you like. I understand that dilemma.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—I could respond by saying a couple of things on that point. I had a friend who did a pure philosophy degree—three years of pure philosophy—

Ms BIRD—A sadomasochist, obviously.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—and you would be sitting there thinking to yourself, 'Dear God, what did he end up doing with it?' He went out of university and joined a punk rock band, but he now holds one of the most senior positions in education in this state. What it gave him was a challenging intellect, a very astute sense of observation and analysis, a high ability to articulate an argument, put it forward and deliver it—actually very well. You would be very interested in this example. At Notre Dame we have compulsory three-core units: one is theology, given our Catholic university ethos; the second one is philosophy—every student in every subject must do it; and the third one is ethics. Combine the three together and you get, we hope, a very well-rounded human being coming out of our university who has the ability to make judgments about right and wrong in ethics, who has the capacity to analyse and dissect an argument in philosophy and who, through theology, has an understanding of some more important things, we believe.

Do we bow to student demand when they say, 'Dear God'—excuse the pun—'why do I have to do theology?' No, because it is a principle we stand for. Our challenge is: how do we help that student to understand its relevance? I would hope that if we teach the philosophy of education, we are constantly teaching it in such a manner that we bring it alive and show them the relevance. I have said to my own students more recently that had they only done a philosophy of education unit that they would be far better equipped to engage in the debate about outcomes based education. It would have given them a raft of skills to engage in that debate eloquently. There is always that counter-argument.

Ms BIRD—I think it is an admirable target, but the vast number of students coming in say, 'I just want to be a teacher.' It is often not until you have a bit of maturity in your profession that you say, 'Now I want to.' Perhaps the model that we have, instead of front loading all the time, should be one that has a bit more of a look at what we need initially, what we need supported, and what we need to encourage in ongoing training.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—You have raised a very important point, which is the perennial balance between theory and practice. We would like to think that we do it reasonably well.

Prof. Berlach—I imagine too that all the universities do it very differently. So, having some sort of standard as to how much prac, how much pedagogy and how much curriculum and that sort of thing, would not necessarily go astray.

Ms BIRD—Choice might be a good option for students in shopping around, yes.

CHAIR—Gentlemen, I want to pick up on your comments regarding articles in law or, as you go on to say in your submission, a reduction in class contact time for first-year teachers as a way of perhaps reducing attrition. They seem to me to be a little bit at odds with each other. Could you explore and explain that a bit for me?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Do not get me wrong—I do not see a conflict of thought there. We were probably trying to say that the first year of teaching is unbelievably demanding. Sharon, perhaps you did a Dip. Ed. or a few years of teaching before your current career—

Ms BIRD—Before I became an attrition rate!

Prof. Michael O'Neill—You could profoundly remember the furnace that the first couple of years of teaching are. It is a very demanding profession. It can be very personally draining. What do we do to help get these young teachers through? Maybe we could use the well-structured and mentored approach that articles can provide in a law firm. I would have to say, given lawyers I know, that it can be done well in some law firms and poorly in others; it is not an absolute solution. But, on top of that, to give a young teacher a full-time load is throwing them in right at the deep end. Some of them, the Ian Thorpes, can swim to the end of the pool very quickly. Others are like me and they need floaties. They need enormous help. One of the key ways of giving them that help is by giving them a little less marking and preparation by taking, maybe, one class off them. Added to that, a program of well-structured mentoring has to be at least one way of going forward. So I do not think that one negates the other.

Mr HENRY—So you are not advocating a reduction of practicum, as such?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—No. I am saying that when they graduate and they are in a school for the first time they should not be given a full-time teaching load by that school.

Mr HENRY—So it would be like an internship?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes.

Mr HENRY—Where they might have an 80 per cent workload?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes. Absolutely.

Mr HENRY—In your submission you say that the work placement opportunity or work experience is also perhaps a way of sorting out some of the wheat from the chaff, in terms of the aptitude of people.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes.

Mr HENRY—Some of the feedback that we have had from students is that a lot of them strongly like the idea of spending time in front of the classroom early because it gives them exposure to classes and students.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Through their degree, they do like the prac time they get. It is by far one of the best opportunities for them to make judgments about and to develop their craft.

Mr HENRY—You have mentioned in your submission OBE. Obviously, there is a significant debate happening in Western Australia at the moment. Is that having an impact on students in the way they feel about their courses? Is it creating a level of uncertainty in the way forward for them?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—For students moving into the reform, who are currently in year 10 going into year 11 for the first time, there is arguably a degree of anxiety. They hear certain things from their own teachers, they hear comparisons made in the press and many of them are wondering what it is all about and whether it will be a better system. I have a nephew going into year 11 next year and he asks me, as his uncle, whether this system going is going to be better for him. A lot of work needs to be done to sell the benefits of the system to those students and their parents in particular. Richard has some very strong views on the subject.

Mr HENRY—There seems to be a strong cohort of teachers who have a strong view against it.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes, there is—significantly. It is a fairly well informed view, too.

Prof. Berlach—I would personally join those people. I have some real concerns about OBE and especially its interpretation in Western Australia. I am trying in my classes to explain to my students what it is all about but I am having great difficulty. They are seeing the weaknesses and the holes in the whole system. It amazes me at times why the architects of this cannot see some of the incongruities. Some students who are training to be teachers are really concerned that they do not quite understand what it is that they are supposed to teach when they get to the schools because the whole OB paradigm does not give you that. It does not give you content—it gives you outcomes at the end. How you get to those outcomes is open to debate. That is something that certainly needs to be looked at. That would help reduce attrition rates in young teachers. I suspect a lot of confusion reigns in those first couple of years regarding what they are supposed to do.

Michael mentioned the load that teachers have to carry in those couple of years. That is certainly true in the type of assessment, competencies and systems they have to use as part of the whole OBE process. They are incredibly labour intensive and I have not yet been able to find any sort of evidence that shows they are better than the traditional methods. All they do is create more work for teachers. There are other issues around that that need to be explored further. Ultimately, if that is resolved it would prevent attrition.

Ms CORCORAN—I want to go back to your procedure for interviewing students. Do you have a feel for how many students you have taken into the course that would have been excluded if you had a straight cut-off in the TER score, and how many students have been excluded from

your course who would have otherwise got in? Are we talking about a difference of one in 100 or 20 in 100? Do you understand the question?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Yes, I understand the question. It is a hard one to answer. You are probably asking for a gut reaction because we have not really documented it as we have gone.

Prof. Berlach—Except possibly in the pre university courses we offer. We have a certificate IV that we offer because we are also an RTO as well as a university in special needs and in early childhood. We also offer a tertiary preparation program to students and those students we then interview. Probably at this stage we are bringing in 70 per cent of those students that have been through those courses. About 60 students all up would be taking those courses so quite a number are coming through the alternative pathway and they would be lower end students, I guess.

Ms CORCORAN—Who otherwise would not have got into the university course?

Prof. Berlach—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—So it is quite significant.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—In terms of the overall first-year intake I would hazard a guess and say that maybe it might reach 20 per cent of the intake.

Ms CORCORAN—So that gut reaction is right—it is worth the exercise.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—Absolutely. How many would we knock back on the interview? Very few, interestingly enough. I can remember a couple vividly.

Ms CORCORAN—You do not exclude too many but you actually include quite a few.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—We do not exclude too many because of the interview but we bring far more in because of it.

Prof. Berlach—That would certainly be true.

Ms CORCORAN—We have not heard this today but we have heard it a few times recently—the need for teachers to see themselves as professionals and the need for the world to recognise teachers as professionals. I have always thought teachers were professionals; it never occurred to me not to think that way. In your submission you equate professionalism with salary. Is there anything else in the mix or is that the measure that society uses?

Prof. Berlach—I think that is a good question. There certainly are other things in the mix; that is just one measure. It brings to mind a study that was recently done by the OECD in which they looked at teachers in Finland, and it found that it is harder in Finland to get into teacher training than it is to get into medicine. So there is a perception in the eyes of the community of a much higher status for teachers than we have in other parts of the world, Australia included. It is not just a matter of remuneration, although remuneration certainly ties into it; it is a generalised perception of the value of teachers. How you shift that is very difficult.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—I think it is a sad reflection on society in general that professional status is linked to remuneration, but I do not think we can get away from it. We need to work on the larger sociological phenomenon that, in this day and age, so many vocations and professions are lacking the respect that they once had in society. You have only to look at the way police are treated in the community, and, increasingly, teachers in the classroom by both students and their parents. There was a time when there was enormous respect for teachers as professional figures—figures of authority, figures who had presence in the community. Sadly, that level of respect is not as strong in the community as it once was.

Ms CORCORAN—That decreasing level of respect, I would argue, is perhaps not tied to salary.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—No, not at all.

Ms CORCORAN—So it is tied to something else.

Prof. Michael O'Neill—It is a sociological phenomenon, as I said. Sadly, it is a reflection of a number of other things that have occurred in the fabric of the community that we live in now.

Ms CORCORAN—My last question is about all those other inquiries that have taken place and all those thousands of recommendations that seem to be stuck in a cupboard somewhere. You will be pleased to know that one of our jobs in the next couple of weeks is to look at all those recommendations and see what has happened, if anything, to them. My question to you now is: are there any in particular that you would like us to look at? Do you have any particular recommendations in your mind?

Prof. Michael O'Neill—I would have to say that this one is superb, and I am referring to the executive summary of *Australia's teachers: Australia's future*. Its focus was on advancing innovation, science, technology and mathematics, but in the course of its development it encompassed a much broader range of issues. In fact, it addressed the issue of remuneration and professional development opportunities and career pathways for teachers. Its recommendations are concise, pragmatic and very well expressed, I think. There are 54 very good recommendations there. I also think an earlier Senate inquiry into the status of teaching, titled *A class act*, was a superb document. Once again, it was a document that got shelved and we never really saw much come out of it.

Prof. Berlach—If the important recommendations had actually been implemented perhaps we would not have the concerns that we have currently about the shortage of maths and science teachers. Let us hope that what you are doing does make a difference in the longer term.

Ms CORCORAN—I would like to think so, anyway. Thank you. That is all I have.

CHAIR—With regard to those students at the lower end that you have let in by interview, it has been said by another witness that, for a teacher to have really struggled with something and succeeded, it may be a very good thing to allow that teacher to understand what the students are going through in their learning process. When you look at those students who, on the basis of interview, you allowed into the course, how has that cohort performed? How accurate has your

interview process been in selecting some winners to go through the course and into the teaching profession?

Prof. Berlach—From my perspective it is mainly anecdotal because we have not specifically done that study. Certainly, I have seen people who, at the end, are still not academically strong but they are very fine practitioners. I have seen it over and over again—they perform really well in the classroom, and they are pretty average academically. When we are talking about early childhood education and primary education, I think that is quite acceptable. When you are talking about secondary education, you need to be a lot more cautious because they have to be stronger as far as the content base is concerned. But, yes, I think a lot of them have the capacity to be pretty fine teachers.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information. A copy of your evidence will be provided to you by the secretariat and the transcript of today's proceedings will be placed on the parliamentary web site.

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

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 2.39 pm