COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2005

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Thursday, 24 November 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 Michael Ferguson and Mr Hartsuyker

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The scope, suitability, organisation, resourcing and delivery of teacher training courses in Australia's public and private universities. To examine the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools.

Specifically, the Inquiry should:

1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.
2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.
4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.
5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.
6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.
7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:
   (i) teach literacy and numeracy;
   (ii) teach vocational education courses;
   (iii) effectively manage classrooms;
   (iv) successfully use information technology;
   (v) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;
   (vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;
   (vii) achieve accreditation; and
   (viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.
8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.
9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.
10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.
11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

The Inquiry should make reference to current research, to developments and practices from other countries as well as to the practices of other professions in preparing and training people to enter their profession.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.01 am

ARNOLD, Professor Roslyn Mary, Dean and Head of School, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

BROOKES, Mr Peter, Faculty Executive Officer, Academic, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CAIRNDUFF, Mr Gregory, Program Director, Bachelor of Teaching, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

FRENCH, Ms Lesley, Lecturer in Inclusive Education and Facilitator, Early Years Education and Care, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

PORTEUS, Ms Julie Ann, Co Program Director, Bachelor of Education Program, and Lecturer in Foundation Studies and Drama in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

SATTERTHWAIT, Dr Donna, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training inquiry into teacher education. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the University of Tasmania for offering to host the committee today. We are aware of the considerable effort that goes into preparations for a visit like this, so I thank those responsible for those arrangements.

The committee has visited a number of universities around Australia as part of this inquiry, including the Central Queensland University in Noosa, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory, Flinders University, the University of South Australia in Adelaide and Edith Cowan University in Perth. These visits have been very useful. We look forward to hearing about your teacher training programs and exploring with you the challenges being faced by teacher educators today.

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

Prof. Arnold—Thank you for the opportunity. I have prepared a presentation which gives an overview of the Faculty of Education. It takes about 10 minutes, and then we will take questions.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Arnold—The faculty is creating a culture which supports the EDGE Agenda. The EDGE Agenda is the vice-chancellor's agenda. It is built round four words: excellence,

distinctiveness, growth and engagement. To support that agenda, the faculty is looking to develop excellent teaching programs which meet contemporary needs and to undertake research which makes a difference. We are very committed to those, particularly teaching and research in those areas.

We have a faculty vision—that is, to become known for transformative practices, creativity and innovation and the getting of wisdom. The stakes are high. We are looking to create in our students opportunities for them to develop their abilities to the highest levels and to implement those abilities in their students. We think that to develop excellent teacher educators we have to provide them with models of best practice in their teacher education experiences.

How are we doing this? We are doing it by ensuring that life in the faculty is intellectually challenging and emotionally memorable for staff and students. We are currently recruiting and supporting excellent staff. We are looking to grow leaders among our students and our staff. We would like our students to become early career leaders and have opportunities to fast-track their experiences and to go out into the community willing to take on leadership positions very early in their careers. We know that after five years many people leave teaching. We think that is possibly because there are no leadership opportunities for them early in their careers. We are hoping to push that boundary by sending our graduates out ready to take on leadership.

To do this we are listening to all our stakeholders, including students. We have had two important stakeholder meetings this year. We are involving the community, the profession, industry and business to tell us what they think we should be doing in our teacher education programs. We want to ensure that our graduates are highly literate, numerate and confident in working with technology. Those three areas are very important areas. How are we doing it? We have established two key initiatives in the faculty. One is the Institute for Inclusive Learning Communities, which is designed to implement the Atelier report and to help teachers in schools to work with diversity. We have also developed a research centre called the Transforming Learning Communities Research Centre.

How are values enacted in the faculty? We are committed to respecting individuals, understanding their similarities and differences, enhancing their ability to be transformed intellectually and emotionally in enabling circumstances, supporting mutually beneficial relationships with and between stakeholders and developing flexibility and creativity in our delivery of teacher ed programs.

How does this play out? I understand that you have copies of the Skilbeck-Connell report. That is a report that focuses on getting coherence in teacher education across all programs. We are working with Professor Skilbeck and Dr Connell to implement that over the next two years. By developing a core teacher education program, rather than having five different programs doing slightly different things in the faculty, we are looking to get coherence and have core programs that students can come into, from whatever program, and have a similarly excellent experience.

We are also developing strong international relationships. The College of Education of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign is a very strong link with us because the University of Tasmania was very fortunate to receive a $7.5 million bequest from the late Professor Charles Hardie. The same bequest was given to the University of Illinois and there is a very natural link

now between our two institutions. We are looking to send teachers who win Hardie fellowships to Illinois to have some preliminary experience there before they go to other parts of the United States. It is a tremendous opportunity for the faculty and the state and one that I think other faculties of education look on with some awe. So we are very lucky and we are going to do the very best we can to get everything we can out of that.

We are also developing strong national relationships with the faculties of education at the universities of Melbourne and Sydney, and we are looking at the possibility of shared programs and shared practicum experiences, where students from those two states might come to Tasmania to see how the essential learnings strategy plays out in the schools here—and likewise our students could go and have a metropolitan practicum and be partnered with students in one of their programs. That is on the drawing board. We think that is important because, when you link with other universities, there are implicit and explicit ways that you benchmark. That is very much in our agenda.

A fair bit is talked about how research works in a teacher education faculty. As I said earlier, we believe that research has to make a difference to the discipline, the profession and beyond. There is a lot of research, for example, that tells us that teachers make a difference in schools. We want to know how you make sure that that difference is built in early on and that we have people who make that difference. We know it makes a difference, but we do not necessarily carry that into the teacher education programs. From now on we will be doing that. We have developed our own post-graduate PhD scholarships and a master of education memorial scholarship in honour of one of our students who, tragically, died. That is a link with Singapore. I have just returned from there for the awarding of that scholarship. What I am outlining here is an outreach program—a way of making sure that Tasmania demonstrates best practice but also links with the right kinds of institutions, organisations and people to keep an eye on whether we are going in the right direction.

Community engagement is enormously important. As I said, we have regular meetings with stakeholders to give them information on our initiatives and to receive feedback, so we are keeping an eye on what industry, business and the community expect from the teacher education faculty. We are also working with the local council. We have a co-pilots program, which is a literacy program for disaffected students. My colleagues the program directors, whom you will be meeting a little later today, can tell you more about those kinds of programs where we work in the local community.

How did we get the distinctiveness in teaching that we are aiming for? As I mentioned, there is the development of a core curriculum for teacher education across all programs. That might sound unremarkable but, whereas people have been used to working in their own small programs, we are now one faculty and one school, so we do not have to divide into isolated little silos; we can work with coherence and have people sharing experiences.

We are also committed to a pilot project for high-achieving and highly motivated students, which is tentatively called the Alchemy Project. We are committed to looking at ways of enticing students who might normally go into law or medicine to come into education by developing a program which is intellectually very stimulating for them and would allow them to fast-track and do honours at the same time. If they are deeply committed, extremely motivated and hardworking—and we put the right sorts of benchmarks in place—and can achieve in a short

time, we do not believe it is necessary for them to stay for a longer time. We are looking forward to designing and implementing that program by the end of next year. We hope that will develop the early career leaders.

When we talk about early career leaders, we are not only talking about students coming from school. Many of our students are mature age, come from other professions and have had a lot of life experience. We want to be able to develop programs that enable them to go out and be acknowledged as early career leaders. We have fast-tracking, as I have mentioned. and opportunities for credit for prior learning. We have a new initiative we are very proud of—the Bachelor of Education and Care (Early Years) degree. That course arose because one of our staff, Lesley French, saw an opportunity for people working in the child-care industry to upgrade their TAFE qualification and get a degree. It has been enormously supported throughout the state by people in industry. We have an international professor, Phillip Gammage, who is an expert in early childhood areas, working with us on developing that degree, which will begin in the middle of next year.

We are particularly enthusiastic about our program called Partners in Professional Practice and Innovation. You will have heard a lot about the practicum or in-school experience and the difficulties people have supporting it, funding it and so on. I hope you have already heard about the very strong relationship we have with the Tasmanian Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office and the independent sector. One of the things that is distinctive about Tasmania is the possibility of having very good relationships—provided you get the vision right. We are working closely with the Department of Education to invite certain schools to work very closely with us—so that the teachers can be true professional partners with us and the practicum can be improved by getting the students to have positive experiences in schools.

A large number of schools in Tasmania give us prac places. I had a report yesterday that most of those schools are very committed to the work they are doing with us. But we want to acknowledge what they are doing for us and upgrade that by asking the teachers to deliver the teacher education part of the program alongside us, rather than having the separation between universities and schools. We want to develop true partnerships, and we believe that is possible in Tasmania. We are grateful for the support of our major stakeholders—the Department of Education, Catholic Ed and the independent sector, who are very much on board with us in moving forward with that kind of relationship.

We want to develop deeper understandings of the theory of teaching and learning—or pedagogy—and develop closer links between theory and practice. Too often, theory sits out as something that students learn about, but they do not see how it relates to their lives. We are looking to have them reflect on their practice and then find a theory that enhances that practice, because the best theories do that. Those that sit outside your practice have very little relevance. Those that enlighten your practice have enormous relevance. That is what we are looking to do. We are very keen to make sure that we assess quality all the way through—and we know there is a fair bit of work to do that—so that it is not at the end of their degree that we discover they are deficient. We want to make sure that we know what their capabilities are early in their career and then enhance them all of the way through.

I have mentioned already improving the practicum. We do have already models of exemplary practice in the Graduate Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring. My colleagues, particularly

Kate Shipway and others, can tell you more about that. Most of all, we want to develop coherence so that when our graduates go out they have a very deeply embedded sense of what teacher education is really about and enormous enthusiasm for the profession and so that they know how to engage with students and have demonstrated expertise. Student numbers are there for your information. I will not go through all of those. They are there for the information of the committee. Please let me know if you want any clarification. As you see, we have about 2,080 students. The total coursework number is 1,960.

Ms BIRD—What is the Graduate Certificate of Education?

Mr Brookes—The Graduate Certificate of Education is a postgraduate coursework program which is a link into the master's program. It is four units at postgraduate level. It merges into a master's, which is eight units.

Ms BIRD—So it is a bridging to your master's?

Mr Brookes—Yes. You can go out with a graduate certificate if you do not want to go onto the master's program.

Ms BIRD—So that is for people who have come through the bachelor degree?

Mr Brookes—Not necessarily. They would come through with some sort of a teaching degree. They would need to have a couple of years experience as teachers and then they come in to do their postgraduate coursework program. After the postgraduate coursework program they can do an honours program, which will lead into higher degrees involving research, if they wish.

Prof. Arnold—We are looking to build the numbers in postgraduate programs. We have reviewed the postgraduate programs and we are looking to build those numbers. Already they are building through the Institute for Inclusive Learning Communities, which is working closely with teachers. The numbers there are building already. I have a graph showing you the growth in all campuses. We are a three-campus university, as you will have heard—Launceston, Burnie and Hobart. The numbers have grown, as you can see. It might be a little difficult for you to see them, but they will be available.

On the growth in campuses, the Faculty of Education has taken increasing numbers of students every year for the last four years I have been here. It certainly suits the university to have those increases in numbers, and the demand is there. So we are doing our level best to take the numbers, provided the students are of an appropriate quality. We are not prepared to drop the level just to take the students. But demand is high at the moment and we are looking to meet the demand. We are looking at innovative ways to also provide practice teaching experience, because that can be a bit of a difficulty if you overload the schools. While the demand is there, we will do our level best to meet it.

We see the current interest in teacher education as an opportunity for the faculty. We are now very committed as a group of colleagues to really modelling excellent practice and to preparing graduates with the intellectual capacity, attitudes and expertise to meet the education needs of schools and organisations in what we all know is a very rapidly changing and technologically sophisticated 21st century.

What are the challenges? The challenges are to prepare high-level graduates with the necessary capacity to engage, enthusiasm, expertise and empathy to transform schooling and education in a climate of diminishing funding. We are not saying that the funding is going to be an impediment; it is a challenge to find a way to do our level best with whatever support we can get. We do really want to evaluate the process and to provide evidence of the quality of the outcomes. It is no good saying we are doing it if we do not know that we are doing it and if we cannot demonstrate that we are doing it, so we are going to meet that challenge. I hope that gives you enough background.

CHAIR—In your submission, you talk about the new model that you will be embarking on next year with regards to print literacy. I would be interested in hearing a lot more about that. Also, we heard evidence from the Tasmanian government that referred to the issue of numeracy and the fact that in the bachelor of education there was perhaps insufficient time to fully consider issues of numeracy—or the course was perhaps somewhat truncated compared to the potential need within a crowded curriculum. I am interested in your thoughts on the issue of numeracy.

Prof. Arnold—We think numeracy, literacy and capacity with information technology is critical. A lot of work does go into preparing the students not only in terms of their own literacy and numeracy, but the two angles—they need to be expert not only in the areas of literacy and numeracy, but also expert in teaching those. If I may, I will refer to my colleagues—Julie Porteus on literacy and Greg Cairnduff on both literacy and numeracy—for further detail.

Ms CORCORAN—Before you do that, can you clarify something? I am not a teacher or anything. I hear the term 'print literacy' and I hear the term 'literacy'. Are they the same thing, or is there a difference?

Prof. Arnold—I do not know if I will make it easier or harder, but I will try to give an easy explanation. People will say literacy can mean everything that is interpreting a symbolic system. People use the term interchangeably. If you think of it as a capacity to interpret symbolic systems then it can cover mathematics as well, if you use it in that very broad sense. Print literacy is what comes off the page, but then people talk about design literacy—and about reading sculpture as a kind of literacy as well. The best interpretation I can give you is: the term 'literacy' is becoming broadly applied wherever people have to interpret symbolic systems. I do not know if that helps or confuses you.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, it does help.

Ms Porteus—So specifically you wish me to address which area?

CHAIR—For my question, could you address the issue of the new module that you will be implementing in 2006.

Ms Porteus—I will have to put that one on notice, because I do not have the background for it. I am not part of the group that is developing that.

Prof. Arnold—Let me come back and say that in the general area of literacy we are doing a lot at the beginning stages to identify those students, particularly in the Bachelor of Education program, who we think need to develop their abilities further, and we are providing a special

program for them. It is a program to enhance their own literacy so that they can then go out and be able to do the same. In terms of numeracy, we are looking at all the areas of the program in teacher education. If there are deficiencies, we are looking to remedy that. So, taking your point about people, if the state department or the government thinks they are not well enough prepared, we will look very closely at that because we are committed to making sure we get it right. It can vary across the five programs too; the areas they get can depend on the students. Some might get a bit more or a bit less, and that is precisely why we are looking to get coherence—so that there are not uneven experiences across our different teacher ed programs.

CHAIR—Moving on to the issue of practicum, on page 8 you talk about the model for school experience placement and supervision that you will be trialling. I am interested in an expansion on that model.

Ms Porteus—There is a partners in professional practice group, which now comprises representatives from the university and from all areas of schooling within Tasmania, and we meet regularly. I can give you an example of two projects that are currently running where we are getting students into schools beyond their normal school experience—as well as their normal activities. One of those is the We Learn Together program where, as part of a unit within the BEd course, students actually go and work for a day a week with students who have difficulty with either literacy or numeracy. Another example is the co-pilots program, which initially was a partnership between the education department and the local council. Our students can partake in that course instead of undertaking a liberal unit, which first and second year students do. They are trained in mentoring and then they get to go out and work on a project with students who are perhaps disaffected in some way. We have had wonderful feedback on that program. They are two examples of us working proactively to get our students out into schools as much as possible, even beyond the normal school experience program.

Prof. Arnold—Kate Shipway, who has been appointed as director for liaison between the faculty and the Department of Education, is working on that program and, along with other witnesses, will give you full details this morning.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I have a few questions. I might save a couple of them for the next session, though, where we will focus more on the teaching side. Regarding student numbers at the three campuses, could you relate how the higher education reforms of recent years have affected your faculty in particular, especially with the promised provision of extra places? How has that affected the faculty on the three campuses?

Prof. Arnold—If I can talk about the Burnie campus, we are quite strategically building numbers there because there is a need. We have recently appointed a high-level person in the state to help build those numbers. We have seen the changes as really an opportunity to put teacher education at the forefront. We are comfortable about the fact that there are challenges there and we are looking to meet them. I am not sure if that answers your question. By developing the coherence, getting people enthusiastic and ensuring that resources are very well directed to the right areas we are finding there are certainly challenges in having three campuses with three sets of resources, but at the moment we are coping with that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Have the reforms along with the promised extra places meant that you are now in a position to offer more places to students wanting to study in the Faculty of Education?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we can take the numbers at the moment. We have had a strong staff recruitment drive in the last couple of years. In the one we are right in the middle of now, we are very much encouraged by the high-calibre people who are seeking to work here. When you get a lot of applications for positions, you can take the very best. In the faculty we are hoping that the work we have been doing with stakeholders and the effort we have put into developing a faculty vision are beginning to pay off in the recruitment drive.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—How did the graduate certificate in coaching and mentoring get started? What was the genesis for that initiative? Do you get a sense in the teaching community that there will be strong interest among more experienced teachers in taking that up as a way of further developing their skills as supervisors and mentors in the workplace?

Dr Satterthwait—We sure hope so. We are looking at a truly win-win situation. We want to ensure that the teachers who supervise our students are the best supervisors we can possibly have, and we would like to have an induction program that is more than an induction program in that it would end up with them achieving an award and recognition for the work that they are doing. The start of that is in the graduate certificate of coaching and mentoring. You will note that we did not call it a graduate certificate in supervision, because we see that the relationship between the colleague teacher and the student teacher as being much deeper than that of a supervisor—that is, they are there to provide the kind of support, especially the one-to-one kind of support, and relationship that is similar to that of a sporting figure in the sense of encouragement, recognition of strengths and weaknesses and providing advice in a non-threatening kind of way to improve the overall performance. We would also want them to move on to a further stage in which they are mentoring a junior colleague as opposed to being the coach.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I have just realised that your submission refers to a graduate certificate in supervision, mentoring and induction, so that was where I got my misnomer from, but you have moved on since that was written, obviously.

Dr Satterthwait—That is right. We have refined it.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Do you get a sense that there will be strong interest in the teaching community?

Dr Satterthwait—Very strong. As Professor Arnold said earlier, the experienced teachers who are among the best of the teachers find that they are hungry for additional knowledge and challenge and to go back to some of these scholarly pursuits. I think that the teachers, with their very busy time schedules and so forth, welcome an opportunity to go back, especially when it is supported by our stakeholders—and it is strongly supported.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The state government and Catholic Education?

Dr Satterthwait—That is right. The government, Catholic Ed and Independent Schools are all behind us. In fact, the new supervision model is closely linked with this graduate certificate. We see something like a video link conference between the different schools across the state while the students are attending a practicum session where relevant issues are raised and shared across the state so that those issues can be discussed in the presence of their supervising teachers. Our students would then leave the room and the people who are enrolled in the graduate certificate would stay back and debrief, discuss and reflect on what these issues are, how they can best support our students in dealing with these issues and make sense of suitable ways of action.

Ms CORCORAN—I have not read the Skilbeck-Connell report yet. I know we have it, but I have not read it, and I apologise for that. You talked about that report having a role to play in this developing of a core program from five others. I do not know whether you use the word 'programs' or 'departments'.

Prof. Arnold—We use 'programs'.

Ms CORCORAN—What made you decide that that needed to be done? What were the five programs, for a start?

Prof. Arnold—They are the programs in the faculty that we outlined earlier—the Bachelor of Education, the Bachelor of Teaching, the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education and so on. We decided to get a report written because we are committed to getting best practice, and we thought we would get the best people to advise us, to consult widely with our stakeholders and to give us the external advice to move forward. That was the rationale for commissioning that report.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about—and maybe this is something we shall be discussing a little later in the morning; I am not too sure—a model of inviting certain schools to become part of a special relationship. You also talked about cluster school models which are starting, I gather, fairly soon. Is that the same thing?

Prof. Arnold—That is part of it. It is all part of it. If you think of this link between theory, practice and the practicum being something that we are committed to, the place to do it is, we believe, through the partnerships between the university and the school sector. That is the implementation; that is where it can happen best. So a certain amount happens at university but it makes sense—and I hope our students can talk about this when they come before you—when they see it played out in the school situation. But it is not playing it out in isolation. When they are in the schools, we want there to be coherence between what the university is looking to achieve, what the schools can offer and the sense that our students make of that when they are in a school environment. So the people are all talking a similar language in having similar aspirations.

Ms CORCORAN—You used the words 'true partnerships', so that is what you mean by that?

Prof. Arnold—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—So does that mean that some students will go to these schools that have got this very good partnership with you and others may not?

Prof. Arnold—There would be the hope that all would come on board, and perhaps our school principals who will be meeting before you can talk to you about that. I think at 11 o'clock there will be some school principals coming on board.

Ms CORCORAN—It has been put to us a few times that there are a couple of different things involved, one being that a lot of universities have trouble in finding places for all of their students, another being that some schools are very good at participating in this program but others are not quite so forthcoming. It has also been put to us that maybe it ought to be—although we do not want to compel people necessarily—that all schools should actually have a role to play in providing practicums whether they like it or not. Do you have a view on that?

Prof. Arnold—Our view would be that if we can do it through a good relationship we will do it that way first.

Ms CORCORAN—Clearly, yes.

Prof. Arnold—That is why we are looking to make it so attractive to the schools so that they see an opportunity for their staff to get professional development through the mentoring program, for example, and so that there is something in it for the teachers in the schools: there is the ongoing professional development of being linked with the university. Likewise, for us there is the benefit of having schools where we know the students will get good experiences. That is very much what we are working towards.

Ms CORCORAN—We heard that another university had some difficulties in recruiting staff to the university because of low pay. If I have got this correct, they do not actually get paid as much given what has been negotiated.

Prof. Arnold—Yes, that is true. A number of our staff have come to us from other places and taken a drop in salary.

Ms CORCORAN—Is that an impediment?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, of course that is an impediment. It seems to be overcome by the fact that there are certain intellectual challenges and interests in working in a university, but it seems a bit unfair.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes. Thank you for that.

Prof. Arnold—You asked for an opinion.

Ms CORCORAN—That is what we need to hear.

Ms BIRD—First of all, I am interested in exploring the two-year Bachelor of Teaching. So you do not offer a graduate diploma, a one-year course?

Prof. Arnold—We do not.

Ms BIRD—Is that the program that most career changers, mature students, will come into? You have mentioned that quite a few of your students have a career change.

Prof. Arnold—I will check with my colleague Peter Brookes on the numbers of mature age people in either program.

Mr Brookes—Most career change people would come through the BTch but we also have a lot of mature age people in the Bachelor of Education program.

Ms BIRD—Would that be divided by whether they are looking at primary or secondary education?

Ms Porteus—They can do both.

Mr Brookes—Yes, they can do both in both programs but, of most people who would like to do the early childhood or primary, the career choice ones would go through the BTch because they have probably already got their first degree in another faculty in a non-education area.

Ms BIRD—Sorry, in primary? I would have thought that was more likely in secondary if they have already got a degree in a special unit.

Mr Brookes—I am talking about primary specifically here. If they are looking at becoming a primary school teacher or an early childhood teacher in a career change, they would go through the Bachelor of Teaching program more so than the Bachelor of Education program because it is more likely that they would have a first degree. You need a first degree to enter them.

Ms BIRD—I would have thought that, content wise, it would have been the other way—that, whatever your base degree is, it is much less likely that it is going to be relevant to your career in teaching primary; whereas, in secondary, if you have been a welder and whatever and you want to become an industrial arts teacher, it would be a relevant prequalification. So I find it interesting that it is the other way.

Mr Brookes—I am talking specifically about people who are looking for a change of job or want to become primary school teachers rather than people overall who would like to make a change. Overall, they would go into the secondary stream.

Ms BIRD—We have talked to a lot of mature students as we have been going around. The interesting thing they say is that it is such a big financial commitment, because usually it is at a point in life when you have your family to raise and you are trying to pay a mortgage and things. They have been quite adamant that they do not want to see the disappearance of the one-year courses in the universities we have been at. I always lay my cards on the table: I am a BA DipEd myself. So I am just wondering—clearly, it is not a problem: you are still getting the people into the two-year course—whether you have had feedback from the students about how they go, managing that. Is there a drop-out rate because of the pressures that that creates?

Mr Cairnduff—Our executive officer has the drop-out rates or the attrition rates. Perhaps he will comment on those. I look after the Bachelor of Teaching program. You will speak to some of the students, and they will speak for themselves. But we go around the schools, for example, when they are doing their internships. An internship, as you probably know, gets to a point where they have to act, or step across the line from being a student into being a teacher. So they are working like a full-time teacher. That is a full-time job.

Ms BIRD—How long is the internship?

Mr Cairnduff—In the Bachelor of Teaching it is eight weeks. So, for half of that time, they are expected to take a full-time teacher load, with the teacher stepping away from them. That is where things get really tough for them, because some of them are working at Coles or somewhere else. They are working, they have a job. Some of them are not only doing that but looking after the kids or supporting their partner in other ways, and they are not getting paid. Their response is: 'I'm acting like a teacher, thinking like a teacher, feeling like a teacher, being a teacher—it's great, but I'm exhausted.' I say: 'But your colleague teachers feel like that most of the time.' Their response is: 'Yes, but they're being paid $50,000 and we're not. I'm doing two or sometimes three jobs.' So it is exceptionally demanding for them—there is no question about that—but they do manage it. The mature age ones, those with families and other responsibilities, say things like: 'The mortgage or the credit card takes a heck of a hammering over those two years in that degree.'

Ms BIRD—The reason I ask is that we had a model put to us—and now I cannot remember which university it was; I think it was a Scottish or Irish model—where there is actually a formal, one-year internship that is a paid internship with a reduced load.

Mr Cairnduff—Yes, I read that. That is the Scottish one, I think.

Ms BIRD—Yes, we were quite interested in that. At that point, we were looking at the one-year DipEd and thinking that that would be a logical two-year course almost in itself. What would be your views on that sort of model?

Prof. Arnold—I saw a reference to that and I thought it looked attractive too, in that, provided you had a way of assessing the quality of the person before they went into the internship, it could be quite a good model for, say, the second year of the BTch. If they were assessed as being of suitable quality then they go into an internship and they get paid. I think that would be a very attractive model.

Ms BIRD—Yes, and if they are doing a 60 or 70 per cent teaching load and 20 or 30 per cent further study—

Prof. Arnold—Yes, I noticed that too and thought it looked good.

Ms BIRD—Yes. We might pursue that a bit further ourselves. To some extent it comes back to the employer bodies in states, which is a separate thing. You have a big focus on research, which is really promising. I must say that here and in Western Australia we have heard very strongly about the importance of research informing practice. I notice in your comments—about 'active research' or whatever; I have lost my capacity to use those terminologies—that you seem to say,

'There's a problem; let's go look at it and then come back,' and I think that is a really commendable way to go.

One thing that really interests me is that a lot of your ICT stuff—and I know we have some of the students who have done a tremendous presentation for us coming to talk to that—seems to me, quite rightly, to be about integrating ICT into teaching and learning. But has there been much research done on how the way that children learn has been changed by the technological age they live in? It just strikes me that there is a lot of disengagement in schools.

I have two teenage sons who I agonised through school with. The classroom and learning technologies today are so irrelevant to their lives. There is nowhere else where they sit down with one book that contains all knowledge. They were just completely disengaged and uninterested in it. I just wondered if there was a body of research about how our technology has already changed the way children learn before you get them in your classroom and try to integrate it.

Prof. Arnold—I believe I know what you are driving at because something that we have really noticed is that our students come into university having had those experiences of school life—some of them have been very positive experiences—and then they face universities where they can sit in front of a lecturer. We talk about it quite a lot, and part of our change is to really take on board the kinds of abilities and skills that school graduates bring to university and provide something that really is stimulating, because they do have a capacity to be multiskilled and to divide their attention and to achieve. Instead of sitting quietly with a book, they can do four or five things at the same time. I think that technology has changed the way that they learn. They learn differently—sometimes faster in some areas. I am with you on that point. I think we have to address that. Partly what we are trying to do in our teacher ed is accept that we need to match and enhance the qualities students come into university with, not revert to something that is an old style of teaching and learning.

Ms BIRD—That is interesting.

Prof. Arnold—There is research to show that.

Ms BIRD—It just seems to me that the way we structure primary education is more conducive to that sort of learning and the way we structure secondary is an industrial age structure of learning. I have said to some students that sometimes universities give them wonderful pedagogy and they are excited about going out to teach, but then they hit a secondary classroom and say, 'What am I ever going to be able to do with this.' It is good to hear that you are modelling it as well, which is the real challenge, I think.

Prof. Arnold—The fast-track teacher ed program that we are working on would attract people who can be multiskilled and keep on top of it and ahead of it. The challenge is for us to be ahead of it.

Ms BIRD—Yes. The last thing I want to explore is the interesting thing with the work in school placements. I will be honest: I am a little bit cynical because we hear all the universities telling us how wonderfully they do it, but my son, who is currently doing a science teaching degree, just had the most awful experience. I will not say which university it was at, but I am

sure they would tell me that they have all these wonderful programs in place. The key factor seems to be the coordination of it from the university perspective and whether somebody actually has that role. I am just interested in what model you use to coordinate and support those placements. Do the students even know the one person they should go back to and that sort of thing—which seems critical?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we do have a person in the faculty who coordinates all the school experiences and visits them as well. I had a report from him yesterday. He has visited probably 90 per cent of the schools and got feedback on how it is all going. But on your earlier point about how everyone says that they are doing it wonderfully, we would like to say that we want to do it wonderfully. We think that we are doing some parts of it well, but not well enough.

Ms BIRD—You survey your students, don't you? Is that what you were saying to me?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we do.

Ms BIRD—I noticed in your submission that you have made quite a few changes directly related to the surveying you do of students.

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we monitor our programs and review them in a cyclical process. That involves feedback from stakeholders and students and the requirement to take on board the advice given and report back on whether the advice was implemented.

Ms BIRD—Does that work well?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, it does work well, but the cycle has been on individual programs. We want to do it across the faculty rather than program by program. That is the point of the coherence thing.

Ms BIRD—I was encouraged by that. I thought it was good.

Prof. Arnold—We are saying that we want to do it better and to eliminate those sorts of horrific experiences.

Ms BIRD—Finally, the other big issue always with practicums is that a lot of the experience is that a student turns up at a school and it is a case of whoever wants to take them. To some extent, having a bad example is not a bad learning experience provided, probably, that it is not the first one you have. But what quality controls are there and how much are you able to say, 'This teacher is a disaster—we don't want them having students anymore,' and so forth?

Prof. Arnold—We do not do it as well as we want to, but with the partnership model we are hoping we will know the schools and the teachers who are connected with us or at least a teacher in a school who could be the person to get that quality assurance in there. But I am with you, because I have seen for a very long time that problem you are talking about, where there is no quality control and there is a sort of desperation. We want to avoid that by making sure that the teachers work closely with us, know what we are looking for, are enthusiastic to take the students on board and see students as people who can help them.

Ms CORCORAN—I have one last question I forgot to ask before. It has been put to us by a number of different people coming forward that choosing students to go into teaching is critical and it should be done in a way other than just looking at their academic record coming out of school. That then implies an interview process. A number of universities are horrified at that, understandably.

Ms BIRD—Yes, logistically.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, just the logistics of it all. Other places, typically smaller places, say, 'We do interview and we think it's important.' Yesterday the Department of Education was making the point that their thought—and I am sure you have heard it from them—is that it should be done now because it saves time later. I just wanted to give you a chance to respond to all of that.

Prof. Arnold—We have looked at that. Ideally, we would love to be able to interview. But, when you look at the logistics of it, you would have to have the staff on board in January. If we cannot do that, though, I think what we would like to do is at least assess the oral and written literacy and numeracy and the capacity to use information technology within the first six months of them coming to us. That is resource intensive and we would be very glad of some support for that.

Ms CORCORAN—That actually came out yesterday too—that perhaps there is a role for the teaching profession to be part of and take a role in that selection process. I thought to myself, 'Why aren't we asking the most recent teachers of these students who are coming forward?' Is that something that is practical?

Prof. Arnold—Yes. Mr Andrew Barr from Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston will be appearing before the committee later this morning. He would be able to tell you about some mock interviews he is offering to work with us on to help our students in that way. That is a model of how the schools could help. I think we all recognise the need to identify early on in a degree the capacities or deficiencies and alter things accordingly. It is resource intensive, but if we were to make a plea, that is where we would like to get some help.

Ms CORCORAN—So in the ideal world we would do it, but it is not practical?

Prof. Arnold—Yes. It would be very worthwhile doing it and having some quality assurance at the beginning.

Ms BIRD—Just taking that further, the other point that was then raised was that you cannot do it at entry level as it has some equity issues around it anyway, particularly when students are paying. What is the arrangement for students who fail pracs? Can they continue and get their degree? What actually happens?

Mr Brookes—The university rules are that, to be excluded from the course, you have to either fail more than 50 per cent of your course or fail the same unit for the second time. What we do if people fail their pracs is that we put them on probation for the following year.

Ms BIRD—When are they doing their pracs? How far in are they before that process might tell them that this is not the career for them?

Mr Brookes—It depends on the program. In the Bachelor of Education program they go out on their first prac in between first and second semester. In the Bachelor of Teaching program they go towards the end of their first semester.

Ms BIRD—This is in first year?

Mr Brookes—Yes, in first year.

Mr Cairnduff—They actually go into schools in their first four weeks in the program.

Ms BIRD—They are observations?

Mr Cairnduff—Yes, it is observation. They do not really get tested hard until they come to a 0.6 load in their second prac, which is in their second semester.

Mr Brookes—In the Bachelor of Human Development course, they do not go on to their first professional experience until the second year of their program.

Ms BIRD—If they fail the first one, they are put on probation and then they need to get through the second one successfully to continue on?

Ms Porteus—If they fail school experience for a second time then they are excluded from the course.

Mr Cairnduff—When they are on probation they are given some support. There is a focus on what the issue is, whether it is behaviour management, planning, interaction, working collaboratively or whatever it happens to be. We try to focus on it closely and allocate a staff member to be responsible for those students, so we try to move them through. Ultimately, some of them ask themselves the question.

Ms BIRD—The continuation of that conversation—I am sorry to extend it, but I would be interested to hear your view on it—is whether it should be possible for students to do a Bachelor of Education that is not about teaching. If you get to that point and you fail your second prac, you may actually be a good workplace mentor and trainer. You might be a good researcher, but you are just hopeless in front of a group of teenagers or whatever. That is another stream that they could continue on. I would be interested in your views on that.

Prof. Arnold—We have considered that, and we are building it into the way we are looking at it. We are looking at it as a possibility, not just for people who do not make it in prac but for people who might want to become trainers. We can imagine that, for those coming in from adult education, it is a track they would like. It is certainly on our books to have a look at it.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I am sure we have got lots more interesting material to hear from the other presenters during the course of the day, but if we have further questions at the end of all of that, we will certainly contact you in writing. The

secretariat will be providing a proof copy of your evidence, and a copy of the transcript will appear on the parliamentary web site.

Prof. Arnold—Thank you very much for the opportunity.

[10.00 am]

ARNOLD, Professor Roslyn Mary, Dean and Head of School, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

BRIDGE, Dr Douglas James, Senior Lecturer, Institute for Inclusive Learning Communities, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

MAHONEY, Dr Helen Joanne, Senior Lecturer and Coordinator, Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

PITTAWAY, Dr Sharon Margaret, Lecturer in Curriculum and Facilitator, Literacies, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

YAXLEY, Professor Bevis Graham, Director, Institute for Inclusive Learning Communities, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CHAIR—I now welcome representatives from the University of Tasmania. I remind you that these public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that the transcripts are made available to the public on the parliament's web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I 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. Do you wish to make some introductory remarks or would you prefer to go straight to questions?

Prof. Arnold—We will go straight to questions.

CHAIR—I asked a question in the earlier session about the print literacy module. If this is the best session in which to broach that matter, I would appreciate an expanded explanation of the print literacy module.

Dr Bridge—We are concerned about how we prepare our pre-service teachers for teaching literacy. We want to make sure that we are offering a fairly balanced program for our students. One of the things we are working on in the institute is a unit with a very high level of focus on basic print literacy skills which will, perhaps, be offered in a graduate certificate. We are negotiating with the faculty to offer it as a cross-program unit and/or in the Bachelor of Teaching and Bachelor of Education courses. In this unit, we will talk to our students about how to teach very basic grammar and phonics, how to make high-level interventions with students who are not achieving appropriate literacy outcomes, how to identify those students and how to be thoughtfully selective amongst the kind of strategies that might be used to support these students. At the moment, there is a small group of us inside the faculty who are looking at developing that kind of unit and, in the institute, we are already working to develop a unit for our practising teachers.

We also have an ARC Discovery grant to look at dyslexia and students' problems with vision. We are trying to figure out what links there might be between visual difficulties and problems

with print. We are hopeful that we will be able to combine the research and teaching element in a unit that we develop for next year in the Institute for Inclusive Learning Communities. We are going to have the people who are working for accreditation in our graduate certificate working with the students who are struggling with literacy and being part of the research. So we hope we can draw a synergy between teaching and learning and research and a kind of ongoing inquiry about how you support kids who are struggling with literacy.

CHAIR—The second part of the question that I asked earlier was to do with the fact that the Tasmanian government had mentioned in its submission a concern that, with the constraints of a crowded curriculum, it is difficult to allocate adequate time to dealing with numeracy. I am interested in your thoughts on that.

Dr Pittaway—I can respond to that in terms of the BEd program, which is the four-year program for undergraduate students. We have changed our model a bit. Next year, we are bringing literacy and numeracy into first year so that students will have an immediate experience of literacy and numeracy. We are also implementing a model of testing. All students coming into first year will be tested for literacy, numeracy and ICT skills—and that is personal literacy and numeracy rather than knowing how to teach it. Then we are putting in place a remediation program. So in their first semester, before they go out on their first school experience, they will be working with literacy and numeracy and we also will have remediation sessions for those students who do not make the grade in the diagnostic testing.

Ms CORCORAN—We hear a lot about literacy and numeracy and I am confused. People tell me, 'Students these days can't spell to save their lives; they're all illiterate.' I look at my children and my grandkids and I think, 'They're not,' but that is a small sample. You have seen students come through the school system for years. Do you see a pattern of falling literacy skills amongst students? Where is this talk of literacy coming from? I am all in favour of continuously improving, which I hope is what you are doing rather than back-pedalling to retrieve a situation that is collapsing. But where are we with literacy?

Dr Pittaway—The media focus attention on this and I think they inflate some figures and deflate others.

CHAIR—Surely they do not—not the media!

Dr Pittaway—They do; they pick up on this. With students coming into university, we have noticed that tertiary literacy is a bit different to being able to read a newspaper or write a letter or a shopping list and spell everything on that list correctly. At first that may be relatively low, with students coming in not knowing how to reference; not having had to do that before, it is a new skill to be learned. It is like going into a butcher's shop and finding a new butcher on their first day of work and expecting them to know how to make sausages. So you have to develop that research skill in students. So there is the tertiary literacy aspect. But next year one of the things we are focusing on more particularly is personal literacy. We do not want to send students out into schools and have teachers say, 'These students can't spell when they write on the board.' We want to implement processes so that personal literacy can improve. But I do not see it getting worse across time at all. I think that is a perception. Again, I think it is from the media: 'Teachers are bad. Let's knock them. They're not doing the job properly.' It is one area that gets people inflamed.

Dr Bridge—In the three years that I have worked inside the faculty, I can genuinely say that the kind of literacy that the Bachelor of Teaching students have brought to the university is really strong and improving. So there is a kind of polarised beat-up about it.

Dr Pittaway—I do not know where the evidence for that is.

Ms CORCORAN—I think that might be my real question: where is the evidence? Thank you for putting it so well.

Ms BIRD—Do you mind if I explore that before we move on?

Ms CORCORAN—No, I do not mind.

Ms BIRD—As I indicated in the former session, my background is English teaching in high school. I taught at TAFE. What struck me with literacy was not so much that students did not know how to do something; they did not know when it was appropriate to make sure that they were doing it right. They did not have a concept of draft, final production, editing type views. It was interesting that, when I worked with them and said, 'This is actually something you are going to give your boss in a workplace,' they would say, 'Oh, no, that's wrong.' The vast bulk of what was there they could correct, but it was as though they just had not thought to do it. I am interested to hear you talk about tertiary literacy, because I think that partially reflects the observations.

Dr Pittaway—When students first come to university, there is the perception of freedom. They are in a different environment now where there are many occasions for time management and there is perhaps a lack of care. At the end of the year, we did a survey of the first-years. The theme that came through overwhelmingly was that they had to improve their time management skills. They would leave things to the last minute. When you leave things to the last minute, you do not go and check them necessarily. So there is that level of care. I have hammered it into them all year. They realise now that time management is important and that doing an assignment the night before it is due in may not be the best way to go.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—They have got it now.

Dr Pittaway—They have heard that now. I say, 'Don't give me anything less than your best, even if that means doing it a week before its due date and then going and correcting it.' So, again, they do know how to correct those things most of the time. My background is in secondary English as well, so that is where my passion for that comes from. But I think, again, it is just about highlighting those things and then they realise, 'This is more serious than I perhaps thought. This is not going to be a fun time where I go and sit on the lawn and watch bands,' and all those models of what university life is like that they see on television. They have to do stuff, get it in and do good-quality stuff.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I would like to continue that theme with a quick question. Those are really good questions and we are genuinely interested in knowing about that. I appreciate your answer so far but on that issue of literacy, if we are going to criticise the newspapers and describe it as media hype, what is the evidence that they are going on?

Dr Pittaway—You would have to ask them that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—What is their primary source? Can you give me a less anecdotal and more rigorous critique of that as hype?

Dr Pittaway—It is interesting. I go into schools as a supervisor of pre-service teachers. We have perceptions about what happens in schools and about what school teachers think of the university program. When we actually talk to people on the ground we realise that those perceptions are often really wrong. I just think that there is a body of common fantasy out there—

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Or fear?

Dr Pittaway—that literacy is dropping. I think if you really looked for the detail of the evidence about that you would not find it.

Prof. Arnold—I would like to make a comment, and I speak as an English teacher who has had a strong interest in writing development for a long time. I make the observation that, quite commonly, if somebody mis-spells a note people believe that they are illiterate. I think it is unfair to send people out into the work force without realising that—whether it is inappropriate or not—that judgment will be made. So it is worth getting it right. I think there is a problem, perhaps, in people not understanding that to develop that notion of appropriateness takes a lot of time. To develop writing well takes a lot of time and effort; that is the point my colleague Sharon Pittaway is making too. It is not something that comes overnight. That is why we are encouraging the students to write a draft, have a correction and redraft. We are trying to get that notion in place.

Dr Pittaway—To pick up on your point, Mr Ferguson, a couple of weeks ago there were masses of very negative reporting in the paper on the Essential Learnings in Tasmania. It has been a controversial issue. The thing that amazes me is that we hear all this negativity about the Essential Learnings, fuzzy thinking and goodness knows what, but really good stories about the fantastic things schools are doing are still reported in the press. If things are so negative, how come there is all this fantastic stuff coming out of the schools? Somehow there is a mismatch there. On the one hand they are saying, 'This is bad; this is bad,'—it might be that the communication about it has not been highly effective—but on the other hand there are some fantastic things happening in the schools. The negative stories are reported much more, but that sells newspapers.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The University of Tasmania's own research over the last 10 years has shown that in the community there is a fear or a perception that there are all these things wrong with the system, but they are quite happy with their own schools.

Dr Pittaway—That is right.

Ms BIRD—I would like to ask you another question about that because it is a big issue that we face. My understanding is that when those reports talk about the literacy levels of teachers—sometimes they are very superficial assessments of literacy; they may just cover spelling and things like that—in that cohort there will be people who want to be maths teachers. I know that

there is almost no profession you can go into now—and it is true of the teaching profession—where you can say, 'I really don't have to worry about writing because I won't have to do much of that.'

That was a pretty common thing only a generation ago for a whole lot of people whereas now everybody has to produce reports and do data entry on computers so they all have to have a level of literacy. I wonder whether you have a view that if there is too much emphasis on the teaching of literacy it will turn off the people who want to teach maths and, to some extent, science—although there is a bigger literacy component in science. If the technical subject teachers in the traditional trades and ICT feel that they are going to be pressured to deliver big time on literacy they might be discouraged from teaching. We might ask the students about that as well.

Dr Pittaway—It is an interesting point. I have just heard of an example this morning of a person from a trade background who has made it part of the way through the course and is not really succeeding. It is not because the course is not the right course, necessarily, it is just not the right course for that particular person. Again, it is a literacy issue and coming from a trade background—and Helen might want to talk about this aspect to do with adult and vocational education. There has not been a need for some people with a trade background to actually engage with that level of literacy and so they find that incredibly difficult.

Ms BIRD—It is a very high order of understanding, passing on literacy.

Dr Pittaway—If they do not make that jump then I think hat the best thing for them to do is to ask themselves, 'What are my skills and how can I put those to best use?' rather than saying, 'I am determined to do this despite everybody saying that it is going to be incredibly difficult for me to achieve here.'

Dr Mahoney—In the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education, which is a distance education program, we have students from all around Australia. Their backgrounds vary. We have Defence Force people, hairdressers, plumbers, you name it. In their unit outlines they have presented to them the requirements that we have for their essay assessments. There is also assistance given through the university through our flexible education unit, which has just had a name change. Many of them take it upon themselves to go and enrol in those assistance programs within the university and they do that before they even start their first unit. Some have chosen—and I think there are two this year—to do that program ahead of starting the actual units within the degree that they are going to study because they know that their level of literacy within an academic situation is lacking. They have really appreciated what the university has done to help them in that sense.

There are many others within the BAVE program—I should not say 'many'; this year there are three—who need extra assistance. I read a report this morning from one of the casual lecturers that we have just hired this semester about two students who were supported by educational services, the FEU. The report said that there was a huge improvement just in the last couple of months due to assistance with essay writing. Some of their comments to me during this semester are things like: 'This academic approach to writing is very different and I am struggling with it, but I will get there.'

Ms BIRD—Could you take that a step further? What I am particularly interested in is that if this push that every teacher, wherever and whenever, must be a teacher of literacy—

Dr Pittaway—But a teacher of literacy in their particular area. Maths will be maths literacy so it will be an understanding of mathematical terminology more than a matter of saying, 'This is how you write a mathematical report.' I think that it has to be in that kind of context.

Ms BIRD—I do not disagree with you but I do not think that is what is being said in the public debate. I think that the public debate is saying quite the opposite: that if you are the woodwork teacher you have also to be able to pick up literacy problems and address them.

Dr Pittaway—As you are well aware, English teachers know that they are not about teaching literacy necessarily. Literature and the rest of what we teach in English is not just for teaching students how to spell. But of course it comes back to the English teacher.

Dr Mahoney—We offer a literacy program in the BAVE degree. That is part of that push to have generic skills, which is highly wanted apparently.

Ms BIRD—How do the students cope with that subject?

Dr Mahoney—Fine. In fact many of them have said thank you, that it was a big help having that unit. We are trying to make it a little bit more comprehensive. We have a new program starting up next year and the approach that we will take will be slightly different. Up until now in the current program we have spent most of our energies on personal literacy and we are trying to expand that slightly in the next iteration of the BAVE degree.

Dr Pittaway—It is interesting in terms of university preparation. I have just done a survey with the first-years. The Cradle Coast campus has a higher percentage of students in the first year BEd who are older—more than 24. Also, there is a huge difference between the amount of students in the Launceston campus and the Cradle Coast campus who tap into that university preparation program. So the older students, if you like—the mature age students—realise that they are lacking in those skills and they take advantage of the preparation programs that the university has on offer.

Ms CORCORAN—I do not want to have a whole big debate again because we do not have that much time, unfortunately, but I want to ask the same question I asked in the first place about numeracy. It is not as popular to run down numeracy in the press as it is to run down on literacy, yet we hear about—and you are doing it too—addressing numeracy skills. Is there an emergency—

Dr Pittaway—It is not necessary skills. What we find here is the perception. People come in with a maths phobia and they are afraid of maths. We have a lot of students who choose the early childhood component in the third and fourth years primarily because they do not want to teach primary school maths. When they do testing of those students the students realise that they are not as bad at maths as they think they are. So, again, it is a maths phobia that they have. It is not necessarily the skill.

Ms CORCORAN—So it is the other way around, is it? It is the students having the confidence in their own skills rather than the community?

Dr Pittaway—They have more ability than they realise.

Ms BIRD—I just want to clarify whether that maths phobia is fear or dislike, because they are very different causes.

Dr Pittaway—It can be both, but often it is fear.

Ms CORCORAN—So you are not seeing a reduction in personal, everyday numeracy skills in students?

Dr Pittaway—No, it is just that people think they are not any good at it. When you think you are not any good at it, you tend to shy away from it.

CHAIR—You talk about consideration being given to a fast-track program that meets individual needs. I am just interested in how that articulates, if you like, to the standard degree course and where you are going with that.

Prof. Arnold—It is too early to tell because we only just committed to that about a month ago. We are looking to actually fast-track the development of the fast track.

CHAIR—You are fast-tracking the fast track?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, so it is a bit hard to tell. But, for example, one conceptualisation would be that you might have your standard program that exists now and then a capacity or a part that sits over the top of it that somebody could choose to do. As they progress, they might choose to do modules that are in addition to the main and exit sooner. That could be one model. But we have not really worked out the details. We have just got the commitment. It is a pretty strong commitment because a lot of people come in with prior learning with the capacity to move fast. Most of all, we would also like to attract the people who would come in to teaching were it to have a higher status.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I think this might be my last chance to ask this question today while you are here, Professor. I am quite interested in the specialisation of teachers. I know that we really do not have very much time to explore that. But as we have gone around the country almost universally we have heard that certain specialisations—for example, early childhood or primary—are very successful with the numbers of students who are taking up opportunities in universities and, of course, graduating. It is much the opposite in specialisations in subjects, especially in maths and science and to a lesser extent in IT. That is a really big concern. Yesterday the Tasmanian government conceded that it is a huge concern to them. I am not yet convinced that anybody is actually doing much about it. I know there are different programs that are encouraging students, but I think if we were all honest we would have to say that that is not really changing the situation very much. One common question that I have asked of universities or stakeholders has been whether the universities should be training students in something of a similar ratio to what the demands are in the work force. What would be your

response to that in the face of having early childhood and primary school teachers in Tasmania who cannot get jobs and the exact opposite in some of the subject areas in secondary?

Prof. Arnold—You would appreciate the tension. Faculties need to have the students. Of course, they are attracted to taking students wherever they can get them provided they have the standard of achievement. But then, of course, there is the demand for getting students who will graduate into mathematics, science or those areas. You need to be able to balance it, and I would ask: is it better to shift some of the numbers into the secondary areas? We would certainly do it if we could.

Dr Pittaway—And if students were interested in doing that—obviously we get a high number of students who want to be primary or early childhood teachers rather than maths teachers.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—But why do you think that is?

Dr Pittaway—I think you would have to ask the students.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I will. Can I put it to you that one possible—not reason, that would not be fair—further disincentive has been the impossibility of a person who wants to be a maths-science teacher being able to do that in a four-year degree program. It is now at least five years. But furthermore, to go down that track you will have to do a science degree over three years. Now having done a three-year science degree, that is your exit point if you want. If you are feeling a little cash-strapped and desperate, you might go and get a job in a laboratory or in the field or something and completely depart from your original intention to be a teacher. One of the South Australian universities—I am not sure if it is UniSA or Flinders—is now offering a double degree in education and science education and certain others.

Prof. Arnold—We do that.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Is that now over four years?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we offer a number of double degrees in music, science, maths and IT.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Is that over four years?

Dr Pittaway—And they are developing one for a design one as well.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Over what period?

Prof. Arnold—It has just gone straight out of my head; I think it is 4½ years.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—That is quite good.

Prof. Arnold—Yes. It is a bit of a struggle because they are doing their—

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—But they are not—

Prof. Arnold—Numbers are building.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—They are building, but off a fairly low base.

Prof. Arnold—From a low base, true.

Dr Pittaway—When I trained as a secondary English drama teacher, at that time it was part of the BEd program. So for some lectures we were in with everybody and then we went to our specialisations. But by the time I finished, there were seven people in the course who were training to be English drama teachers. If that was the same then for music and for maths and for science, the numbers just were not there to support that kind of program.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I am a graduate of this faculty, and I was the only one in my year group in maths-science—and then I went and left the profession.

Dr Pittaway—And you are not teaching any more.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—But still, it just shows that we need to do more, don't we?

Prof. Arnold—Yes, we do, and a combined degree is one that attracts those who are very motivated and can move in and out fairly quickly. And they still have got to fit their practice teaching days into that time too.

Ms BIRD—I might give a little bit away, but I did indicate earlier my son is enrolled in a Bachelor of Science Teaching, which is a four-year undergraduate bachelor course. He has no interest in science research; he just loves science and would like to teach it. I actually think we underestimate how many young people are actually fascinated by science and are really interested in it, but are put off by the academic rigour of a science degree. It is not the component they are interested in. What would your path be that you would be looking at for those sorts of people?

Prof. Arnold—I am struggling to think somebody could become a science teacher without having science discipline. Is that what you are suggesting?

Ms BIRD—No, without a full science degree.

Prof. Arnold—You would probably struggle with other science faculties not being particularly happy about that. They would regard a strong discipline base as very important for that person going in.

Ms BIRD—And they would think that the bottom line of a strong discipline base is a full degree?

Prof. Arnold—They would.

Dr Pittaway—It is one of the issues we had when we were thinking about numeracy remediation. There was talk about sending our students to maths, and we all went: 'No! That would turn them right off.'

Ms BIRD—That would kill it forever!

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I have no doubt that we will have further questions, which we can refer to you if need be. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence, and a copy of the evidence will also appear on the parliamentary web site.

Proceedings suspended from 10.29 am to 10.43 am

BOOTH, Ms Kerin Mary, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

BROWN, Mr Timothy Edward William, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

COTTON, Miss Rebecca Margaret, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

HARDY, Miss Sarah Jayne, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

KACKLEY, Ms Suellen, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

PENROSE, Mrs Catherine Frances, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

REID, Mrs Debra Anne, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

SAVILLE, Ms Marissa Jane, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

VON ALLMEN, Ms Sandra Lyn, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

WILSON, Ms Jacqueline Maree, Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CHAIR—I thank the witnesses for taking the time to meet with the committee. We really value the opportunity to speak with our student teachers, who are the reason for this inquiry. Certainly we have had some very informative chats with students from a range of universities around the country and have been impressed by their dedication to teaching and their enthusiasm. I might start with an opening question: what is it that you like about your course and what is it that you perhaps do not like so much and might want to see done differently?

Miss Cotton—I am a third-year BEd pre-service teacher.

Ms GRIERSON—Is that primary or secondary education?

Miss Cotton—Primary, or early childhood. What I like about the education that we are getting at the university is that we have a lot of faculty support from our lecturers. They get to know you and I am on pretty friendly terms with most of them. We have had really good training in literacy and numeracy in particular, which I feel has equipped us when we have gone out into the schools. There is not much I can say that I do not like, because I have absolutely enjoyed my whole degree. I do not know if that is because I am older and I am appreciating what I am doing!

CHAIR—What did you do before?

Miss Cotton—I worked in various accountancy jobs and secretarial jobs before that, so I am from a very different background. But I did always want to teach, so I was pretty keen to get here. When the opportunity arose, I got here. We get a lot of faculty support. I have to say that most of the content we cover is very relevant. There is only one subject area about which there

seems to be consensus amongst all the students doing the BEd course that it does not appear to have a lot of relevance, but, other than that, all the—

Ms BIRD—Name it.

Miss Cotton—He is going to hear this, isn't he! It is okay for a short period, but we do a subject called—which is very deceiving—'school values and reasoning', which sounds as if it is going to be very applicable to our course. It is a useful skill to have, but we spend 26 weeks on it. We do 13 weeks in third year and we do another 13 weeks in fourth year, and we spend six weeks on child development. So—

Ms BIRD—You need more balance?

Miss Cotton—Yes. And the values and reasoning—

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It is more of a philosophical kind of—

Miss Cotton—Yes, totally. It is an argument. You basically have to argue a value. We were told in our first lecture that it was not going to be relevant to our teaching, and that did dishearten a lot of students at the start. But it is compulsory and you need to get through it to get through your degree. I can see a place for it, but I think that more time probably needed to be dedicated to something like child development.

CHAIR—Would anyone else like to take that question?

Mrs Penrose—I will. I am in the Bachelor of Teaching, Primary. I have studied at another university and I have found that, studying here, we do get a very high level of support from staff. That is the thing that I have found most encouraging. I have been in a very big faculty in a very big university before, where you never went to speak your lecturer personally.

CHAIR—Doing another degree?

Mrs Penrose—A different degree, a previous degree; that is right. The support for you as an individual is very encouraging.

CHAIR—Great. What about the prac experience out in the field—how have you found that?

Mrs Penrose—Personally, I love every minute of it. I have loved every minute. Most of the other students find that it is the highlight of their course—and, if they like teaching, it should be the highlight.

CHAIR—Are you received well in the schools when you go there, or have you had a range of different experiences?

Ms Wilson—I am in the first year of the Bachelor of Teaching. I have had two very different experiences on prac. In my first prac, the colleague teacher was told by the principal that she had to take a student, so she just did not want me there. In my second prac, my colleague teacher was

absolutely fantastic. I just learned so much. After the end of that prac, I now feel very confident about teaching; whereas I did have some concerns before.

Ms CORCORAN—Do you think your experience is typical of other experiences?

Ms Wilson—I am in the primary section, and there are only 17 of us in Launceston here. No, nobody else had that experience, but it is quite possible that it could occur again.

Miss Cotton—I can say something about that. In the very first practicum that I had, I took it as a positive experience because I knew that that was how I did not want to teach. Then the subsequent two pracs that I had after that were brilliant. I had two teachers co-teaching in both my second- and third-year pracs. They were very different styles of teaching, so I had four teachers to compare. They were very supportive. I got a lot of university support. We had visits to see how things were going. We had principal support at the last school I was at, where every year the principal at the school met with the students. The school took in six or seven students. Every week she dedicated an hour's meeting time with us just to talk about school life and life as a teacher.

CHAIR—Michael, do you have a question for the students?

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I want to hear a little bit more on the likes and dislikes, to be honest, before I launch off.

Ms von Allmen—I am a second-year Bachelor of Teaching student. I have done honours as well. I also work at the university, in the library. I have found doing the Bachelor of Teaching wonderful. I heard you mention before the options as to a one-year or a two-year course. I think one of the bonuses of the Bachelor of Teaching is that we have so much practical time. We have 91 days of it. I had fantastic experiences in all of my pracs. Some of them were slightly negative but you turn those around and make them positive experiences. It has been a fantastic time. As for the level of support, those at the university always make you aware that you can contact them if there are any issues. It has been fantastic.

Miss Hardy—I finished my Bachelor of Teaching degree with honours this year. My entire experience over the four years has been nothing less than fantastic. Every single prac that I have done has been great. I have been supported by all of my prac teachers. I could not actually think of a bad word to say about any of them. The relationships that I have formed with my lecturers in my faculty have been very worth while. I have felt very supported the whole way through my degree. It has been very good.

Ms Kackley—I am in the first year of my Bachelor of Teaching. The pracs are extremely important. They are probably what we get the most out of, because you can really only learn teaching by doing. With regard to that, in our program we had six one-day sessions in the first semester. We also had a tutorial that accompanied those. You would go out and do one day in the schools and then you would come back and you would have an opportunity to discuss that with peers and, probably more importantly, the tutor. I found that to be really fantastic, and I think everybody else did as well. I believe it is really integrating the practical with the theoretical better than when you go out and do two weeks or something solid, which is fabulous but there is so much going on in your head and there is so much that you would probably benefit more from

if you were able to discuss things and get feedback. If there were some way of having three days a week prac and two days of theory or something like that, I think that might be more beneficial.

It is like driving a car: the theory takes you so far and you have to go out and do it. You do a bit and then you talk about it and you learn much better that way. So the pracs are really fantastic but I think they could even be improved upon through the way that they are applied, although I do recognise that it is hard to get placements for all of us in the schools. I would like to say that I think the university does a fantastic job of that, given that it is a small state and there are an awful lot of us that they have to place. I think they do it well. I have had two excellent experiences so far in my pracs, so I think I have been really lucky. That is what I have to say about that.

Mr Brown—I am in the third year of my Bachelor of Education. I participate in a We Learn Together program, which I think we are all aware of. I got to do the prac and to work with a child, which was learning for me and the child, and to talk about it at uni at the same time, so I had that experience and it worked really well.

Ms BIRD—So you would endorse that model?

Mr Brown—Yes, very much so, because you can refine it as you go and you can talk about it. I think collaborative work is much more rewarding and successful than working on your own, particularly as when we will be out there teaching we will have collaborative support. The lecturers have been very supportive. I agree with what has been said. Everything that I have needed they have catered for as best they can. As for Rebecca's comment about SVR, I am in agreeance as well. That is probably the only thing in my degree that I would see in a negative light.

Ms Saville—I am a Bachelor of Education graduate in service—I have finished my degree and I am teaching at Scotch Oakburn College, where I have seen Michael recently. I am also doing my honours at the moment. Ours is a little bit of a different structure. I think it is really good. While I was a teacher aide at Scotch Oakburn for five years during my training, everything that I was learning I was putting into practice constantly. I worked from prep right through to grade 6, so I got to constantly see different teachers doing different styles of teaching—so the more pracs the better.

Mrs Reid—I am a Bachelor of Education student in service. I am undertaking my honours as well. It has been fabulous doing it as a flexible unit. I live an hour out of Launceston and doing it flexibly has allowed me to work in three different schools. I looked at what the unit was doing and went to a high behaviour management class. I then worked in an average school—not average as in learning but in a small town. I then also worked in the city. I have found it amazing that, on a daily basis, I have been able to work as though I am doing prac. Daily I interact and talk with teachers. I can go to the teachers and run by them the theory that I have been learning. They also have taken on board many of the things from the university. They have been out teaching, in practice, for 10 to 15 years and have taken on board things that I have been learning here, with the new theory coming through. It has been fabulous. My learning has developed so much more because of those discussion times. I am a really big fan of the unit and of doing it in-service. I have been to a few meetings where people say, 'We don't get enough prac,' and we

say, 'Well, we're on prac all the time.' It is a really good model to be in. It makes for long hours at night, but it is no different from being on campus.

Ms BIRD—Can I ask you to reflect on a proposal put to us, which the university was interested in also. In Scotland, if you were doing a two-year Bachelor of Teaching or a four-year Bachelor of Education, the last six months or year of your course, or the last six months after your course, is an internship. In effect, that means that you are employed in a school and paid an internship wage to perhaps teach a 60 per cent load and continue your remaining subjects for 40 per cent of your time. I think the mix in Scotland was 80-20 or something like that—an 80 per cent teaching load. The downside is that that is six months or a year where you could have finished and be earning a full wage out in a school. There is some disincentive there, but we were quite interested in the model as a way of picking up what some of you are talking about regarding a much more intense sharing and learning experience. I would be interested in the range of your opinions about that sort of model.

Miss Cotton—That sounds like a really good model. My only concern is, as you say, if you have just finished four years you could be out earning a full wage but instead will be earning an intern's wage, whatever that might end up being. As you say, that would be a disincentive. However, I could see you perhaps doing your first semester at the uni and doing your second semester and extra time—say, perhaps six months—towards the end of the year. We do not necessarily have to finish in October. The uni might, but we could continue on until the end of the school year. We could go from June or what have you. We could have an intensive first semester and spend the second semester in the school as an intern. I would be more than happy to do that.

Ms BIRD—If it were integrated into the program.

Miss Cotton—Yes, integrated. I am happy for the year to be extended beyond the 13 weeks of a semester. That does not bother me in the slightest.

Ms BIRD—But not into another year.

Miss Cotton—Not into another year. I am a single mother and a mature age student. I really need to get out there and get my degree. But I would be more than happy to do those last six months—

Ms BIRD—On that sort of basis?

Miss Cotton—Yes, and to do an intensive first six months at the uni that year.

Ms von Allmen—I also support that model, especially when there are many people like us trying to work part time while doing a degree. For those people, it is particularly difficult facing their internship for a long time and maintaining their income. That would be a really good proposal for those students as well.

Mrs Penrose—Yes. It is difficult to have to give up your job for that prac period. That is what I have faced as well.

Ms Kackley—Also, all of us in the Bachelor of Teaching program have a previous degree and some of us have a fair bit of other experience. I think what we need most is the practical experience, although obviously we need some theories of teaching. With that in mind, I think there are two things. One is its integration and the other is that, for us, I believe the faster it is the better it is. I would be happy to do as much prac or internship as possible, but only if it did not extend the length of the degree.

Ms CORCORAN—The lady at the back has not had a chance to respond.

Ms Booth—I have just finished a Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education and I was not sure whether that really tied in with today's hearing.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, it does.

Ms Booth—All I can say is that it is a wonderful degree and I think it is finally getting a little bit of recognition around the tertiary institutions.

CHAIR—What was your background before going into adult and vocational education?

Ms Booth—I have been in various businesses—farming and all sorts of things, and I have been a mature age student, so I have a lot of experience. I have a little bit of teacher aid and music teacher experience in a primary school. But my area was definitely working with adults. I am now working as a teacher and tutor at the AMC. It is only casual work.

Ms CORCORAN—What does AMC stand for?

Ms Booth—The Maritime College. I am working with international students, teaching English. The BAVE course is a wonderful course and it is flexible learning. We had a really good range of teachers with a range of abilities at keeping in touch with us online. It really works well when there is a teacher or lecturer who is actually really busy online and can communicate well that way, otherwise it is a bit of an isolating experience. We all had to seek out our own pracs and our own placements. We did not get any support on that other than suggestions and a little bit of encouragement. I felt that was really hard on some people. I was fortunate in that I can be fairly up front and go along and introduce myself. But for some students in their first year, because you have to start doing your prac as soon as you start doing the course, I think it is a bit daunting. Not only that, but they did not have the recognition of the BAVE course. It had not been very well promoted, I feel. But I think it is now gaining a little bit more respect—for instance, the adult migrant English service has employed BAVE students and so has Drysdale College. So it is finally getting out there and they are realising that it is a worthwhile course. But I think it definitely needs a little bit more support on the teacher IT training and also the support for students to get placements.

Ms CORCORAN—It seems to me, looking around the room, that many of you are not straight out of school. I do not know whether you are typical of the rest. I am very observant!

CHAIR—You all look very young.

Ms CORCORAN—The university is going to give us stats and the ratios of students straight in from school compared with mature age students from other careers. But I am interested in where you have come from. Are you first-year students? Have you come from somewhere else? Why have you chosen to go to teaching now?

Miss Cotton—I have come from an administrative background, as I said before. I chose to do education because I always wanted to do education as a child. I had parents who were teachers. At the time I finished high school in the eighties it was very frowned upon. People said, 'Don't do teaching—everyone does teaching.' So I applied to do commerce at the University of Tasmania and I put education down second. I expected to get a rejection for commerce and I did not, unfortunately. So I started that degree, quickly found that it was not for me and went into the work force. I began at the uni in 2002 in Hobart—because I am from Hobart—doing a Bachelor of Arts with a view to doing a Bachelor of Teaching because I wanted to stay in Hobart. But then my marriage broke down at the end of 2002, so I relocated and commuted for the first year. I have a five-year-old daughter. We live halfway between here and Hobart. I did it because I really wanted do it. I have done a lot of volunteer work with children. It is just a drive in me—I have always wanted to do it. It is the best thing I have ever done and I love it. It is just a real drive—I really want to teach.

Mr Brown—I have worked in retail for nine years, and I still work in retail to support myself through university. I have worked with children on a voluntary basis with Riding for the Disabled, because I have an interest in horses and children with muscular dystrophy. I have always appreciated children and have wanted to work with children. I left high school—I did not complete college—and went into retail and did traineeships and management and then thought: 'This isn't what I want. I really want to work with children, so I'm just going to go for it.' And I did, and I have never looked back. I really enjoy it, and I cannot wait to get out there and teach.

Miss Hardy—I am similar to Rebecca in that both my mum and dad were teachers, and I grew up in that environment. Basically, from an early age I knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I have always had a very strong involvement in sport, and I still do today. I have combined the two; I want to be a health and physical education teacher. I cannot wait to get out there, because I love being in that environment. I came straight from college into the degree. For the degree that I am in, I feel that it is better to start as early as possible so you can be active with the children and you can be fit and you can have fun and all of that. When you get a little bit older, you can still do it but you might start to slow down a little bit.

Mrs Penrose—I have a background as an agricultural scientist. I have an ag science degree, but then I spent many years as a full-time mother and also working in child care. This sparked my interest in working with children, which had always been there. Basically, it is a career change in order to be with children.

Ms von Allmen—I am doing a Bachelor of Teaching in the secondary stream. I am a librarian here at the university. I love the teaching role of being a librarian, even though it is working with older students. I have young children; I am a single mum. I thought I would like to get in and use those skills in a job that I enjoy and moving across to the education area rather than being just a librarian. It is opening up all kinds of doors having both degrees. I am looking forward to next year.

Ms Wilson—I am doing a first-year Bachelor of Teaching. My first degree was a Bachelor of Social Work. I worked extensively with children in child protection, fostering, adoption and general family counselling in the Northern Territory. I did a lot of work in the outback, out in the communities. I am a single mother of five children; they are all in primary school. I have been quite involved in their education, which stimulated my interest again after many years. I separated from my husband 16 months ago and decided, 'Wow, I can do anything I want', so here I am.

Mrs Reid—I am doing a Bachelor of Education (In-Service). This is my final year. I have been a conference coordinator, I have worked with the defence department and I have been an interior designer, which opened doors up to working in the schools and working with students in the arts area. I was working on a voluntary basis. I have also been a Ranger guide leader and youth group leader; I have worked with young people practically all of my life. It naturally evolved that I would work with students with art. It was getting frustrating, because I was working with whole-of-school events. It was a passion doing events with whole-of-school things. I thought: 'Right, this is it. I'm going back to school.' I woke up one morning and said to Michael, 'I'm going back to school.' That was fine. Here I am at the end of it, and it has opened so many doors. The philosophy behind the integrated learning is so much fitted into my own belief. It was like coming home, being able to teach in that environment and to do something that I agree with.

Ms Saville—That is a hard act to follow. I am doing a Bachelor of Education (In-Service). I finished my degree; I am doing my honours. I am a learning technologies teacher at Scotch Oakburn College. I have always been interested in computers. As far as teaching is concerned, when my son started at school, I did a lot of parent help and discovered that I liked it and was good at it. The school offered me a position as a teacher aide. I started doing teacher aide work and then asked, 'Why am I only a teacher aide?' Then my marriage broke down; I am another statistic.

Ms BIRD—There is a bit of a theme happening here!

Mrs Reid—I am still married.

Miss Cotton—Not for long!

Mrs Reid—At the moment!

Ms Saville—I was interested in teaching before my marriage broke down. I had all the information sent to me the year before that died, but I got that information too late to sign up in that year. So, when it all died a few months later, I got the information sent to me again and applied that time. It was really difficult to get into. I had to reapply and offer more information to prove that I really was interested and why I wanted to do it.

Ms CORCORAN—What were they looking for?

Ms Saville—I started working when I was 15, and I had not been to TAFE or done any college or anything in between, from 15 to 33. So I really had to make them understand that I genuinely did want to do it—that I had been doing the teacher aide work for so long and I had

worked with special needs students as well. I really had to pitch my case twice before they accepted me. It was good. It was very worth while.

Ms Kackley—The question is difficult for me because there are so many reasons. My previous academic experience was a Bachelor of Psychology and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in film. I have spent a lot of time in education. I have always been interested in education. I applied to teachers' college, like Rebecca, way back and was not accepted. I went on to do other things. I kept going back to school, I suppose because I was looking for something that would enable me to work where I felt that I was doing something that made a difference. I went into film as a way of communicating where you can have an impact. I am a bit of an idealist. Then, when I came here, I suppose the reason was twofold. Another thing is the job market, obviously. Teaching is something that is portable. You can do it anywhere. They always need teachers. I looked back and thought: 'This is a culmination of things that I have done in the past.' Before I came here I was working at a university and I did a lot of counselling with the first-year students. I really enjoyed that. It made me think that I wanted to go back and try to be a teacher.

Ms Booth—I had a mixed career, mainly raising a family on a farm but also as a teacher aide and a music teacher at the local primary school. I was involved in our family business, which grew to a large enough size to offer me the scope of being a vocational trainer for new recruits coming in. It also involved public relations, when we went out selling our products at trade fairs and so on. My parents and my sister were teachers, so there was a bit of a background. Seeing the new migrants coming into our area—even in regional Deloraine there were some Filipina women and so on needing English lessons—I felt I really wanted to do some voluntary tutoring. To do that I needed to get a bit of a background in teaching, so that interested me and I got into the adult teaching area. It went on from there. It looks like there is no shortage of new residents and international students to help out.

CHAIR—We will have to stop there. Thank you for taking the time to appear before the committee and being part of the parliamentary process. We will be reporting back to the parliament our findings on ways in which we can improve teacher training. I thank you for participating in that. The secretariat will forward to you a proof copy of the transcript of your evidence. A copy of that will also appear on the parliamentary web site.

Ms CORCORAN—Thank you for the submission of the survey. We did not get time to talk about that. I was hoping to get to that next.

Ms BIRD—It was very interesting.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[11.17 am]

BARR, Mr Andrew David, Principal, Scotch Oakburn College

DALY, Mrs Elizabeth, Director, Faculty of Education; and University Council Member, University of Tasmania

REISSIG, Mr Steven Joseph, Principal, Scottsdale High School; and Postgraduate Student, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

SHIPWAY, Ms Kate, Director, University Liaison, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CHAIR—Welcome. Thank you for appearing before the committee today. 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. Would you care to make some introductory remarks or would you like us to go straight to questions?

Mrs Daly—Go to questions, I think.

CHAIR—Just as a general question, I am interested in the practicum model and the partnership model that the university is adopting and I would like your thoughts on that.

Ms Shipway—You will have noticed that I have been lurking in the background all morning. I am delighted that I was here to listen to what the students had to say because it was fascinating. I was also aware that you do not need me to repeat lots of the stuff that you have already heard this morning. I am very excited and privileged, I think, to have moved from being a director in the Department of Education to working with the faculty and still to be a member of the Department of Education so that I can work closely with the faculty in developing these partnerships which we believe to be so critical to address a number of issues. Having listened to the students, it does not seem that there are any issues around the practicum—

CHAIR—I did hear that their lecturers will know what they said.

Ms Shipway—The Department of Education in particular and the faculty decided a couple of years back that it was very important that we did try to work together to address in particular the pressure on placements for preservice teachers into schools. There are increased numbers of students in the faculty, as you saw from the graph that the dean put up, but we do not have increasing numbers of schools and we certainly do not have increasing numbers of students in Tasmania, as you know. So the pressure on placing preservice teachers in practicum is certainly increasing.

However, it was not just the pressure of placing them; it was the pressure of placing them so that they had a really good experience. So, in establishing a joint working group between the

department of education and the faculty, we started to work from that point of view. It seemed sensible in Tasmania—maybe it can only happen here—that we include Catholic education and the independent sector. They have come on board very readily and very happily to work with us.

We have moved ahead. At times it has felt to me a bit slow, but the slowness has been around understanding the issues and analysing all the evidence we had, like the reviews of the various programs that have occurred over the last three or four years, reading the SETLS—the student evaluations—from the course outlines. They have done evaluations of practices which had not been necessarily happening in the past, so we have a lot of information through those. While those SETL forms are not very good, when we read the comments, that is when we get the outrider comments. That is when you hear about the bad experiences and the very good experiences. So that has been extremely helpful.

We talked to the faculty staff. The faculty had already started to make some changes anyway. They had been taking a lot of notice of what the students told them. You have heard how closely they relate to the students, and they do. So they have taken on board a lot of what the students have been saying. The joint working group has now moved. There were two joint working groups—one looking at innovation and one at prac. We have moved them together now. We found that in the end we were talking about the same thing—about developing a partnership and a sense of reciprocity which could be mutually beneficial for the faculty and the schools. You cannot force schools to do a good job in supporting prac. That is just not feasible. As an old teacher, and having had many preservice teachers with me over many years in various states and countries, I know what a burden it can be when it goes wrong. It can be great when it is great and it can be really hard when it is not so great. It is getting the organisation right for the schools where nothing goes wrong, and it is getting the support for the schools right so that if they need help the help comes, and comes in a form that they welcome and value. In particular, having some way of selecting the very best teachers to be the colleague teachers is our next challenge.

We are working hard on this pilot. We now have a really good model to pilot, which will start in the middle of next year. We are not rushing into it. We have left our schools alone this year because everyone is so busy. We have been saying, 'No, no, we will not talk to them yet, but we are going to talk to them any minute now. And then we will put out expressions of interest early next year for clusters across the state to commit to being partners with us across a two-year period. We are hoping out of that to be able to place a number of pre-service teachers. I have done some figures around clusters, and some clusters are taking 111 preservice teachers across a year. We are saying, 'Let's look at BTeach and BEd only—years 1 and 2 in the BEd and year 1 in the BTeach, initially. Let's give you a group of students. Let's work closely with you around placing them so that we can have criteria around the colleague teachers whom they are placed with and we can look at alternative placements for them.' It is not just school anymore. We know that people doing teaching qualifications want to head off on a whole lot of pathways, so what other learning opportunities might be available to them in that cluster? What about early learning? How do we get them involved with students with disabilities? How do we ensure that they get good experiences around Aboriginal education and so on? So we are looking at access to a range of exemplary experiences.

Another aspect to it is how the cluster principals and the cluster teachers, if you like, can work closely with the faculty over time. We will leave the students in the cluster for a year and we will help the clusters to coordinate with the faculty so that it is not all left to the faculty and the

faculty is not doing one-by-one placements, which is very onerous: 'Please have this student; please have that student; how many will you have.' We have a sense that, if we can build up a really strong relationship, the clusters will say, 'This is fabulous—give us more.'

I visited Edith Cowan University and it was music to my ears when they said, 'Our partnerships have led to us having more offers than we can fill.' That is what we are aiming for in Tasmania. I think we will get it. The other great thing is that the independent sector and the Catholic Education Office are working really closely with us on this because they do about 20 per cent of the placements and it is important that we keep that opportunity there. When the clusters opt in, we will then go out to the non-government schools contiguous to those clusters and say, 'All right, are you interested in being part of this?' We have already talked with them about that process. That is probably enough from me at this stage. I know that you know a little bit about it, but I really wanted to share with you where we have got to and how positive and constructive the whole process has been in getting it under way.

Mr Reissig—I am happy to make comments picking up a few of the points from—

Ms BIRD—Before you proceed, some of us are not Tasmanian and sometimes we do not understand what the school is that you are representing. If you can give us a bit of a picture of what your school is, that would be great.

Mr Reissig—Scottsdale High School is a rural school 70 kilometres from Launceston. There are 7,000 people in the whole municipality. We have 400 students in grades 7 to 10 and an off-site campus which accommodates about 28 students at grades 11 and 12 as well as adult learners. That is the setting. Some of the points that Kate raised were very valid. In fact, I want to pick up a few of her points—those of strong partnerships between schools and the university, reciprocal learning and clusters. They are the three key points that I would like to mention.

On the notion of clusters that Kate talked about, our department has moved very well to clusters and that has certainly embraced, from a broad principles point of view, shared decision making, collective responsibility and also sharing of ideas for resource allocation et cetera. The planned model about sharing students or preservice teachers with clusters has many benefits. We believe that will certainly support growth and stretch the learning of preservice teachers because, rather than being necessarily tagged to one school, they are tagged to one cluster. The broader principles and colleague teachers can have a program of experience which is really authentic and valuable for the student. That is certainly going to be of benefit.

The issues of partnerships and reciprocal learning are very important. We have had three students in our school this year. The feedback from our colleague teachers and from preservice teachers has been exceptionally positive. We would like to grow that experience in future years. I know that the model Kate has led certainly allows that. For example, we meet with the students and we know that, as a school, we have so much to learn from preservice teachers. But we also know that we can impart some reciprocal learning. Also, down the track we believe there are opportunities under the proposed Graduate Certificate in Mentoring and Coaching for some of our teachers to actually come back to the university, be presenters, work closely at the coalface here on site and also grow their own learning and understanding about how the faculty of education works.

That reciprocity is important. We have preservice teachers going from the university into our clusters and schools and staff from our clusters coming to the university. This notion of lifelong learning and commitment to learning for all is so important. One of our supervising teachers this year has expressed an interest already in coming back to university to complete a PhD. We are looking at ways we can grow, particularly in various disciplines. So already there is momentum in schools. I am sure that, as our clusters continue to gather momentum and continue to be effective for education in the state, there will be strong partnerships and commitment from all.

Mr Barr—I am from Scotch Oakburn College, a coeducational independent school. We have 1,060 students whose ages range from three—we have an early learning centre—through to 18, the final year of secondary. So the ages are across the spectrum of primary and secondary schooling. My points will be brief because I do not want to copy what has already been said.

I think Steve's point about mentoring is a crucial one. If you look at other professions and how they have moved in that regard in business and the like, and in all sorts of other things, the importance of mentoring is vital. I think we have to be a little bit flexible in how we do that across different ages. My one concern with that is that we might fall into the same model of one person with one teacher. I know that is not the thought. We have been working well together in a partnership with the independent schools. I think that is one of the great advantages in Tasmania. Having come from another state, I know that there are wonderful opportunities here where we work together across the sectors more than I have seen anywhere else. I think that is a great thing. There are cooperative classes across the three big independent schools, which is unheard of in other states. In the same way, that is now building the partnership with the university and other tertiary institutions. That is vital from the point of view of students. It is vital if you are going to get the proper partnership required in the mentoring approach with preservice teachers coming through.

What that can mean in practice, in a middle-schooling sense, is getting to know students over a longer period of time. That is something that I would see as important—to really know the individual learning styles of kids and any particular learning issues that they might have. I would like to see, for instance, that they have this mentoring with a particular teacher whom we help select. It does not automatically follow that there is mentoring. We are building up mentoring in our school and doing some professional development on that. That is where we get involved—in helping to select those mentors. I would like to see the preservice teachers come back at different times to get to know how kids are learning and progressing, rather than being there for a little block of time and then moving on to somewhere else. But that is the sort of thing that can happen, and that would be different at different ages. But we are working towards that and it is working well. I am very confident and happy with that process.

CHAIR—On the issue of developing the partnerships and so on and so forth, one thing that we have heard about difficulties with is whether mentor teachers are adequately rewarded, whether the financial reward is a pittance and does not hold a lot of attraction for some, whether it is done through PD, and whether the university is perhaps giving back to the school in some way through some cooperative arrangement. The Science Alive program sounds like a really exciting way of getting a reciprocal benefit coming back to the schools. What are your thoughts on the ways in which we can reward the mentor teachers for being part of a program within the busy schedule that they already have at the school?

Ms Shipway—I will just comment on what we are hoping to do through the pilot and then I will leave it to everyone else. We have talked about this a lot and, as you say, it is an ongoing issue. We think the coaching and mentoring graduate certificate could be one way of recognising those skills and giving those teachers some credit towards higher education. Of course, that brings with it a whole lot of extra work, so that might not necessarily be seen as much of a reward.

Ms BIRD—And an expense.

Ms Shipway—Yes, and an expense. I must say that we are going to investigate some ways in which we can compensate those people if they do engage in those studies. Hopefully, the faculty might give scholarships or we might be able to supplement money into the clusters so they can support people in doing those things. Another way that we are looking at it—I know the Catholic Education Office is doing this too, because I was talking to the director recently—is by ensuring that the skills, dispositions, qualities and capacities of these exemplary colleague teachers are recognised within the promotional pathways in the department. I think that to be able to acknowledge that as an AST or an AP they would have particular responsibilities and then, of course, to be able say, 'Because you have been doing that, you are more likely to be able to fulfil those senior positions', is a really valid way to go too. Other than that, we are looking at a changed model of rewarding remuneration, if you like, within the pilot project, which will mean money going into the cluster as well as to the colleague teachers.

The amount that colleague teachers get for their work is a pittance—and I know that you would be aware of that by now, having been around Australia. It is a very small amount and it has not changed for a long time. I think that needs to be looked at quite seriously. However, I think we have to be very careful that we do not do a blanket award around it, because not everybody can make a good colleague teacher. I think we must acknowledge that in our work force—teachers are not all equally equipped to be colleague teachers. You have to have some particular dispositions and qualities that enable you to give feedback in really good ways.

The coaching and mentoring grad set will certainly build on those skills. There is no doubt about that. We hope to support people in the clusters initially who are likely to take a coordinating role within the cluster. They can then mentor their colleagues and so on, so we should get a bit of a cascading effect through the schools. There is no way that every teacher is going to want to engage in higher education, if you like, beyond what they have already got. So rewarding teachers is a very difficult one. You could also say, 'Well, it is part of your responsibility to the profession.'

Ms CORCORAN—I was going to ask that question. Is the reward in fact no financial reward at all but that part of their own—

Ms Shipway—And my understanding is that in some professions there is no financial reward.

Mrs Daly—Could I just comment on that? I am a director of education as well as being on the university council. I have had a fair amount of experience in the education department. I think there is a cultural shift that we need to make here. While I agree with all of the things that Kate just said about some kind of a reward system, the cultural shift is that, as a profession, we need to recognise the responsibility to coach and mentor, and indeed contribute to the education of,

our trainee teachers. I think the model that is going to be trialled next year has a bit of a 'What's in it for me?' approach.

Andrew made the point about having a group of student teachers who go in and really get to know the students, and the schools get to know them. It is a huge benefit. It is very different from the current model where five or six or 10 or 15 student teachers come in and they are there for a few weeks and they are saying, 'Oh dear, what do we do and how do we plan?' and then they are gone again and the next lot come in. I really believe that this new model is one that the clusters—independent and Catholic, as well as our own—will embrace, because they know from the outset that here is a group of young professionals that is coming in and that will make a contribution to us or to our students, as well as us making a contribution to them. I think that breadth of a group of schools, with time in child-care placements and in flexible programs that lots of the clusters are already running, presents some huge opportunities for those young students. One of our major aims at the moment is to provide such a breadth while still providing the basics. There are some wonderful opportunities. And it is a collective responsibility, whereas before it was challenge. A board of principals embracing this group of people for a whole year is a very different kettle of fish, and I think it is great.

Mr Barr—It is a great challenge for our profession. One of our biggest weaknesses as a profession is middle-level leadership right across the nation. I think this is a way in which we can encourage that and move towards that. It does not need to be a financial reward. Sometimes that is as much as we can do, but there is more to it than that. I think our profession needs to find ways to provide that leadership for people coming through. Often it is a challenge to do it. I see it as a great challenge to be able to provide that, particularly for younger ones aspiring to be leaders within schools. I think it is also an interesting one for what has been called NIQTSL. Certainly, as a principal and a chair of independent schools heads in this state, I know that our concern was the direction that that was taking away from leadership. I think that body, which I know now has a new title, should not lose focus on school leadership. I think that should be a crucial part of the development of that institution.

Mr Reissig—I would like to support what Andrew is saying and add that that middle leadership and that notion that in schools everybody is a teacher, everybody is a learner and everybody is a leader are so important. There are some terrific beginning teachers, some terrific teachers who have been teaching for two, three or four years, who now have a really good opportunity to be mentors and leaders in schools and to step up. That grows their own leadership capacity and their capacity as teachers. That is critically important.

Mrs Daly—We have a new leadership curriculum for principals but it is not just for principals, it is for aspiring leaders. Middle management is one of the issues where a program like this, to provide some leadership portfolios, if you like, as colleague teachers, is an opportunity we intend to take up.

Ms Shipway—I would like to say one more thing that relates to the role of principal in the whole prac process. I have a sense that in the direction we are heading we will be involving our principals much more deeply in the learning of the pre-service teachers. I know that some principals do a fantastic job and really take it on board and meet with them and so on, but some do not. We have heard that from many of our pre-service teachers over the couple of years I have been at the university, that they do not even meet the principal on some occasions or the

principal just says, 'Who'll have this student?' and the student is standing there next to them, and all the teachers say, 'Oh, no—not a student!' We know that in working closely with our principals in this way they will assume a much greater responsibility and will develop a really appropriate level of commitment. So the pre-service teachers will see themselves much more as a part of learning communities, and I think that is fantastic.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I would like to congratulate you on the approach that you are obviously already embarked upon. We have been to a lot of different communities around Australia and heard from lots of different stakeholders and employers and universities, and not many of them have progressed that far. It is interesting that all of us agree that the remuneration to teachers and, to a lesser extent, to principals as a result of having a pre-service teacher in the school is a pittance. It makes me wonder if it is really worth doing at all. I know it is in the award and that that is a whole other issue that would have to be resolved in an industrial sense, but I wonder if we as very smart people all around this room could think of a better way to allocated those resources, perhaps for the university and the employer to be able to a give a much more appreciated form of recognition to a teacher.

Ms BIRD—Or at least some face to face.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Yes. I am not even just talking about a release of time. Everybody wants to develop and feel satisfied in their work and their profession and, of course, we are dealing with a university, so I would have thought there was scope to consider a really interesting and new way of rewarding those teachers, perhaps by some further learning through the university such as the graduate diploma.

Ms Shipway—Certainly that is a part of our thinking. We are conscious that there is an award; it is built in that if they are colleague teachers they will be paid. Many do not actually apply for the money, which I think is very interesting in itself.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It is a lot of paperwork. When I last had a student teacher I think it was $33.

Ms Shipway—And, of course, in the secondary school there might be four teachers looking after one pre-service teacher, so they would get $12—

Mrs Daly—A quarter of it.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Even the principal gets a small cut. It is tokenism.

Ms Shipway—We certainly have that on the agenda. It will be an interesting conversation to see if we can actually do anything differently into the longer term. If something should come out of your inquiry that would support our work that would be very helpful, from our point of view. To be able to remunerate flexibly and appropriately would be fabulous.

Mrs Daly—The smallest challenge will not be the unions.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—No, I would not have thought so.

Ms BIRD—I would like to follow up on that and take it a little further. We hear from many universities that the funding model for students in education courses does not recognise the cost of the practicum—as was the problem for nurses when they were subsumed from colleges into universities. I am impressed by what you are saying you are doing. The idea of funding existing teachers to do the graduate diploma—a lot of places would say, 'There's no way we are going to have the money for that.' There is obviously some room for flexibility. Would you see the fact that funding allocation does not acknowledge the huge practicum costs as a major impediment?

Ms Shipway—Certainly when I started working at the faculty and looking into this area, I became aware, once this inquiry was launched, that there was a figure of around $1,800 that went to universities to cover the practicum for each pre-service teacher. We tried to follow up on it money-wise. From what I understand, the faculty does not get nearly that much—there will be some good reasons for that; some of it will go into paying salaries and so on. What we do know is that if we want to support our schools, our pre-service teachers and our colleague teachers appropriately it is expensive. Giving quality feedback to individuals and to small groups is very expensive.

If we were allowed to plead for more resources, that is what I would be doing. I would be asking that faculties have more capacity to support their schools in the work they do around field placements and that they could visit in more productive ways because it is very challenging for them. We are building it into the pilot. We are looking at having a couple of faculty people who belong to each cluster and who are there in an ongoing relationship so that there are not people zipping around the state all the time. We are trying to maximise the efficiency around all that because travel is really expensive too, and getting worse as you know.

If you wanted some help I am sure Tasmania would be really happy to look at a better way of funding prac. We would love to contribute to something like that, and we could do it cross-sectorally. It would be great.

Ms BIRD—If you could do that before the inquiry concludes—some preliminary ideas or suggestions—we would value that.

Ms Shipway—We would be very happy to help out with that.

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

[11.49 am]

LE, Dr Thao, Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

SIGAFOOS, Professor Jeffrey Scott, Professor of Education, and Director, Transforming Learning Communities Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

WATSON, Dr Jane Marie, Reader in Mathematics Education, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that these public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a transcript is made available to the public on the parliamentary web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you these 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. Would you care to make some introductory remarks or would you like to go straight to questions?

Dr Le—I love to talk, so may I have five minutes?

CHAIR—You certainly may. We love to listen.

Dr Le—Our research has a number of distinctive features of which we are extremely proud. First, we look at the relationship between theory and practice, not theory into practice but theory and practice—in other words, practice can teach us a lot about research, but it is not a one-way direction. The second thing is that our research should focus not just on teaching and learning in the school but also on tertiary education. We do research about ourselves in teaching rather than go to schools and preach how they should go about teaching and learning in schools. Reflecting on ourselves is not enough. We have to do research about ourselves as teachers and learners, and that is the progressive thing we are doing.

The third thing I am very proud of—my mother told me I should be very grateful and also very humble, but I would like to make an exception on this occasion—is that, different from other universities, we believe we have a mission to the world and to humanity, not just to a state or country. We have been to conferences in San Francisco, Paris and Sydney, and we have seen people from developing countries going to the big conferences in order to be passively engaged in the research discourse rather than taking an active part. We would like to reverse that trend and share the resources in education. We have organised conferences in developing countries so that, instead of one or two of them attending, we bring the world to them. We did that luckily, with the help of our ambassadors.

We have collaboratively undertaken five or six international conferences in Vietnam, Malaysia and other places because we want to empower them to take an active part rather than passively receiving research knowledge. Last week we had a conference here. We empowered our students to take a role in conducting research and interacting with the world. So instead of one or two

senior lecturers going to New York and Paris we brought the world here. We also sponsored our partners from Pacific islands and Asian countries to come here to facilitate their engagement in research. In that sense, I must say that we are very proud.

CHAIR—We have heard a number of themes in this inquiry. There seem to be some very different opinions on a range of subjects coming from groups representing school principals. The school principals themselves have long practical experience and they tend to have a range of views that are somewhat different to the views coming from the more research based approaches to education. I am interested in your thoughts on the divergence between the pure research side and those with the long practical experience who perhaps may doubt some of the findings of research that we hear about. With education research, I guess it is a little different in that it is not like the laws of physics, which can be duplicated over and over. It is a lot harder to quantify cause and effect in education than it is in physics, chemistry or whatever.

Dr Le—I am so pleased you asked that question because I can indicate a number of interesting things in our research discourse at this university. First of all, when our students have graduated, we try to engage them, in a formal or an informal way, in research. At the moment we have almost 100 research students and the majority of them are former students. A fascinating trend is that we have about eight principals, who, after retiring, want to come back—not just because they have nothing to do but because they have a lot of wisdom and experience and they want to challenge us here. That is why I say that research and that kind of interaction is important. We look at them as our very great, precious resource. Also, they have a connection with schools so that people from the school can feel at home when they come to our institution. The thing is that in the old days they came to our institution; nowadays, we go to them.

Another interesting thing is that sometimes a lot of staff at the schools are doing research without knowing that they are doing research. They think that if you are doing research you must do a thesis or you must do something that requires a grant. When we visit a school, we hear the many interesting things they are saying. We are looking at Essential Learnings, which has been introduced in Tasmania, and we listen to what the teachers say. We encourage them not only to know what it is but even to do research on things like classroom management. They say, 'We have some children who need a bit of special attention and we have done this or that.' I say: 'That is already a beginning, like a pilot study. Why don't you take it up? You don't need to go to the university to do master's research or a PhD. We will come to you and we can work together.' So in that sense it is a very close interchanging of ideas. We should never adopt the idea of a pyramid model where you tell them what to do, because then the research will be totally irrelevant from their point of view.

Dr Watson—I would like to comment briefly on that, in terms of part of the way I interpreted your question. In many universities, perhaps on the mainland, there is more of a dichotomy than there is at the University of Tasmania. Certainly in recent years and now, almost all of the research by the researchers is very practically oriented. It is oriented to the experiences in schools, such as those that Thao has commented on, or subject areas. For instance, my area is mathematics education, which is very down to earth. It is not very esoteric. When I talk to teachers in schools about my research they know what I am talking about because they have students who are doing the problems that I am saying students are having trouble with. So I think one of our advantages—as well as those Thao has talked about—is that we do not really have very many ivory tower academics in our faculty. Is that what you were referring to?

CHAIR—I was in part, but I was talking about a divergence of views between the research based findings and what many people with practical experience are telling us, across a range of matters in education.

Prof. Sigafoos—I would like to say something about that. I think you often hear about the gap between research and practice. There is a gap, and a lot of times the research being done by educational researchers is not adopted by educators. You could look at it another way: that is, there is a practice-research gap. It might be that researchers are not necessarily doing research on topics that are of most value to the educators.

As Jane was saying, in our school we have researchers who address problems of significance in the classroom. What we are trying to do is kind of like a partnership model. The ideas for the research will come from the field, from the teachers and principals. They might say: 'Here is something we have problems with. Can you come and help us design a study or get some data to help solve that problem?' That is one way I think you can help to close that gap.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—In the submission from the faculty there was reference to the curriculum changes to the Essential Learnings framework. If I read it correctly it implied that the University of Tasmania education faculty itself is moving toward an Essential Learnings framework. Is that a correct reading of the submission or not?

Dr Le—The answer is yes and no. It is not just black and white like a religion—that is, you belong to it or you do not. That is due to the kind of partnership we have. We have to take our stakeholder, the education department, very seriously. When the Department of Education initiates something like that, we have to take it seriously because we are a partner. It is not that we wholeheartedly say that everything is perfect and we will go all the way with Essential Learnings. In any program when we look at it, there are certain things that could reflect the diversity of use, because if children receive the same thing it might work well for one but not for the others. When our students go to school they should not be deprived of knowing what the school is doing, whether or not we believe wholeheartedly in it.

First of all, we have to introduce Essential Learnings in our courses, but we do so critically, not religiously. At the moment we have two lecturers doing a PhD on Essential Learnings. They go and interview teachers to see what they feel about this. They look at what students, as the ones who are going into that area, feel about it. So you see, we cannot just isolate ourselves and make ourselves immune from what actually exists in the school. That would be a crime where our students are concerned, because we would throw them in at the deep end. So we are orientated towards it but we do not just take it totally as it is. We treat it in that critical way.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I think you might have misheard me, or perhaps I did not express myself well. My question was whether you are using the Essential Learnings framework yourselves in teaching in the faculty. That is what I really meant. I did not mean whether or not you were teaching students how to use it.

Dr Le—We do. As I said, we use certain parts. We take into account where Essential Learnings comes from. Of course it has taken certain insights from different perspectives in education. For example, it talks about scaffolding. It talks about how to help children to communicate well and about independent thinking. Other states also may use it but maybe in

different way. Maybe they use not Essential Learnings but something like 'new learning'. From our point of view, we have to look at which educational perspective is embodied in Essential Learnings and at what we are doing for our teaching and learning. In Essential Learnings they talk about communication and the social context of teaching and learning. We must say: 'That is good, but how about other theories and other research that mentions this?' So we include it in that way. That is the way that we tackle it.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Dr Watson, you were about to speak.

Dr Watson—I wanted to say something after Thao.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—You do that, then I will ask you another question.

Dr Watson—What I was going to say was, if you look at our course framework, you would not see Essential Learnings 1, 2, 3. But even in, for instance, the maths curriculum or the literacy curriculum, we are obviously aware of the context within which we are operating. I would say that being numerate, which is one of the Essential Learnings, is certainly something that we stress very heavily within our primary and middle school curriculum. But, since this session is about research, I wanted to mention a couple of PhD students. I have a PhD student who is not on staff but who is looking at how to assess multiple aspects of the Essential Learnings at the same time with one task—how do you look at all these different things?—which is really the essence of the complexities of the Essential Learnings. In the old days we did a maths test, on which you could say 'tick', being numerate, but now we have activities that we put together that will look at other aspects: inquiry, the environment and things like that.

One of the ARC research linkage projects that I am involved with, regarding Essential Learnings and research, is working in clusters of schools in rural Tasmania on the quantitative literacy—the basic maths requirements of middle school students. We framed this proposal precisely in terms of looking at the government's requirements for innovation in maths, science and technology for Australia. We must provide students with—I will not say 'numeracy'—the maths skills that they need to do these things. We work within Tasmania, which is the Essential Learnings environment, so we have to appreciate that being numerate is important all across the curriculum, not just for the people who are going to be the innovators in Australia.

We are working on a middle school program where we are devising professional learning programs with the teachers, who are struggling with how they do both these numeracy and basic maths skills. We have to do being numerate so that the students can do the ELs and be quantitatively literate, but they also need, for instance, those basic proportional reasoning skills that they are going to need to do algebra and geometry, because we cannot renege on that in terms of what Australia requires in terms of innovation. That is one thing.

Another link to research, in terms of what Kate was saying in the last session, is that we know that she and one of our staff members are working on another linkage research application to actually look at the evaluation of that pilot project that has been developed. We are trying to develop on the researchers' side a culture in which everything we do has to be evaluated in a way that is going to provide evidence, and I would say research evidence, for the fact that it is effective. The fact that Kate and another staff member will be putting a linkage in will mean that we will then have a research base to go beyond the sorts of things that the people in your last

session were saying. So I have gone a little bit further, but I wanted to tie together the idea of ELs and the sort of research that we are trying to do to be practical.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Do you yourself have a background in mathematics as a maths teacher?

Dr Watson—My background is in mathematics, and I taught in the mathematics department of the University of Tasmania for 13 years. I was then hired by the Faculty of Education to teach mathematics to Bachelor of Education students because, at that time, the feeling was that the students coming in to do the Bachelor of Education did not have a sufficient background in mathematics.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—So do you lecture in mathematics curriculum studies now?

Dr Watson—I do now as well. Over the years, I have done a considerable number of research projects in schools, with students, with teachers. Basically, in recent years, it has been on statistical literacy, collaborative learning, cognitive conflict and all those sorts of issues, which I then bring into the classroom in the curriculum studies with the students.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—So my question—and I promise you it is my last—is: how do you, as a mathematics specialist and a person who is very much a part of the mathematics tradition and discipline, feel about the future of that discipline in schools given that the curriculum framework has changed so dramatically? Can I just put to you a scenario: I understand that there is at least one and now perhaps two schools locally which are moving toward a 50 per cent inquiry based curriculum. If you are aware of that, how do you see mathematics as a discipline fitting in? By the way, I am not setting you up to be critical of in a political sense, but I think it is a genuine concern.

Dr Watson—I think you should all have a genuine concern about what is going on with mathematics and curriculum movements in Australia at the moment, but I will not buy into the curriculum argument. The biggest difficulty for teachers in an inquiry based curriculum is having the quantitative literacy skills that they need in order to bring that aspect to the inquiries that they do. I know the Curriculum Corporation have published quite a few books, which I have been somewhat critical of, because they say, 'Cross-curriculum activities: buy this book and you'll be able to do everything', and maybe in two lessons out of the book there is a tiny bit of mathematics stuck in. There are lots of mixtures of history and science and literacy and music and art, and 'we will draw beautiful pictures'. But, from my point of view, they do not tie the art together with tessellations to talk about geometry, to talk about angles and all of these things because they do not have the background for it.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—It requires a specialist knowledge.

Dr Watson—It does, and this is one of my views. One of the positives of our middle school program is that it has a fairly heavy numeracy content; we are hoping that we will then be turning out teachers who will be able to integrate better than we did in the past. Of course, as a mathematics educator, I am against an inquiry based program if you have no-one involved in that program with any mathematical skills. I do not believe that the Department of Education in

Tasmania wishes to be turning out students who are mathematically illiterate, and they may, at times, have to work on how they are going to work their programs so that they can do this.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Do you think it is possible?

Dr Watson—I am working very closely with the mathematics consultants in the department. We are not on opposite sides. I was with them yesterday, and they were ringing me and saying: 'We've got this new curriculum consistency document from Canberra. What do you think about the chance elements at grade 5? What are we going to do about this?' We talk about these things all of the time.

The department is putting more money into middle school numeracy. You might be aware that some of our schools did not do very well in the national benchmarks. I have been involved in a consultancy with the department whereby we are working on programs to help the teachers appreciate the basic proportional reasoning that the students have. I have to tell you a sad story—which perhaps I should not if it is going to be written down—but some of the teachers do not have those skills. That is why we are working with them in a very concerted way to try and do that. How much money is needed for that is really a question for the Department of Education. We are trying—at least I am trying—within the BTeach program to put forward programs that will help at least produce new teachers who are better in this. Will we succeed? I hope so. If we do not have that mathematical foundation, we will not have the kind of inquiry that Australia needs.

Ms BIRD—I want to explore something there, which is interesting—and we have had the conversation elsewhere—and that is that the real challenge is clearly in primary school. The challenge in secondary is actually getting people who will be maths teachers. The challenge in primary school is that you are asking for such a multidisciplinary focus in one person. We have already heard today that, sadly, we are getting students who are coming into university with what they call maths aversion. Having teenage children, I can tell you there is a huge maths aversion out there in our secondary schools. To be honest with you, I think it is largely because it is so poorly taught. It is like we have forgotten how to resource maths teaching and develop support for new models of teaching for maths teachers. You give them a textbook and they will manage in a classroom; how disheartening to maths teachers. And that flows onto the students. I think that is a huge area that we have been particularly poor in.

I want to discuss what you were saying about the challenge in the primary section. I cannot remember where it was, but it was said to us that perhaps we should stop trying to aim for this all-round primary ed teacher who is able to do all of these things and to support more specialist support and intervention in classrooms. I am interested in your perspective on that.

Dr Watson—That model has been tried in various places. I know of some studies in the United States which have looked at that. The difficulty, of course, is finding the maths specialists. Part of the training that the department is doing at the moment is training what I think they are calling 'numeracy leaders', being numerate leaders to fit the terminology.

Ms BIRD—So they do not mean adding up the budget by that?

Dr Watson—And those people are not just meant to be the specialists in the school, but to assist other teachers. I do not think just having a maths specialist in a primary school is good enough, because, with the ELs in particular, it has to be integrated all the way across the curriculum. It is impossible for one person to do that in every classroom all the time. I would not mind having a numeracy leader who works with people educating as needed across the classes. If I could just throw in one plug, which I occasionally have the opportunity to do in terms of the secondary curriculum at the moment, I have a very strong bias from lots of years of experience that what is going to have to be faced in the new curricula which are going to be developed is the fact that Australia needs more people who are statistically literate about what is appearing in the newspaper every day than people who know how to factor a binomial in algebra.

When I go to watch my student teachers, I have spent so many hours watching kids struggle, kids who have not the foggiest idea how to factor, or how to do anything. They cannot even do fractions. If we could have a curriculum where they would be learning about sampling and populations, what kind of questions you ask to be statistically literate and how to survey people with the right kinds of questions, we could do a better job of turning out people who would not be so averse to mathematics because they would see some use for it. They would see it in the newspaper every day. That is my bias.

Ms BIRD—The other thing I wanted to raise with you is this. I am particularly interested in the transnational work that you were talking about. Pardon me, I cannot remember where I read this on the weekend, but in Malaysia, I think, there was a recent research conference on ICT. I raised this with the earlier group so I am interested to hear from you whether there is any body of research. There is a lot of talk about integrating ICT into the classroom and that, instead of being a stand-alone module, ICT should inform all sorts of subject areas. Have we had a good look at how the way children learn has changed as a result of the modern world they live in? To me that would be an obvious lead-in to how you integrate it into the classroom. It may well have changed even the way children learn and integrate new information. Has there been much work on that?

Dr Le—We are looking here at three kinds of relationships about IT and learning. First of all, a student of IT learns how to do processing. Secondly, they learn about IT. In other words, IT is not just neutral. IT can affect people emotionally and intellectually and whatever—even human relationships. My son now has stopped talking to me. He talks to the computer most of the time. So we cannot just isolate IT from social contexts. Through IT you can learn. That relationship has to be embedded in the way we communicate with our students. Learning IT is interesting, but you all know that when our students want to do IT, when they finish and go to school, IT is nowhere.

Ms BIRD—Not available.

Dr Le—Even half a year is a struggle. We should look more at the relationship of IT to the child as a learner and as a social being. The social network has changed. Their friends are not the neighbour anymore—their friends are around the world. The thing that we emphasise with our students here is that young children are at a very vulnerable age. They are exposed to the world, they are very keen to contact the world, and they are very keen to find out things about other human beings. Some parents pay a lot of attention to what the children are talking about and guide them. But not every family is lucky like that. So teachers should take a bit of a role here

and try to make our students conscious of not only learning technology but learning about technology in the social world, in the changing world that we are living in.

Ms BIRD—What about cognitively, not just socially—that is, the fact that children are cognitively different to how they were before? The amount of information our children are exposed to compared to what we were exposed to when we were that age is very different. How do you take that into a classroom, where you are supposed to enthuse and engage students with a textbook?

Dr Le—I am pleased that you raised this because sometimes we just think of using technology and we stop there. At the school we encourage our students to do what we call problem based learning. They are young and they can solve a lot of problems. We tend to underestimate them. For example, we talk about diseases—what is happening now, not what happened in the old days. For example, my children talk about bird flu. They ask, 'What is it?' There is an opportunity for them to do research. I must say that we have to guide them through, because IT can have so many traps.

You mentioned the way they learn about things. In that sense, I think our students should be more oriented towards working on these kinds of problems. The children are fascinated by things and we cannot just give them textbooks. Bird flu is a very interesting example. First they ask, 'What is bird flu?' We can lecture them about what bird flu is and things like that. We can also say that it will affect interacting with people and interpersonal relationships—their friends will not be allowed to come visit them and so on. Then there will be economic issues, depending on how big it is. If, for example, Australia suddenly closes and does not join with the world, how will that affect us economically? We share this with grade 6. They love to hear about that. But grade 1 could be on something different. That is why it is a big challenge, because you do not have a recipe for it that says you should go and teach them this or that. You have to be careful because one thing about IT is that it is too powerful and could become destructive, if children use it without guidance.

Prof. Sigafoos—That is a good question. I think what is happening is that there is a lot of technology and people are saying, 'This might be applicable—how might I best use it?' People are struggling to figure out how best to use it. I think that is a perfect venue for doing research. When I came here, one of the things I realised was that there are a lot of staff people at this university and our school who are using technology, applying it, evaluating it and trying to figure out how best to use it. We very quickly put together a team—I think we have about 15 people—and we are going to put together an edited book. Each chapter will be describing a different piece of technology and a case example of how it has been applied for teaching and learning. I do not think that is going to solve all of the problems and it will not be the only thing that is needed, but it is a piece of additional information that hopefully would enable and assist teachers to make better use of technology.

Dr Watson—You were talking about the cognitive aspects of things. I think some work has been done, but not a lot. In connection with what Jeff has just said, last night I was reading a proposal for one of these chapters. It is looking at the use of ICT in VET courses in TAFE. It has to do with plumbing and things like that. In this proposal, one of the things I underlined was that they are looking at the technology and the cognitive processes that the students are using, and then they are taking that out and videotaping them actually using the equipment. So it is going

from the technology in the classroom to the cognitive processes and then into that. That is a proposal. It is not finished. But it is the sort of thing which I think is really important in terms of us realising that your question is an important one. It is one that we are going to be looking at.

Ms BIRD—That is tremendous. I just want to clarify something. It is a bit of a hobbyhorse of mine, so I am sorry if it is an indulgence. You are all talking about post ICT. My interest, as I have said before, is that we work in schools, in the secondary system in particular, based on an industrial world model. There are bells, there are square boxes that you go into and you sit at seats. It is so irrelevant to the modern experience of kids by the time we get them into the classroom. They multiskill, they seek information from a variety of sources, they work independently and they network with people—and not necessarily those sitting around a table with them in an enclosed room. To some extent, the disengagement we are seeing in our middle school kids is perhaps linked with the fact that our school systems have not moved out of the industrial age into the technological age. These are just my thoughts; I would be interested in some research into it. I know there are resource implications of that. But it is not always about the hardware; sometimes it is about how you engage with, talk to and structure your lessons with the kids.

Dr Watson—Can I just tell you ever so quickly about one of my PhD students and a project she is doing, because I think it is directly related to what you are saying. She came to us from a school in Hobart where they have lots of money for technology. They have got a big government grant and they have laptops for everyone. She has got one of those electronic—I do not even know what it is called!—whiteboards, where she writes on her computer and it all comes up.

In the Department of Education there is a new graduate certificate that teachers are encouraged to do which will take them out of the textbook-blackboard mould into this technology. Her initial research was on what impact this would have. The teachers have done this graduate certificate, they have all passed and they all have these wonderful portfolios. I have a teacher profile that she worked with in evaluating what the teachers were doing. Lo and behold, the teachers had ICT skills, they had lots of great ideas and they said that the kids had lots of fun working on the computers and doing their projects. She was looking at maths and science teachers, and she found that what was missing were the connections with the content. The teachers had all these wonderful ICT skills and the kids were excited, but she found that when the kids were working they were playing games. They were playing mathematical games, but they were not looking at concepts and learning the things that are in the maths curriculum that we really want them to know. She has written a paper for a maths conference saying, ‘Here are all the ICTs these teachers have, but we now have to make sure that they are using them for the mathematical concepts.’ In a school that probably has the best technology in Hobart or in Tasmania, she was actually disappointed.

Ms BIRD—The outcomes do not always reflect—

Dr Watson—I think you are right. Even teachers who move away from the textbook are not really sure how to use the technology to replace it. As we all know, some of the things that you see on the internet are just beautifully illustrated textbooks. I am saying to my preservice teachers, ‘The internet is the internet, but if you cannot do better than writing on the blackboard then maybe writing on the blackboard is better because the students see it happening.’

Ms BIRD—That is interesting. Thanks.

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 and it will also be posted by Hansard onto the parliamentary web site.

Proceedings suspended from 12.28 pm to 1.20 pm

DALTON, Mr Ian Stanley, Executive Director, Australian Parents Council Inc.

CHAIR—May I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's web site. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House. 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.

Mr Dalton—I have a short opening statement that I would like to put before the inquiry. APC appreciates the opportunity to appear before the committee as the representative voice of the parents of Australia's non-government school students. The preamble of the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children, and the central role of teachers in the learning process. APC believes that the achievement of the goals depends on systematic and effective partnerships between parents and teachers, which can actively engage parents in the educational and schooling experiences of their children.

Parents know that the outcomes of schooling are particularly influenced by the quality of teaching in the classroom, and research findings support this view. Teachers, however, need the active support of parents to most effectively help students learn. Research supports the fact that a significant proportion of the variation in learning outcomes for students can be attributed to influences outside the school—such as socio-economic background, ethnic and language background, gender and other social and demographic variables, and family support for education.

Future initiatives which seek to improve teacher education must take account of the potential of parental collaboration with teachers to minimise the effects of disadvantage, to promote wellbeing and resilience building, and generally to enhance the work of teachers. Today's parents are able to provide a significant resource for teachers to draw upon in enhancing their critical professional undertaking.

APC proposes that, through the development and application of specific education modules, all trainee teachers and practising teachers should be given adequate opportunity to study and understand the powerful influence that the support, encouragement and attitudes of families and parents have on student learning outcomes. Such modules should also introduce strategies for teachers to develop equal and collaborative relationships with parents. The potential to improve teacher effectiveness and teacher morale is significant.

Research findings support APC's contention that if any reformation of teacher education and in-service courses were to incorporate a central focus on skilling teachers to communicate equally and effectively with parents, and teachers were enabled, per se, to enter confidently into true partnerships with parents, teaching in Australia would reach a new level of professional achievement.

CHAIR—With regard to the association between parents and teachers, do you feel that the current relationship needs to be substantially improved? How would you rate the performance of our beginning teachers in interfacing with parents?

Mr Dalton—I think there is a great degree of variation. Our information would suggest that it is very much dependent upon the personality of the new teacher and also the priority that they place upon parent engagement, which, in many cases, probably comes from their experience of their own family background. What we believe is lacking is a systematic endeavour to acquaint new teachers with the importance of engaging with parents. One of the failings of our compulsory education system is that it can tend to give parents the impression that, if they pack their kids off to school each morning and pick them up at night, their contribution to their schooling has been made. We are really saying that the level of awareness has to be raised not only within the teaching profession but also amongst parents more broadly. I think that is where a lot of the work being driven by the current minister for education is quite positive: it is really opening up this whole conversation about engaging teachers and parents in meaningful ways.

CHAIR—Obviously, at the moment we have quite a large number of mature age people entering the teaching profession. From your viewpoint, do those mature age people have better skills in liaising with parents than the graduate or beginning teacher?

Mr Dalton—To be honest, I have not seen anything that would indicate a big difference between them.

Ms CORCORAN—I would like to pursue that a little further. Earlier this morning we heard evidence from a group of students from the University of Tasmania. Almost all of them were mature aged and most of them were parents. I am not saying they are representative of the entire student load there, but that has to have some effect on teaching. Of course, most teachers are already parents anyway, so it is an interesting point. What would you like to see happen that does not happen now?

Mr Dalton—As I said before, probably the formalisation within the teacher training curriculum of the importance of schooling as a partnership enterprise between teachers and parents—that teaching is not something that is done by a teacher in a classroom in a vacuum. Ken Rowe's research indicates that around 60 per cent of the outcomes for students happen in the classroom but about 40 per cent happen outside.

Ms CORCORAN—So that is what you are looking for in teacher training—that teachers be taught that they are only part of the process and that parents, families and other influences are the other part. What impact would that have on them in their teaching? Does the teaching that is happening now recognise that responsibility, even though it has not happened formally through their training process, or are there things happening or not happening in our classrooms that you would like to see change?

Mr Dalton—We see it as being very patchy. There are some teachers and parents who do this very well. There has been a lot of talk about the importance of family-school partnerships and teacher-parent partnerships, but our experience is that we are still in a time of emergence where, whilst people know that it is important, actually putting it into practice is something that people do not understand and do not do very well. Along with the Australian Council of State School

Organisations, we are quite active in conducting parent programs in schools. We have seen cases where schools would be quite happy to say that they are active in engaging parents and they are committed to the whole process, but, when you go in and look at the way they do things, they really do not have that depth of understanding of what we are talking about here.

Ms CORCORAN—If a school does it well, what does that school do? I am still struggling with the practicalities of how you want to see parents involved. I am not disagreeing with you. If we have to make a recommendation, what are the words we should be using and what are the practical outcomes?

Mr Dalton—The practical outcomes would be that, as a normal part of their approach to teaching and delivering curriculum, teachers would look to engage some sort of parental involvement. This may be limited to, for example, telling parents what they are doing and why they are doing it or—and this is probably most relevant at a primary school level—it might be saying to the parent group in the class: 'I need some help as a teacher in this class to do various things. I want you to come and help me, but it is not going to be doing my photocopying or stapling sheets of paper together; it will be getting you to play a role in the education process.'

Ms CORCORAN—Is it like I used to do years ago with gross motor programs—that sort of thing?

Mr Dalton—Yes. Obviously there is room for the photocopying and the stapling as well; do not get me wrong. That is an important resource. But it is about helping teachers to realise that the parents are a resource that they can draw on to enhance their teaching delivery. All those things go together to make that happen.

Ms CORCORAN—You talked about teachers needing to be aware of the impact of the media in the educational development of children. We talked earlier about the impact of technology—how it impacts on our kids and how they learn. When you say the word 'media', how do you define it? Is it a broad definition?

Mr Dalton—Yes.

Ms CORCORAN—You also talked about—I think it was nine—attributes that you would like to see teachers have.

Mr Dalton—Is that the commitment to the nine values of Australian schooling?

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, that is the one. We have talked in many different places during this inquiry about how we select students to go into teacher education. Most universities simply do it on academic results. Some do it by interview as well. How do you see selection of students to go into teacher education happening in an ideal world?

Mr Dalton—In general, I would be inclined to suggest that the majority of people who go into teaching with a balanced perspective go in there initially with a love of children. That is what stimulates them. How you do that in a selection process I do not know, but I think there has to be some kind of—

Ms CORCORAN—We would love you to find out because we do not know either.

Mr Dalton—Obviously an academic intelligence is important but I think, particularly in teaching, it goes beyond academic intelligence to a creative intelligence. Being creative is an important part of what teachers to—engaging their students and also enjoying the things they do themselves. At the moment I am part of the judging panel for the National Awards for Quality Schooling and, in looking at the submissions that have come forward, you can see that those teachers who excel at what they do are passionately engaged and passionately looking at new ways of being good at what they do. Underpinning that is a love of and excitement about being able to help these young people develop their lives. I am glad I am sitting here as the person I am today and not as the person who is responsible for choosing new teachers.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, there is an advantage, isn't there?

Mr Dalton—We also need the numbers. It is a matter of balancing that—

Ms CORCORAN—What we are hearing is that it would be a good idea but logistically it is very difficult.

Mr Dalton—But in an ideal world, as you said before, even if you get people initially coming to the profession looking at it as a solid career in which they might be able to set themselves up in retirement, once they are engaged in the profession they can become engaged in a meaningful way and find out that it is a pretty exciting thing to be doing. If we can start to turn those lights on a bit, that would be helpful too.

Ms CORCORAN—If we were able to find a way of coping with interviewing potential student teachers, who should be making these judgments about these values—is it simply the university administrators who are interviewing or is it the dean of the faculty or other people?

Mr Dalton—To tell the truth, it is something about which I have not exercised my mind. It is an interesting point, though, and a very good question.

Ms CORCORAN—What I am getting at is whether there is a role for parents.

Mr Dalton—In that sort of situation there is a role for anybody who can add value to the process. I think that parents, experienced teachers or anybody who can add to that selection process would be able to make a valuable contribution.

CHAIR—Do you think there is a role for the community to be proactive in approaching the teaching profession on a 'How can I help?' basis rather than putting more load on teachers by requiring them to engage with parents? Quite clearly that can be part of the equation, but a teacher faces a cohort of parents who can vary very much from year to year and from place to place. Do you think that, as a community, we should be saying to our teachers that the parents of, say, half the class are keen to be involved and the parents of the other half are not? Perhaps the community needs to be more proactive in saying: 'We want to help you, we have this range of skills. How can we best bring this together,' rather than having the schools drive that that, because teachers are fairly well overworked at the moment. What are you thoughts on that sort of a reversal?

Mr Dalton—I think that could happen. Our submission is not restricted to teacher training. It also covers professional development and in-service training, particularly for future teacher leaders. Our experience is fairly general that nothing of any meaningful purpose happens in a school if the principal is not supportive and engaged. The sort of thing you are talking about would be very helpful but it would need something of a change in the culture of our schools where principals felt confident enough and easy enough with the process to engage the sorts of people in the community you are talking about. I think it would require a fairly significant mind shift. I suspect that, in the majority of instances, the teaching profession can still be rather insular. So getting to what you are talking about would require a further shift in the mindset. We would have to go a bit further down the road we are now travelling than we have gone the moment.

Ms BIRD—You have raised really interesting issues and I hear what you are saying. I think back to a huge public scandal at a Catholic school in my electorate. It was plastered all over the Sydney media that a parent at the school taped up the mouths of children. That poor gentleman actually did nothing of the sort. He had been a long-term assistant with the school performance night. The kids were being a bit silly and he threw the tape at them and told them to tape up their mouths. The kids thought that was a good idea and they taped up their mouths. But the parents of one child complained and caused an absolute trauma for the parent involved—he is actually a grandparent—and for the school community and so forth.

To some extent, I think we can see why, in the current environment, schools are very wary about parental participation—perhaps for the wrong reasons. I liked what you said about the training component. You said that it would be good if teachers could think not just about how they can encourage parents, where they are able to, to get involved—you acknowledge that sole parents who are trying to work may not be able to engage in the traditional ways that we think of—but also about how they communicate with them. Indeed, you identify how they can resolve conflict. Let us face it, some parents drop their children off and pick them up and other parents are at the school every half hour. As I understand it, you are talking about, if not a subject, an integrated theory of understanding of parenthood and the modern challenges of family. Am I reading that right?

Mr Dalton—Yes, you are. From the point of view of our organisation, we have to be careful not to look at the parenting community through rose-coloured glasses and think that everybody is fantastic. We realise that that is not the case. And we realise that, no matter what sorts of things you put in place, you are going to have a person—be it a parent or anybody else—who is obstructive, arrogant or whatever else. We are talking about trying to give teachers adequate skills so that when those situations happen, as they will, that they do not, as a result of that, despair and lose their faith in the broader parent community and that they have the resilience to be able to deal with that and say: 'Okay. This person has got their problems. Whilst they are having a go at me, I am the available person for that to happen to, but it is not directed at me personally.' It is all that sort of resilience-building in teachers.

It is also very much about looking at meaningful engagement of parents—not necessarily meaning that the parents have to be on school property, as we thought about in the past. It was probably three or four years ago when I was looking at a TV program on schooling in, I think, Malaysia. At the end of each day—and I do not think we should go to this extent, but it is the sort of thing that can happen—the teacher would send the primary school children home with

what they were going to do in the class the next day. The parents would sit down for two hours with the kids and go through it all so that the kids went to school the next day prepared with some basic understanding of what they were going to do.

It gets back to what I was saying before about not just thinking that, if the parents are engaged and committed to education and send their children to school, that is the end of the story. There is a lot more 'valuing' involved—parents letting their kids know that they value what they are doing at school, that they are interested in what their kids do and that they are prepared to be involved in the school in some sort of meaningful way, to reinforce in the kids: 'This is an important thing that I do at school for six hours a day.'

Ms BIRD—Thank you. That is very interesting.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I was really struck by the contrast in the quote at the beginning of your submission and that of the Tasmanian Department of Education. The education department submission states:

Quality teachers make a difference. They are the single, most important determinant of student achievement, making a significant and lasting impression on all our lives.

Your submission begins with a quote from Henderson and Berla, which states:

The evidence is now beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children succeed, not just in school, but in life ...

While the premise of the department of education's introductory quote is quite sound in that teachers do make a very important, lasting impression on all of our lives, it forgets to mention the primal role of parents—which has not been lost on you. Do you think that, although well intentioned in its usage, sometimes educators miss the point that parents play a very important role in a child's education?

Mr Dalton—I could not have said it better myself. I think that goes back to what I was saying before that—

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—When I say 'educators', I should put it better than that and say 'the profession' rather than individual teachers.

Mr Dalton—As I said before, I think we are in somewhat of a transition at the moment where education has been very much focused on that 60 per cent of benefit, if you like, that comes from within the classroom. That has tended to be the focus of what professional educators have been about. It has also been the focus of the people who educate the educators. We are only now entering into a real transition phase where there is a growing acknowledgement that if the 60 per cent effect we are getting from what happens in the classroom is going to be improved and have a greater impact on closer to 100 per cent of students in the classroom then we need to take more account of that other 40 per cent contribution that comes from outside the school. That is where we are at the moment. That recognition is now starting to occur.

As I also said earlier, while people are starting to switch onto that and understand it, there is not really a great degree of knowledge and understanding out there as to how you make that happen. But some great work is being done at the Harvard Institute in the US and so on that is starting to get some solid evidentiary basis for the sorts of things we are talking about that, I think, will grow and develop. As we say in the submission, if teacher education is to be reformed really effectively then that other 40 per cent has to be taken into account and ways found to integrate it into the teacher education curriculum. That would be far preferable to all of a sudden having these courses on parenting, if you like. When you are delivering a mathematics curriculum, being able to say, 'These are the sorts of things I take into account' and how well you involve and give your students' parents an understanding of what you are doing will go a long way to improving your success.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I know you speak on behalf of parents of children who are in non-government schools, but what level of engagement with the local school would you like to see parents having, irrespective of what school their child goes to?

Mr Dalton—That is a difficult thing to quantify. In an ideal world it would be to have as many of the parents as possible understanding that they are an integral part of what the school is doing. We are very much advocates for defining a school as being something more than the building, staff and students. The school is that whole community of people. One of the other things we have some difficulty with is the way in schooling that you have conversations or references to parents, parent communities, school communities, families and family communities. All this can get integrated into one sort of hotchpotch and nobody understands exactly what they are talking about when they are talking about that. We need to build an understanding in all school communities that they are part of the school. I saw a reference the other day that got to me—a Catholic school interstate referred to its parents as the 'clients' of the school. To me that is really sad. They are not clients of the school; they are an integral part of the school.

Ms BIRD—I will play devil's advocate here from the parent's perspective. I am sure your organisation will have many parents who would say to you: 'My life is so busy that all I get is guilt when the school sends me a the list of things that I could be doing.' From personal experience, I commuted to Sydney everyday, which involved three hours of travel. I used to get really frustrated with teachers who said, 'Parent-teacher time is from five to seven o'clock.' That was a whole day off work for me to get there. Then at another school parent hours were from five to seven o'clock but you could ring the teachers at any time and they would actually ring you back. That was a very different approach.

I think what attracted me to what you were saying was that it really is horses for courses in teachers understanding the variations of families and their demands, and maximising their opportunity, whatever that may be, to be informed about them. Do you get feedback from people saying quite the opposite? It has been my experience over the years that schools are increasingly demanding parent participation and resourcing and so forth, and it is actually becoming more difficult for people to comply with those demands. That is why I referred to the traditional ways.

Mr Dalton—That comes back to what I was saying before about how we have to start to redefine what we see parent engagement as being. It is very true that if you have two parents, in

many cases, working two jobs to put their children through whatever school they might choose to send them to—

Ms BIRD—Or just to pay the mortgage.

Mr Dalton—That is right—or just to pay bills—then the last thing they want to do is to be feeling guilty about not being able to go to school. But what we have to be able to say is that that does not mean that they cannot still engage with the school.

Ms BIRD—Yes, and that is what we do not do very well, I suspect.

Mr Dalton—We are still learning how to do it.

Ms CORCORAN—I have one more question. We have heard—and you make reference to it too—everyone saying we need more practicums, that the trainee teachers need to have more time in schools. A number of people have raised with us the possibility of a model that puts the student into the classroom for the last six months of their course or the first six months after their course has finished, or perhaps for 12 months, as a sort of internship. They would not be taking a full load, but perhaps a 0.8 load or something, and would not be getting paid as much as a teacher does. That seems to have a certain appeal to it but it raises, too, the possibility of parents saying, 'I don't want an unqualified teacher teaching my kids.' I make the point that this is right at the end of their course. I am wondering if you or the APC have a view about that?

Mr Dalton—Our view is that the higher the level of practical experience that you can give to trainee teachers the better. As I said before, teaching goes beyond being an academic exercise; it is a creative exercise and it is an engagement exercise. Oftentimes, to be able to really develop a sense of how to do those things effectively requires you to be in situ doing it, and preferably under the supervision of somebody who knows how to do it well. I do not think that there would be too many parents who would be concerned about their children being taught by a less qualified—

Ms BIRD—A provisionally registered teacher.

Mr Dalton—A provisionally registered teacher, if you like, provided that they also knew that the teacher was undergoing an adequate level of supervision and that they were not being thrown into a classroom with 25 children and being left there to do it.

Ms CORCORAN—So supervision is the key?

Mr Dalton—I think so, yes. And not only supervision but adequate and committed supervision.

Ms CORCORAN—Yes, good supervision.

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 by the secretariat and will also be posted on the parliamentary web site.

Mr Dalton—Thank you very much for the opportunity and for asking such wonderful questions. It was great.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Michael Ferguson**):

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

Committee adjourned at 1.54 pm