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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Wednesday, 8 March 2006

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, Mr Hartsuyker, Mr Henry and Mr Sawford

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

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

Specifically, the inquiry should:

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

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

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.30 am

WEST, Dr Peter, Research Group on Men and Families, University of Western Sydney

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I now declare open this hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training into teacher education. The inquiry has examined a broad range of issues which will impact on how we are preparing our teachers for their complex, demanding and critical role in educating our students. Dr West, I remind you that public hearings are recorded and a *Hansard* record is made available to the public through the parliament's website. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Dr West—I will make a couple of corrections and observations, and then I will go over to you. I said on page 3 that my students worked 'ten hours or more'; I should have said 'per week', of course. They work larger amounts than that on average, I suppose. I commented on media stereotypes on page 5. I have since published a piece called 'Male-bashing' on www.onlineopinion.com.au, and I can give you that reference rather than try to spell it out. That was the second most read article on that online journal in January this year. There was a lot of debate about it, and people had various views, but my point is that there are men out there who have views and experiences which do not always agree exactly with what women say or with what women think—or with what academics think either. And these men vote.

Without good models of masculinity, boys will find bad models. They will find them in the media, for example. We find many fathers are missing in action from their sons' lives. I read a thesis which said fathers were scared to talk to their sons about sex education because someone might accuse them of something. Kids need some men in their lives. Children spend some 13,000 hours in school, and in those very formative years we want them to hear the widest range of voices. We want principals and teachers of both sexes. It is bad for children only to see one sex. That is an important point. To say that we do not want any men as teachers is a ridiculous argument. We need quality men if we can find them. I provide evidence from one parent in my submission. In a recent issue of the *Australian Journal of Education*, Herb Marsh and Andrew Martin looked at the evidence on men in teaching and said of course children need quality teaching but there were some personal issues in which boys wanted that reassurance of a male. I talked about only hearing women's voices versus men's and women's voices. There are books such as *The Essential Difference* by Simon Baron-Cohen, which takes a long time and looks at a lot of evidence to say that men and women are, in very significant ways, often quite different.

It is also bad for children to hear only one world view. I have provided evidence of some of the strong feminist bias in the teacher education texts. I gave you two examples, and I have photocopies here. Of course we need to encourage girls, but we also need to encourage boys. I am glad that the earlier inquiry into boys' education produced the report which you were part of, Mr Salford, *Boys: Getting it right*, on the policy stalemate on strategies to help boys learn. I am one of a team of consultants helping boys get on better with teachers and helping teachers understand boys. It is a two-way process.

If we are always hearing bad things about boys, we cannot expect teachers to be sympathetic to the boys in their classes. I agree with Sebastian Kraemer in London: boys too easily get condemned and suspended for their restless energy. Simon Baron-Cohen, whom I referred to before, talks about some of the differences between the sexes. Those arguments get ridiculed in the academic establishment. It is fashionable to say that boys and girls are not significantly different except when boys are doing something wrong.

Andrew Martin's review of boys' education for the Australian Capital Territory found that most of the gender experts said that boys were not even similar. I think that is an extraordinary argument. UK research shows that teachers are afraid of dark-skinned boys and punish them too much as a result. In New South Wales schools, that means Aborigines, Islanders and now Africans. We are getting Africans coming in from Liberia and Ethiopia. We are having trouble in Sydney on the school buses. No-one knows what to do with boys' energies. Males in trouble cost us all money: boys who are suspended, expelled, on the street and causing trouble on the beach. Ninety per cent of Long Bay Jail is made up of males.

Once again, I thank members who worked hard on the earlier committee to get the Success for Boys program started, and I thank Kerry Bartlett, who could not be here today. I hope you follow that up by ensuring we have teachers who will encourage active learning and who praise and encourage both boys and girls.

CHAIR—One of the challenges we see all the time is the lack of males going into teaching, which probably compounds the wider social issue of the lack of male role models in many children's lives.

Dr West—Yes, indeed.

CHAIR—Certainly, that is a big issue, and a point that I made in the parliament just the other day is that we are throwing more and more issues on to our schools to solve. Teachers are being expected, in six hours a day, to solve problems of society as well as teaching their curriculum load.

Dr West—That is very true.

CHAIR—I am interested in your thoughts on the importance of the male role model as one element of the issue, as opposed to the fundamental differences between boys and girls—the contributing factors and how much better we could do by having stronger male role models and more teachers in schools. What proportioned improvement could we make, do you think?

Dr West—I refer to a statement made by someone, who is a friend of mine, on page 8 of my submission. The parents' voice is something that concerns me. I give talks to parents in Queensland and the Northern Territory. They are different from the people you speak to in Bondi or Hobart and so on. But parents have some quite strong views on this and parents are asking for some men. They are difficult to find but they can be found if the school hunts around hard enough. My friend's comment—I do not think I will bother to read all of it—makes the point that his daughter was quiet, well-behaved and nice and she did well at school. But, he states:

My ... sons are loud, physical, push each other around, climb trees and fences, jump on their bikes and race off in all directions making a racket.

He says his daughter's needs were looked after and that he worries about his sons. There was a male in that school as deputy. A male can call out, 'Hoy!' and everyone in the playground will jump. There is something in the male as an authority figure that is important. Of course, you need a male who can be a good teacher and carry that through. The English research talks about using someone like that to teach reading, because we do not want reading just associated with libraries and quiet people and so on. Some of the most physically active people should be modelling reading, and some of the English schools are using older males to do that.

I have talked also of gap students. I spoke to David Anderson of Shore School this week, who said they bring these people in. They do not give them very much, but they have beds and they have food, so they get these young English guys who can be around the school. They do some coaching and they help the boys out. So here are some young males who are there for boys and the boys really like having them around. It is quite difficult to do and a lot of the schools are finding it extremely difficult to find males and worse still to keep them. It is a worldwide problem. If you do a web search, you will find that almost any country in the world has a similar problem and no-one has much of an answer. But I make the unfortunate point that, unless we can make boys enjoy school more, they will not want to stay around in schools as teachers. I wish I had more answers but I do not.

Mr SAWFORD—It is interesting how education goes in cycles. When you and I went to school, it was a very boy-friendly curriculum. The girls were disadvantaged; there is no question about that. Then you got to a period, around 1980, when the boys' education inquiry recognised for the first time that the attainment levels at year 12 across Australia were within one percentage point. Access into university was about the same. So in 1980 we seemed to get a few things right in terms of indicators. We may have got other things wrong but, in terms of indicators, the genders were operating pretty well. But now it has gone completely the other way. If you go to any supermarket or any shopping centre in Australia, you will find them—hundreds in this city—and they are not at school.

Dr West—That is true.

Mr SAWFORD—They are suspended, they have taken the time off or they are just not engaged by school, so we have a huge problem. Sometimes you speak to people in academia and you speak to teacher unions, and you even speak to people in the schools—principals and teachers are a lot more honest, they are the most honest of that group, about the fact there is a problem. Governments do not seem to want to know what the problem is either, both state and federal. Will the pendulum naturally swing back?

Dr West—I think it might. I have some evidence about the teacher education text. You may care to look at it if you wish. There are also a couple of books, which I find floating around our university. If you would look at that cartoon, Mr Sawford, you will see there is a very treacherous word called 'we'. I find that some people are included and some people are excluded. They say, 'We feel that so and so,' but am I including you, Ms Bird, or am I excluding you? 'We' comes out as girls who are being held down by boys, and unfortunately that is a very

widespread view in teacher education. That is why I have brought those arguments to your attention.

There is also another piece about 'we' that is an extract that I have given to you in my submission. 'We need a theory of masculinity to contain these boys.' What my reading, particularly from the UK, is suggesting is that we have to find ways of stopping teachers from going into panic mode. In the UK it is Caribbean boys, dark skinned boys—and probably the same would be true here. The teachers see these boys, they get scared by them and they are told: 'Watch those boys. You have to get right on top of them.' Girls are saying that boys are being punished too much and praised too little, so there are signs that the girls are giving some suggestions to teachers already. As I said, I am working with schools in the coming months to try to get the teachers to come around a little bit and say, 'Okay, yes, this is what boys are like, that they do things—

Mr SAWFORD—That was confirmed in the Slade-Trent study, wasn't it.

Dr West—That was a very good study.

Mr SAWFORD—The girls recognising that the problems are there and that they are a part of it.

Dr West—Yes, and the boys say teachers do not ask, do not listen and do not care. This is interesting evidence from Simon Baron-Cohen. I am sure my academic colleagues would roll their eyes with horror over some of these arguments. We are not allowed to talk about biology, but let us forget about biology for the moment. He talks about the 99 per cent of girls who play with dolls at age six. Why is this significant? Because the girls are talking, 'Here's Ken, here's Barbie and they're going out together and here's Barbie's friend, and Barbie is doing this.' The girls are playing and they are talking; they are chatting. Once again, here is a relevant argument for needing both sexes in the classrooms, for kids to hear different ways of thinking. Not that all men are the same; they are not. Not all women are the same; of course they are not. What are most boys doing at age six? They are not playing with dolls. In this book, it says 17 per cent of boys apparently play with dolls, but they are characteristically tearing off their heads, throwing them in the corner, and doing those sorts of things. The boys are running around saying: 'Bang, bang! You're dead!' 'I'm the boss. No, you're not, I'm the boss.' The sexes are characteristically doing different things in their very formative years. As the brain is growing and forming, people are forming habits and they are forming speech habits. Which sex would you imagine is better prepared for an adult life in which we have to be in a workplace? There are gay men there, there are women here, there are people from other countries we have to get on, we have to listen to them, we have to cooperate. Here is an Aboriginal person. The girls are much better prepared, because they have had the basic training in their growing up.

Mr SAWFORD—Sometimes that may be true, but it is interesting that in our children's hospitals there are more girls suffering depressive illnesses than there are boys. There are sometimes more girls injuring and harming themselves than there are boys, so sometimes the measurements are conveniently overlooked.

Dr West—Yes, they might be.

Mr SAWFORD— I think some girls are having—

Dr West—Am I allowed to disagree with you, Mr Sawford?

Mr SAWFORD—Sure, you certainly can.

Dr West—The Colin Mathers research in the ACT—this is a little bit dated—says that boys injure themselves much more.

Ms BIRD—They do it in different ways.

Mr SAWFORD—No, I am not saying boys do not injure themselves, but people overlook the fact that sometimes a lot of girls get into all sorts of trouble and when they leave school, they do not cope. They do not cope with university, they have problems with image, they have problems with depression, and sometimes those are not measured. And sometimes the statistics that are gathered about girls in this country and about women are all hidden.

Dr West—That could well be true.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, that is all I am saying. But I want to get back to this inquiry. We are under the pump. We are under the pump on the boys' education one and I think Kerry, if he were here today, would say that in hindsight both of us have regrets that we did not take a harder edge in that report. Maybe it would have been a much more effective report, even though we both believe it is an effective report. But there have been innumerable inquiries for the last 25 years into teacher education. Our secretariat has put together all the recommendations from those reports, and a lot of those recommendations seem eminently sensible. Yet there seems to have been a failure of implementation of the majority and they have just gathered dust on the shelf. Even the people in universities acknowledge that.

We do not want to be another one. We have some personal views as to why that might be the case in terms of the way in which universities in particular deliver information to this inquiry. Some give the impression they know everything; some give the impression that they are in absolute denial about everyday facts of what is happening to boys and girls, what is happening to young teachers and what principals and teachers are saying. But that is all anecdotal stuff. We have to come up with a set of recommendations. Of all those other reports, no-one in the House of Representatives has ever tackled teacher education: this is the first group.

Dr West—Is that so?

Mr SAWFORD—I think this committee has prided itself on making a contribution to the education debate in this country. It is not a secret that we are trying to focus on maybe 10 recommendations that will have a really powerful impact. Some of those will be on resources, on attitude and on the way people operate in partnerships and so on. What recommendations would you be pushing? You have a long and very credible history in teacher education, not just on boys. What would you be encouraging us as a committee to really have a go at that would make a significant change for the better? We are not into the blame game and we do not want to allocate blame. I think everyone on this committee, although we come from varied political backgrounds, wants to make a contribution. We do not want to be in there slamming universities or slamming

schools. That is not our role. We want a change. I do not believe the current situation is acceptable, even though a lot of good things are happening. So how would you effect the changes? Imagine you are the minister for education; you are Julie Bishop.

Dr West—Teacher education has so many players in the field, and no-one seems to be really responsible for it. I have drawn some of those historical allusions, which you seem to be well aware of, that teachers colleges were an arm of the department of education. I was there, and I thought it was dreadful and we all moaned and groaned about it. We were virtually apprentices of the department of education. But, after all these arguments about students rubbing shoulders and how everything would be better when it went into the universities, I am more inclined to say we have lost so much in that change. Everything is so indirect. We have Commonwealth and state in there somewhere. We have students that now come in at graduate entry. I went around the room and said, 'What have you done?' They have done everything from postmodernism to, nearly, underwater basket-weaving, as one of my colleagues suggested. That is a slight exaggeration, but you get the picture: they could have done anything. So in 10 months we have to orient them to the whole idea of teaching and then prepare them for teaching. And the schools think it is not good enough. So there is something in that argument to give us a better apprenticeship model of some kind.

Mr SAWFORD—Some of the universities really go in hard on this in terms of the technician and the scholar. They say, 'Bugger the technician; we want the scholar, and the technician will come out of that.' What is your view on that?

Dr West—When I talk to teachers—and I am talking about boys' education but the same would apply generally—they say over and over, 'Don't tell us a whole lot of words: tell us what to do with the boys.' Teachers are very hard-headed, practical people who have noisy kids whom parents cannot control. Teachers are wrestling with tons of problems. They want problems solved. I think I would be tempted by some kind of apprenticeship model which would get more connection between the training and the employment.

Mr SAWFORD—The University of Central Queensland took an upfront technician mode: classroom management first, hoping that the scholarship would come second. There were some reports that, basically, the schools that they were involved in were delighted because these young people had superior classroom management skills, but the concern was that that would reach an end and their lack of scholarship would then impact negatively on the quality of their teaching. That is a valid argument. But the other argument must also be that, if you have the scholar skills and not the technician skills, you are not going to operate terribly effectively.

Dr West—I do not think most teachers want to be scholars, and I really do not think they need to be scholars. They are given curricula these days. The curricula are getting firmer and firmer. The days when teachers were given curricula that had 10 pages of airy words have gone, and we are getting back to harder, more specific curricula. The other thing that principals say to me is that getting good people in is one thing but holding them is so much more difficult. Having seen systems in other countries, in New South Wales I think our department of education, by world standards, is a fossil. It used to be true that it was the largest education system in the world outside of Soviet Russia. You can check that better than I can. But it is just too difficult for the people in Bridge Street to know what is going on in schools. You could mention particular schools. I used to visit people in the department of education and there was a fridge covering

most of Western Sydney. How people in Bridge Street could ever cover the whole of New South Wales, you would have to look into the history of that, but it was a much smaller system. New South Wales was a smaller state. The problems were fewer. Kids did as they were told. I would like to see us move from a centralised bureaucratic system, which frustrates teachers. There are good teachers who are not getting rewarded for their effort. The teacher who works hard and really tries hard every day is given the same amount as somebody who waltzes in the door at two minutes to nine and waltzes out at one minute past three, and that is wrong. I am sure the unions will agree with me—not, not at all!

Once we get the good people into teaching, we need to hold them there. They need reward for effort. They need to feel respect—which is an interesting word these days. If you talk to the policemen, they tell you, 'I want to be respected.' Boys in school want teachers to respect them. What do teachers want? They want respect. We all seem to want respect. Perhaps you do yourselves. All of us need it, and teachers do not feel respected. They feel they have no status. The pay for teachers is not bad. I have asked around. It compares reasonably well at the beginning, but the men that I speak to will go into the police, the Army, the Navy or the Air Force far ahead of teaching. So you might care to think about how to get good people into teaching.

We used to have very good students from Canada from a different system: they were paid more if they did a masters degree. They got more money and they were given much more status. It is a much more localised system. They do not have a department of education which is bumble-footed, bureaucratic and inept, which really does not know much about teaching and is always scared of doing the wrong thing. We had the outlandish case of a parcel of books written about boys' education which was locked away because they were terrified someone would object to it. Whether or not that matters—perhaps it does; perhaps does not—it was typical of so many problems that the department cannot cope with. I think it has outlived its usefulness. In 1880 it was called the Department of Public Instruction. We have gone a long way since those days.

Mr SAWFORD—What are you hoping for?

Dr West—Local control. And then you would have to say you will have to worry about the school in Mt Druitt versus Woollahra Public School and how we can try and manage to keep the resources roughly equal.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one last question before I hand over to others. I think you comment on this issue in your submission. I have a grandson who is eight weeks old. It is interesting how you change your views about it when a grandson arrives. There are some fantastic schools, both public and private, in my electorate. It is a pretty tough environment. I certainly know which schools, if they are still operating that way when he is old enough, I would recommend that boy be sent to. But there are lots of schools in my electorate that I would never let a boy get near. I think you are right: parents are voting with their feet. People who are concerned about boys' education are increasingly going to the private system, which has more ability to recruit young males and balance up the genders. And the private system sells it; it becomes a marketing tool. Conversely, that does not seem to be happening in public schools unless it is the initiative of particular key people on a parents' council—which I have seen in my electorate. They have created the prop, which goes back to your comment on local issues. They have actually gone out and convinced the department that they can do that.

I am talking about the roles of individual principals—not always males, either. In fact, there was a woman here in Sydney—I think at Roseville—who was an outstanding primary school principal. She had an outstanding deputy principal, also female, and the way in which they tackled gender and boys' education was just fantastic. It does not always have to be men doing it. There are many good women out there who are principals and teachers who can and who want to cope to allow the education program to go on. I think public education had an advantage over private education when we went through because it had choice: boys' schools, girls' schools, area schools, agriculture schools, selective tech and selective high. There was a whole range. Now we have got a comprehensive high school.

Dr West—Yes, everyone is supposed to do everything.

Mr SAWFORD—Is that part of the problem in teacher education, that even though the academics say one size does not fit all, that is what we are doing? That is the message we are sending out to parents: one size does fit all. Is that a problem?

Dr West—Yes, I do not think schools can do everything. They cannot do everything well; they can try. You hear of schools struggling with all sorts of electives at secondary school. There are schools struggling with Aboriginal kids. I was talking about the black kids who are coming into Blacktown and Penrith and the schools think, 'My God, what are we going to do with these kids?' Schools have got different needs, but one department is trying to serve them. That is the problem again.

Mr HENRY—I think it is a very troubling issue. It certainly causes me some concern, having been a boy myself of course. Picking up on what Mr Sawford has just said, I just think that our schools do not provide the level of flexibility that we need to provide an education and a learning environment for young men, whether they are 12 or 16 or 17. In fact, I think in some ways we are going very much in the wrong direction. We are asking students to stay at school until they are 17 or 18, but we are not actually providing opportunities to engage them, to create a learning environment and to get them involved. I think we do need to have a specialist approach to this. I am troubled by it because there are a number of levels to this that we are not addressing, and I think you raise a number of questions here that are important. I agree with much of what you have said, but I am not sure how we go forward.

Dr West—Well, we come back to the boys. We were talking about the Success for Boys program, which we are trying to get going, Mr Sawford. We have got some modules that are held up somewhere. All the schools have to do the modules. I am going to meet the schools, and I am talking at some length with the teachers. I want to get the teachers to think harder about what it means to be a boy. We talk about biological arguments and these sorts of things, and some of the teachers seem quite taken aback by them. I do not think we are educating teachers sufficiently about the nature of masculinity or about how to work positively with boys. I showed you some of the evidence; there is a lot more there. I think we are teaching teachers not to work with boys. We are not teaching them to work positively with boys.

At the other end of that, at schools I am working with boys and saying, 'Listen, it really doesn't help you to tell the teacher to go and get'—I will not say the obvious word!—'you have to find more productive ways of working.' Here, again, we have to talk to the parents as well as the teachers and say to the parents, 'What are you doing with your son? You're sitting in front of

a television with him. What about doing something else, finding ways of talking to him? Do you know this is how boys talk to you: they do not talk face-to-face over a table; they talk quietly, shoulder to shoulder?' So I say to the mothers: 'Go for a walk with your son when he is really, really angry.' I give workshops to parents, and when I say to parents, 'I get angry when my son ...', every parent has got their hand up. They have an answer.

We have to work on a number of fronts with the parents and teachers, but trust me—or check on me if you like—the messages we are giving teachers about boys have been consistently negative and consistently unhelpful. We have a long way to go in working to improve that, and I believe we can see the consequences every day in the street, on the beaches and in a lot of our jails. That is what has happened to kids.

Mr HENRY—From what we hear from universities and teaching providers, they are flat out teaching teachers to learn the subject matter they are going to teach, let alone giving them additional tools to manage classrooms, classroom behaviour or gender based issues.

Dr West—They find enough time to talk about girls' issues—that would be one answer. If they were going to manage classes, they would do very well to understand how boys work, how boys think, how boys react and why boys do not have the words when teachers confront them with: 'Why did you do this?' The boy has not got the words. Then, if you talk to his father, his father is the same. We have fathers that are struggling to be good fathers but they do not have enough skills. I believe Mark Latham was right on this issue: we have to help parents to raise their kids better for a changing world. The workplace, as you very well know, is changing. It is becoming more demanding. Those male heavy industries—the steelworks and so on—are not there anymore. Men have to try harder and work harder with all their communication skills—and how many of us have been told by women, 'You're not communicating well'?

Mr HENRY—Oh, it is not just me!

Dr West—No, it is not just you.

CHAIR—'Not listening!'

Dr West—Yes, that is something we are not very good at, I am afraid.

Ms BIRD—Firstly, I apologise for being late: I was driving from Wollongong and the traffic was horrendous. I have two teenage sons and I profoundly agree that there are some serious issues about how our education system is dealing with boys. I am not convinced that more male teachers is the answer. When I think of their experience and where the problems have been, it has rarely been a female teacher, to be honest with you; it has been more what I would call a clash of testosterone, which is not unfamiliar either between boys and their fathers—and, in the other way, between mothers and their daughters.

Given that the vast bulk of schools are headed by males and that in most schools the deputy principal disciplinarians in schools are males, my main concern about it is that it is perpetuating to boys the male image as the disciplinarian rather than the nurturer in the classroom. I have some reservations about whether simply more males is the answer, for two reasons. First, if it is not attainable for the broader social or economic reasons that boys are not going into teaching,

are we then in a position of saying, 'We can't solve this problem'? Second, those statements attract attention and may detract from a whole range of other strategies in teacher education that I hear you talking about: strategies for understanding how boys operate in their society today—not when we were kids but today—and how they manage or do not manage their schooling.

In the car on the way up, I heard that you were to be before us to promote the fact that we should target getting men into teacher education. I would like you to comment on those two things. Why do you specifically think that the numbers issue is important? I am not sure I disagree with you, but I would like to hear a bit more about that. If that is not achievable, what practical suggestions do you have on what we should be doing with teacher training? Are you talking about adding another subject to the curriculum? Are you talking about integrating some of this theory into the broader range of subjects they do?

Dr West—I have three points from what you have said. Is it possible? When I go to the private schools I see that, yes, it is possible. I have talked about the gap students they bring in from England. David Anderson at Shore School said, 'We've got the beds and we're serving food, so we can supply two of their needs at once, and we give them a few dollars a week and they're happy with that.' That is the gap students. It sounds like a stopgap. It is not an ideal solution, but it is one small part of the solution. When I have been at private schools I have said, 'How come'—and it is not only the GPS schools, it is the Catholic schools—'there are all these big, boofy men wandering around in the staffroom in the primary school?' And they say, 'We go and chase them. We find the men who are training. We look for good men.' I have to say it again: we do not want just any male in the classroom. There is no way we want to throw out a good, working, effective female teacher for some dopey males.

Will men work? I will have to go back to the *Australian Journal of Education*, that article by Herb Marsh and Andrew Martin. They are well published and well respected. It is a long, careful review, and right at the end they say, 'Yes, we do need quality teaching, but there is this element of mentoring that boys really need.' I was going to say a hand on the shoulder, but no-one touches anyone anymore. It is that sense of a man there, interested and caring about them in what Marsh and Martin call 'personal issues', that boys respond to. You would have to talk to Andrew Martin about what they are, because Herb Marsh has gone to Oxford.

Then there is gender and teacher education. If we are teaching about girls, I do not know why we cannot talk about boys. It is simple wilfulness, or call it anything you like, that means we cannot say to teachers, 'Here are 10 ways of working positively with boys.' It is what I do with teachers, and teachers routinely say to me: 'Okay, fine, I've heard your argument. Tell us what to do in the classroom. I've got a bunch of rowdy boys. I don't know what to do with them. Give me some strategies.' And I will say, 'All right, this is what I've heard, this is what I've read. Try these five things.'

Ms BIRD—Do you see the point I am making, though? I do not know if you have studied what is in gender studies courses and teacher education. My eldest son is doing a bachelor of teaching and covered both male and female gender issues when he did the subject. I found it quite interesting, because it is very different to the way it was structured when I did it. Some of that has happened, but what I am concerned about is that you are saying that people are looking for practical answers. Do you feel that is integrated into the things like the bullying subjects, the classroom management subjects, those more craft based subjects that are in universities?

Dr West—I do not know anyone—I slip it in sometimes, but it is not in any stated curriculum—at university who is teaching positive, practical things to do with boys. The teachers are perfect evidence of it. When teachers are disciplining kids, they are disciplining boys. When I walk around schools, which is part of my job, there are boys everywhere. They are moving the furniture or they are planting trees. You name it, there are boys outside the classroom all the time, and then of course they are being suspended and expelled. You ask the deputy what the discipline list is, and you get: 90 per cent boys, 95 per cent boys, 99 per cent boys.

Ms BIRD—But has that ever been any different, Peter?

Dr West—I do not know about that.

Ms BIRD—I very much doubt it has been any different. I do not think it is a good situation, or ever has been, but I do not think it would be any different. In fact, I think in the past it would have been 100 per cent boys.

Mr SAWFORD—Good schools, even in tough areas—and I have a couple in mine—do not have those long lines. When you ask those teachers how they teach, you will get the whole range. They will teach implicitly, which favours girls, but they will teach explicitly, which favours boys. They will have competition. They will do as you suggested when the wind or the weather is bad: they get them into the gym; they get the energy going. They have active learning. They insist that the boys have some passive learning, which girls are often much better at. They insist the boys have it, but they insist the girls have active learning too. Many of the girls will resent it. They do not want active learning; they want passive stuff. They will give the girls plenty of verbal things so that they can contribute in an oral way, but they will give the boys plenty of visual stimulation as well. They are the good schools. They cover all. Good teachers have always done this, whether they are male or female.

But the interesting thing is what often happens to the teaching staff. When you have the balance, you have the sense of humour there, both male and female, and I think it stimulates both genders to operate more effectively. When you have only one gender, male staff can be almost like a country club—but so can female staff, too.

Dr West—We need a mix.

Mr SAWFORD—We need to mix them.

Ms BIRD—You have touched on the last point I wanted to make. My observation—and this is unresearched other than from the two specimens I live with—is that we are becoming much more driven by benchmarks and standards and exam performance, and all of the requirements for organisational skills and passive behaviours, such as sitting at desks doing hours of homework when they get home from school. My concern is that in some ways those requirements, in terms of constant testing and reporting and benchmarking, work in a way that is very contrary for boys.

Dr West—And so does having assessments every couple of weeks, whereas the exam system—

Ms BIRD—And having a nicely presented assignment.

Dr West—Do not start me on neatness!

Ms BIRD—No, do not start me on that either!

Dr West—Neatness has a lot to do with boys. I was going to mention Ken Rowe's research—you know Ken Rowe's work at the Australian Council for Educational Research. He talks consistently about teachers talking too much. I find my students do the same. The default mode is to talk and talk and talk. It is like a disease that teachers get—talking themselves to death. And probably we find that women are more verbal than men.

Ms BIRD—I think this committee disproves that!

Dr West—Perhaps so. But we have to find ways of getting teachers out of the default mode and making the kids do more of the work. This is what the UK work says over and over: that we need to get the kids to do more of it, to get the kids to have experiences outside the classroom and stop them being frustrated by these cursed desks and so on which were designed for another age. They are not designed for growing bodies when kids are bursting out of their skins.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today.

Dr West—Thank you.

CHAIR—We will contact you if we need further information. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence, and a transcript of your evidence will be placed upon the parliamentary website.

Dr West—Thank you very much.

CHAIR—I note that the committee accepts those documents as exhibits.

Proceedings suspended from 10.13 am to 10.25 am

COLE, Dr Bronwyn, Head of Program, Primary Education, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

NEWMAN, Dr Linda, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

PINNINGTON-WILSON, Ms Lynda Elizabeth Anne, Lecturer, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

SINCLAIR, Associate Professor Catherine, Professional Experience Academic Coordinator, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

SINGH, Professor Michael, Professor of Education, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

VICKERS, Professor Margaret, Head, Regional and Community Engagement, University of Western Sydney

WILSON, Associate Professor Steve, Head of School, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

WOODROW, Associate Professor Christine, Head, Early Childhood Programs, School of Education, University of Western Sydney

CHAIR—Welcome. Is there any additional information you wish to give us at this time?

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—I am also currently with the DET as the early career teacher consultant for the south-western Sydney region.

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

Prof. Wilson—I would like to provide a little bit of context. During our program today we are not going to explicitly address our submission and we are not going to explicitly address the terms of reference of the inquiry although a lot of our presentations will touch on those terms of reference. We hope that there is plenty of time for you to ask questions if you would like to ask questions either about the presentations or about our submission. We are going to have three presentations. The first one will be presented by Margaret and Lynda. That will focus on our community engagement agenda around professional experience. Our second presentation focuses on early childhood education but particularly in relation to the sorts of teaching methods and relationships with the professional community that we are attempting to establish. Professor Michael Singh is to present our third presentation. He is not here; he has been held up by traffic. But that will be around the way we see research in relation to teacher education.

At UWS, the same as the rest of the university, we have been subject to fairly significant change in the past years. Due to the funding environment, much of the university has been restructured, and we have been caught up in that as well. We have had a good look, at UWS, at the range of courses we offer. We made a decision that we offered too many, that we were too comprehensive, and we tried to rationalise the broad range of courses.

UWS has always been on two campuses, at Bankstown and Penrith. For us in teacher education that has meant that we have needed to consolidate our programs. We used to offer virtually every program on both campuses and now we have had to consolidate particular courses on particular campuses. We are in a period of transition right now, so we still offer primary education on both campuses, but in two years we will only offer primary education at our Bankstown campus; we will only offer secondary education at our Penrith campus; and we will continue to offer early childhood education on both campuses, for reasons that Chris might have the opportunity to explain later.

We have also in that environment been forced to look very carefully at the nature and structure of our courses. We have had to change things, like many universities—like our face-to-face teaching hours—and investigate the use of flexible delivery in order to have an education group that is economically viable. Probably two years ago our group was in significant deficit. We are out of that deficit now and we feel we have a fairly rosy future, for the time being at least.

We probably have about 2½ thousand students all-up. Of those, usually about 2,000 are training to become teachers and the other 500 are doing our professional masters programs and our postgraduate higher research degree programs. We would typically graduate about 900 to 1,000 students a year. There is not quite an even spread of those at the moment, but about 900 of those would become teachers. In the profile we are moving towards they would be spread relatively evenly, with 300 in secondary teaching, 300 in primary teaching and 300 in early childhood teaching.

UWS is trying to position itself in relation to its situation in the region of Western Sydney. We have a very key agenda in relation to university engagement. The whole university has as a significant platform in its strategic plan the notion of working in partnership with the region, not just by doing our stuff in the region to the region but by working with the region on its agendas as well. We have tried to pick up on that in teacher education. We think we are doing relatively well the moment, and you will hear that in the presentations to come.

Finally, we are highly committed to research as it is an imperative and integral part of a strong teacher education presence in our university. There are challenges to teacher education at the current time as the research quality framework is being introduced. Professor Singh will talk about his view on how a strong teacher education group can emerge. We work fairly significantly in partnership with the region on research projects as well. That is the contextual outline from me. I would like to now pass over to Margaret.

Prof. Vickers—I am going to talk briefly today under the title ‘reversing the lens’. My theme is that we are involving not just schools but other aspects of the greater Western Sydney community in our teacher education programs, and I want to give some examples of how we are doing that. They are only examples, so it is going to be up to you to ask further questions. The examples are: alternative professional experience in the secondary program; embedded teacher

education, which Lynda Pinnington-Wilson will talk about; and academic service learning, which is an undergraduate course across the whole university run by us. When you hear from the early childhood program you will hear that their program is also very heavily using community resources in an integrated way.

First of all, in relation to alternative professional experience, we have two conventional professional experience programs and we have an alternative one. The conventional ones involve putting trainee teachers into situations where they learn how to deal with classrooms and how to teach subjects under normal supervision arrangements. The alternative one puts them in non-conventional settings, including in youth organisations, in youth mentoring and sometimes going with home-school liaison officers on visits to children who have been truanting and so on. What is the goal here? This is where the metaphor 'reversing the lens' comes in. Instead of getting our young people—our trainee teachers—to look through the traditional lens, looking at young people and asking: 'Are they good pupils, can they learn subjects?' we want to turn the lens around and ask, 'How do these young people that we have in Western Sydney schools look at school?' We aim to give them experiences that will allow them to see how these kids juggle multiple perspectives in their lives as they come to school.

Take an example, and it is not an uncommon one in our schools, as Lynda Pinnington-Wilson will tell you, of a 16-year-old girl who has full responsibility for dealing with her younger siblings for various reasons—no father, the mother is dysfunctional or has a full-time shift job. She has to get all of the little ones off to their different destinations before she comes to high school. She walks in the gate at 10 o'clock. What happens? Does the teacher say, 'You are being gated for detention or you are on a level because this is the second time you have come late this month,' or is the response, 'Is there anything wrong at home and is there any way the school can help?' About 15 per cent of early school leavers leave because they are juggling enormously complicated family circumstances and they only stay on at school if schools help in their survival, rather than creating additional obstacles. It is so common in the schools in which our students work and will be placed that we have made it an explicit part of our teacher education program. I will give two examples from our program. One is Plan-it-Youth, which is an accredited mentor training program, followed by 10 weeks of one-on-one sessions of our mentors with mentees and structured debriefing every week with the Plan-it-Youth coordinator after each session. I will show you about four minutes of a video about that program.

The other one is called 'The future generation program', which was supported by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, which allocated a full-time staff member on our behalf to identify youth organisations and to help place our teacher education students in those placements. We had hoped to have with us today a student who has graduated through that, but she could not be spared—Mission Australia desperately needed her. Those students create projects and they execute those projects in agencies, with support from the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, which I think most of you may have heard of. It is a fantastic youth organisation in Australia. I will now show you how Plan-it-Youth works. I will be fast forwarding bits of this tape because it is a nine-minute tape, and we do not have time to watch it all.

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Vickers—The man you can see there has been in a wheelchair for a number of years, and he explains how doing this work with students has helped him understand his own teenage

son and how much he has learnt from it. There are a number of examples here where people are saying that this is really reciprocal learning—everyone is learning.

A video was then shown—

Prof. Vickers—An image that went past rather quickly was of young women in hijabs standing behind a group of students. They were our University of Western Sydney teacher education students. It was an interesting moment when the Plan-it-Youth coordinator, who was used to getting mostly Anglo volunteers, had our students walk in, because about half of them, a visible minority, were traditional Muslims. She thought, 'How will this go?' They were among the best mentors she had ever had in the program. I am sorry that was so brief, but I wanted to show you that because it gives you a bit of an image of where we are at and what our context is. It is an extremely effective program.

Moving on, the second example I wanted to talk about is embedded teacher education. We are codelivering the Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) in collaboration with the Department of Education and Training. Why? Because we are preparing young people who will go into some of the toughest schools in Sydney. We call these high-employment opportunity schools. These are the hard-to-staff schools of our state. We do this because research results show that there is a much higher rate of survival in teaching when initial teacher education programs are conducted in the context of tough schools. It has not been done in Australia before as far as we know. It has been done in the US. The results indicate that if you want people to survive in these schools, they should really be contextualised in these schools during the year. I am going to ask Lynda Pinnington-Wilson to comment on why we do this and how we are doing it.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—Firstly, it is difficult to speak on my own behalf as I have the wonderful dual lens of DET experience and university experience, so I will speak from those perspectives. What we are trying to do with the Classmates project is match the real and the ideal for people who want to be educators in secondary schools in south-western Sydney. To do this we are using a quality teaching model of connectedness, making sure university students are realistic about the needs and requirements of becoming a teacher but also providing a terrific opportunity for those students in their care. So we really want to make that teacher preparation course the finest that we can.

In doing so we have approached it with the idea that at times universities can deliver wonderful programs and at other times perhaps the person who is best able to deliver those elements is someone who has, for example, just marked the HSC. They may be able to articulate what is required to a senior class and to also do that for our students enrolled in teacher education programs rather than waiting the six months that it might take for the standards package to come out into schools or universities. I have another example. Margaret Vickers is about to present at a beginning teachers conference. Margaret is able to give that wonderful context from her national research paper. That context then provides a better idea for our beginning teachers so they can really conceptualise what it is our students need.

The Classmates project is not just about giving a snapshot of teacher education in a traditional practicum of four weeks in first semester and then four weeks later on in the year; it is about being consistent, and in teaching that is the most important thing, every day. Our students will go into schools and become real teachers three days a week for the first two terms and then, in the

third term, for up to two days a week. All the while they are finishing their own study and completing requirements at university. They have lessons after school. Most of us in professions have requirements of accreditation so we go to in-services and do things like our own homework and our own study, so it is a realistic view. My original concept included the idea that, as well as being placed with a supervising teacher, one of our students would be sponsored by a faculty. Now is the time to capture the corporate knowledge. Teachers are an ageing population—if I can say that—and we need to capture best practice, articulate it and demonstrate it for our beginning teachers and our pre-service teachers so that they can do it for themselves when all of us retire. Now is the time.

Prof. Vickers—I am going to eliminate the remainder of the presentation because I think I am out of time. We can answer questions from you. I think that is a quick outline. We are eliminating the winter break, we are running straight through three days of continuous work in one school and we are going to do, as Lynda said, participatory research. A lot of the brilliant stuff that teachers do in hard-to-staff schools is done tacitly. We do not think this has been well codified. I know of just a couple of books anywhere in the international literature about how to work a hard-to-staff school. We want to involve our students in the codification of this tacit knowledge as part of their teacher education program.

I am going to skip over the other component of the work that we do, which is where we are really trying to connect with the undergraduates before they come to us. Now that we no longer have undergrad programs, we are doing academic service learning at that level. I think I am out of time, so I had better stop here.

Prof. Wilson—What we have built into the program, on advice, was some time for you to ask questions if you would like. Or we can just go through the presentations and have a discussion.

CHAIR—I have a couple of questions now, if you are happy to take them.

Mr SAWFORD—I have some questions.

CHAIR—With regard to the embedded school model, with the three days a week initially and thereafter two days a week in a school, how does that dovetail with an already created curriculum in relation to total number of practicum days versus the total number of days available? Does it fit in with the theory side as well as the practical?

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—Practicum is not an intensive four weeks of 6¼ hours a day; it is spread out over the weeks. Our students will go in and teach exactly the same programs from the scope and sequence that teachers have in place. There is no artificiality about it. There is no, 'What would you like to do? Let's create something together.' Our students from university fit straight into the teaching and learning program, which has been decided upon in the school. There are no breaks in continuity.

CHAIR—But basically you have reallocated the time?

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—We have spaced it out, yes.

Prof. Vickers—The same number of prac days, differently organised.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—Down to the minutes.

Prof. Wilson—The teaching, instead of being regular weekly sessions, is often intensively organised—sometimes on the university campus, sometimes on the school site. Part of the teaching we actually use, the program that Lynda sets up with early career teachers in the DET, has an in-service strand. We actually co-locate some of the content that we do through that. We have DET people teaching our students and, in fact, our own university people are teaching the DET's early career teachers. It is a more efficient model in that way, but it is a trial. It is the first year of it; it involves 20 students at the moment. Part of our research is to examine the extent to which we could mainstream that program.

CHAIR—What are the key lessons of the hard-to-staff school experience? Is the message different to a standard course?

Prof. Vickers—Learning in context is essential if you are going to survive. We have teacher education students at Punchbowl Boys High School and Belmore Boys High School. Already, in their first three days, they have walked across the yard and had kids hurling a ball so that it hits them as they walk the yard. The harassment, the sexual innuendo in that harassment—they are already sitting down with us and saying, 'How do I deal with this as a person?' They are learning that from day one. They have started three weeks ahead of everyone else's first visit to a school. They are going to have a continuous presence in the school over two terms. It is a bit of a baptism of fire, but we are there holding their hands. They will not be so shell shocked when they are appointed to these schools.

Just briefly, 65 per cent of Australia's homeless youth are in 15 per cent of our schools, and they are the kinds of schools that we are in. The research that was done by a different House of Reps inquiry a few years ago on this said, 'If you've got one homeless young person in the school, the goodwill of the staff can handle it. If you've got 12, you need a social worker.'

Ms BIRD—For the staff?

Prof. Vickers—We are dealing with schools that have a very different job to do, because of the populations that they serve and the locations they are in.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—With difficult-to-staff schools, one of the key things we are looking for is teacher resilience. There are five aspects to resilience, according to Dr Janice Patterson. One of them is to have that significant, critical friend, professional friend. The Classmates project provides that, and the spin-off is that it builds a network. If we look at Fiona Conroy's information that she gives out in DET, up to 35 per cent of teachers leave in their first five years. One of the exit interviews found that one of the reasons was that there is a perception that they are not supported. However, this is a supportive model with extra safety nets built in. As the early career teacher consultant, I am going into schools three days a week and making sure that sort of support is there.

Prof. Wilson—We have our teachers in our one-year program go out into schools after about eight or nine weeks of learning, and they do come back shell-shocked. That is the first step, in my view, to them not being resilient. It is not what they expect. Their own experience as learners has been in the top streams and as successful students. My colleagues and I are very interested in

and excited about the potential of these sorts of models because the one-off sudden immersion in schools does not lead to them wanting to continue to be teachers, certainly in those schools. The DET has a similar view. They are tired of losing good people and also tired of people not taking these schools seriously at the beginning. Our students will often try to elect out of doing professional experience in these schools altogether. We are trying to convince them that they are career opportunities, but it does take a lot of energy and planning.

Prof. Vickers—In terms of scaling up, we are dealing with 20 students in this special classmates version. But all 300 students doing the Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) do that alternative prac where they are placed in youth organisations and see what is going on in the lives of the kids who have difficult circumstances. That is a slice of the program that allows everybody to get a bit of a view on kids with problems.

Ms BIRD—To follow up: one of the things we consistently hear is the difficulty universities have in finding schools who will participate in prac placements. I would imagine that model is also more conducive to the school in that it is less disruptive, particularly in more difficult schools. I know what we were like with casual teachers and trainee teachers. If someone just comes in for a three- or four-week block, it is a pretty horrendous experience, whereas when they know that you are there for two terms, I imagine it works better with the rest of the faculty, staff and students at the school. Have you noticed that it is easier to find placements with that model?

Prof. Vickers—We are just starting. We have a very enthusiastic participation from schools.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—Yes, we have. Initially, if you consider three days a week of professional teaching to another person, it is an enormous commitment. These people have taken on this project as volunteers.

Mr SAWFORD—Is this the mentoring program?

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—No, this is classmates program. For supervising teachers to take on a prac student is a huge ask. That is the sort of investment that some people are willing to make, which is wonderful. However, in my visits to the schools in the last couple of weeks, we have had comments from students across the hall, 'Are you my new teacher? Are you going to stay?' So there is the benefit, as you have so rightly pointed out, Sharon, of consistency and normalcy. You are a teacher and you will be staying there. The answer that we have asked the students to give is, 'Yes, I'm here.'

Prof. Wilson—It is a good question, because my suspicion is that with a cohort of 300 in the future there will probably be a limit to how many people we can manage in a classmates sort of program. It very much depends on having the number of teachers and bringing the sort of perspective that we need to the relationship. I am optimistic. I think we could perhaps do half of the 300.

Ms BIRD—The negative side of that perception is, 'I'm unpaid and I'm in this school and expected to be a three-day-a-week member of staff.' I think there is an intrinsic danger of exploitation as well. I know it is very early days, but I can see the mindset of the trainee

becoming, 'I am in many ways a fully functioning member of this staff but I'm unpaid.' It might not be a problem.

Prof. Vickers—It is exactly the same number of prac days. It is 41 prac days.

Ms BIRD—I am a BA Dip Ed and have taught in high schools. I think there would be a very different mindset if I were going in to do a three- or four-week block or going in to be there three days a week for two terms. I would feel part of that school, which has real benefits. My only concern would be a possible potential in-building of resentment. I well know that a lot of supervising teachers see taking on a prac teacher as a bit of a relief, not as a responsibility. There has always been an inherent danger of exploitation along those lines. It might be too early for you to get any sense of that yet with the program.

Prof. Vickers—That is why I am holding back on the idea that we have 150 doing this. We make it very clear that, because this has additional demands over and above the normal model, everyone who is in there is there as a volunteer. Because it actually covers exactly the same subjects as the Bachelor of Teaching, students can leave it and go back to the mainstream Bachelor of Teaching. So the students are volunteers, the prac teachers are volunteers and we have a staging point about three weeks in where we say, 'Are you sure you want to stay here? Because this is tough. However, you'll learn a lot and you'll be the survivors. You'll be head of department in three years, because you're ready for this.' But, again, if we have students who are weak students, we cannot place them in this mode because they really have to be functioning as if they are teachers from early on. Some of the weaker students we have really probably—

Ms BIRD—We have had a lot of evidence about internship programs post degree, and it sounds like this model fits halfway between. We had a group of students we asked about internships, which would be a reduced hours teaching load type of model, and they were a little bit hesitant about their pay rates and stuff like that. It is interesting that they had that perspective about an internship. My concern is that this could be seen as a backdoor internship with no money.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—That has come up once in my visits, and I have been out there three days a week for the weeks that we have been in progress. My response, which would be the DET's line and certainly the federation's line, would be that employment in New South Wales Department of Education and Training schools is based on qualifications. As the student does not currently hold the qualifications and will not until the practicum component, as well as the other methods and foundation subjects, are completed, they are not entitled to be employed. Therefore, payment cannot really be a very viable discussion point.

Mr SAWFORD—I will go back and ask a question of Professor Wilson: you mentioned rationalised courses at the University of Western Sydney in your introduction. What courses and faculties were dropped? Was education considered?

Prof. Wilson—Are you asking 'Was the quality of education considered?'

Mr SAWFORD—No, when you say 'rationalised courses'—

Prof. Wilson—Essentially, when the university took amalgamation seriously in 2000, it discovered it was the second most comprehensive university in Australia across a broad variety of disciplines. In terms of education we were affected basically by, as I said, the concentration of particular courses on one campus rather than two, and that was a common response by the university to understand that it could not offer things on five campuses any more. In education, though, we also took the decision to change our mainstream models in both primary and secondary to graduate entry whereas, in the past, we have had a four-year Bachelor of Education (Primary). That is being phased out, and replacing it is a program that we have always run but in conjunction with the BEd (Primary). That is currently called the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary)—

Mr SAWFORD—What was the rationale for that change?

Prof. Wilson—No, it was not just money. Did somebody say 'money'? It was partly money. The teaching models in the BEd (Primary) were unsustainable, after a lot of investigation. We came to that conclusion—and that is not without trying a lot of different sorts of models of a four-year program—but the other reason is that the research is very mixed on the efficacy of four- and one-year programs. Our one-year program is actually 1½ years, with 120 credit points. Students can do it in one year in what we call accelerated mode. There is a strong academic argument for taking teachers in primary education who have another degree under the belts and then come in and do their education degree on top of that. We have always had, with our 1½-year primary education programs, a strong reputation out in the profession. These teachers are seen to add a lot of value. You might want to add something to that, Bronwyn.

Dr Cole—We have run the Bachelor of Education graduate entry program in its earlier form since 1991. We compared the retention of graduates of our graduate entry program with the retention of graduates of our four-year Bachelor of Education program. I actually do not call the graduate entry program a one-year program. These students have a 4½ year qualification, because they have done an undergraduate degree. They have made a decision at a more mature stage in their lives that this is the career for them. When we looked at the retention rates of our graduates, we found that these people coming through our graduate entry program were being retained in schools longer because they make their decision later. They are more mature in dealing with the coursework. Our staff found teaching them very rewarding, because they really eat up what you are delivering. They have got a worldliness about them.

We had a lot of discussions with principals about our decision because we were concerned about how they would feel. People ask, 'How can you train to be a teacher in one year?' And we said, 'They're not, because they are actually getting their content knowledge through their undergraduate degree, and the department of education has requirements for that undergraduate degree for primary teaching.' We have put some education subjects into that undergraduate degree, so as the students are going through it they can do a suite, which will become a major in education. They are broad education subjects. Once the students get to the graduate entry program they can really focus on what they are doing. There was a whole lot of research that suggests when you try to mix the two together you muddy the waters. If you give the students time to focus on their content knowledge and then time to focus on their pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge, they actually do a better job.

Our research suggested this was producing the best of our teachers, who are being retained in schools longer. We also had a group that struggled in that model. We have developed our program to start next year as a Master of Teaching (Primary), which again is 18 months long. We have reviewed the whole program, to change the way we deliver that as well. We deliver that in a lot of schools that are hard to staff, where we have been doing quite a lot of research through our Fair Go Project—which we will talk about later. We also have a Master of Teaching (Advanced), extending it to have a full two-year qualification as well. We hope that the Master of Teaching (Advanced) will attract our best and our brightest, and that we can entice students to go on to take that. We are looking at projects again in a lot of the housing estate schools—Margaret calls them 'employment opportunity schools'. It also allows people who may need a little bit longer to get their qualification to stay on for those two years.

Mr SAWFORD—How long has the mentoring program been going, and what analysis have you done of it?

Prof. Vickers—It has been going for four years. Every year we place between 12 and 16 students in that option. There are about eight different options for placement, for 300 students. All do this alternative professional experience, and the Plan-it-Youth is just one of them. Analyses conducted by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum on behalf of the department, in relation to youth mentoring, show incredibly positive results for the high school students who were mentored. Whereas 50 per cent of them would have been expected to drop out, the high school completion rate is about 80 per cent. Those who leave school get jobs. It really is a very effective program. In relation to our own students and our evaluation of how it works for them, I have been reading the 1,000-word reflections that our students write and having interviews with our students. The kinds of things that come out of that, and we have published a couple of papers, are: 'I'll be a different teacher because of this.'

Mr SAWFORD—So it is very qualitative?

Prof. Vickers—Yes, but the research on the mentees, the kids who are mentored, is quantitative. There are seven versions of Planet Youth across New South Wales, so overall over the last five years about 3,000 high school students would have gone through as mentees. The quantitative research on them shows that they are doing better than students who would be in the top socioeconomic quartile. The mentored students have better retention rates than the state average, although they were picked at the year 9 level as being the ones who were most likely to drop out.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not surprised. Basically, a mentoring program as you have described encapsulates the trinity of what education ought to be: first, education is the impact of mind on mind and, second, it is the quality of the relationship between you and me and what we do with it—that seems to be fairly evident in a program like that. The third one is not so easy to measure, and that is the quality of the program that we both embark upon. How do you measure that? And how would you describe that?

Prof. Vickers—The quality of the program is a very interesting issue, because there are seven Planet Youth programs across New South Wales and each one is run by an exemplary person like Jan Chisholm at Campbelltown. For me, the quality of the program is based on the relationship between the students who are doing the mentoring and the reflective work done by the convenor.

So, immediately after every mentoring session, the mentors are brought back into a reflective session of debriefing and troubleshooting—'Did something happen in there that you couldn't handle?' It is that combination of doing the mentoring and then having the mentors in a support group with a very experienced expert that I think gives the program its quality.

Mr SAWFORD—I notice you used both the terms 'reflective' and 'debriefing'. I am very pleased with that. Sometimes I find the term 'reflective' a little bit mushy, to be quite honest. What impact does that mentoring program have on your teacher education program? It seems to me that there is the 'why' question, 'why educate'; what you are doing is 'how you educate'; and there is 'what you educate'. They are the three basic questions. So, in terms of the mentoring program, what impact does that have on teacher education in your university? Does it have any?

Prof. Wilson—Are we talking about the mentoring program—

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. Basically, it is the fundamentals of education, from a classic Greek education to education today. It is a model for successful education. What I am asking is: out of the mentoring program, what sort of information and analysis gets fed back to the student pool?

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—I would like to pick up on some of that if that is all right with you. I have had 17 prac students in my experience as a classroom practitioner, and those who—

Prof. Vickers—Our prac students.

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—have been on the Planet Youth program, who report to me, have finer teaching skills, in particular in the areas of questioning, explanation and description. They have a better communication range; their repertoire is wider and more varied, to be able to communicate with a person in that demographic. They also report to me—not only that but I see it in my own classrooms—evidence of learning or evidence of values education or evidence of change. We might take these as anecdotal evidence, but the kids turn up to school more often. So there is attendance, and they wear their uniform. They are on task more often because they understand the end point. It is that connectedness, the relationship to the outside world. It is important learning. So I believe those are really powerful lessons to learn as a preservice teacher, because that is your core business. Getting that feedback, catering for individual needs, tailoring the curriculum for particular learners: if you are able to do that and learn those skills from this program, that is very beneficial—for both student and teacher.

Mr SAWFORD—Can I ask a series of very quick questions. I want to get a feeling from you. I want to go back to the written submission that you put in. In the last part, on examining the adequacy of funding, you make a recommendation that the weight of 1.3 needs to be 1.6. Can you quickly justify that?

Prof. Wilson—If you want teacher education groups that break even then 1.4 might do the job. We at UWS are treated very well in our internal funding model. The 18-month graduate entry programs are weighted more attractively than 1.4 and in fact the average weighting across all our programs would be 1.6 currently. After having traded our way out of our current problems, we are left in a position where we can start to look at development and investment in quality. With 1.3 you have a lot of trouble. With 1.3 you are cutting back on the number of hours you have with students and you are trying to come up with models where you have cooperation

of your professional colleagues for nothing. You can do it—and I think some of us around the table would not agree with this—but I am of the view that the whole face-to-face question is a bit of a problematic one. I do not think that staff or students necessarily want huge numbers of hours and that that leads to quality. Students these days have full-time jobs and study full time. They want quality and flexibility, and that is what we are looking to give.

To invest in teacher education in a meaningful way I really believe that 1.6 is reasonable. Added to that are the professional experience costs, and they might increase. You would be aware that there are cases in two states to have that payment increased. It is probably justifiable; it has not been for some time. If we are going to continue to pay teachers, that is a significant cost. In Western Sydney, on top of that, there is the cost of transport for people to undertake those sorts of roles.

Mr SAWFORD—On term of reference 10 you make this statement:

> This is not an expectation of professions such as medicine and law that have formal internship arrangements between graduation and professional employment.

In this inquiry we have had varying points of view about the scholar-technician balance. You seem to have a stronger scholar and a lesser technician balance. Other universities have a stronger technician and a lesser scholar balance.

Ms BIRD—I would have assessed it as quite the opposite.

Mr SAWFORD—I think, in terms of time, you have a graduate. Is there a balance that you would recommend?

Prof. Wilson—You need both.

Prof. Vickers—I think we push both.

Mr SAWFORD—You put both?

Prof. Vickers—We push both.

Prof. Wilson—Some programs say basically, 'This is how you do it,' and that is one danger associated with a graduate entry model. I know you do not resonate with the word 'reflective'—

Mr SAWFORD—I was just being silly.

Prof. Wilson—but if you throw the word 'critique' around it too—

Mr SAWFORD—I like more explicit language. That is all.

Prof. Wilson—All right. We believe that teachers are professional people, and that is what they need to be. There is a view out there that you can tell teachers what to do and they can just follow the program. You need people to make really good decisions in teaching about learning and methodology. They have to interpret curricula and they are people who fundamentally can

walk into a classroom and act out a professional role that is very difficult to monitor. You need good people. You need both: you need a scholarly way of working and a scholarly frame of reference, and you need people who can apply that in a way that engages kids.

Mr SAWFORD—On a personal basis I accept your weighting of 1.6. I think that is just realistic in a modern world. But one thing I find difficult to come to terms with is that every university in Australia has an education faculty, and I am not convinced that that is a good idea. Just about every one does, don't they?

Prof. Vickers—There are some that do not.

Prof. Wilson—My memory is that there are about 28 out of the 37 or something like that.

Mr SAWFORD—It seems a hell of a lot. Some views of education, as I think we heard yesterday—was it yesterday?—when the professor—

Ms Pinnington-Wilson—It was the department of education yesterday.

Ms BIRD—No, it was one of the universities.

Mr SAWFORD—Anyway, they suggested that maybe we should have fewer faculties of education and perhaps more quality.

Prof. Wilson—I think that will be an outcome of the whole restructuring of the higher education sector.

Mr SAWFORD—You think that will happen?

Prof. Wilson—I think it is happening now. It has certainly happened at UWS. There are things we do not do anymore, and other universities are making that decision. I think some universities will make that decision about teacher education, and they probably are already.

Dr Cole—I think we have done that a little, in that we are focused now. The Bankstown campus has become largely a primary focused campus, with some early childhood, and the Penrith campus is becoming secondary, with our TAFE entry early childhood students there. That was a consolidation of our resources, because our staff were travelling backwards and forwards across campuses, plus we had students trying to make up their mind about the difference between going to the Penrith campus or the Bankstown campus for primary education. So we have consolidated on one campus. I think that is adding to the quality of our program, and it is helping us to meet the diverse range of schools better.

Prof. Woodrow—If you have finished, I would not mind adding to that. I have worked in three faculties of education around Australia, and I have friends in many others. I have a pretty strong personal sense that education faculties are the pariahs in some universities and that they get—

Ms BIRD—We have heard 'milk cow'?

Prof. Woodrow—No, they are not a milk cow; they do not make money. The preferred faculties are those that generate their own income. Education has a much more limited capacity to do that. I would suggest that there are very likely to be universities that have cast off nursing in the same way and will think about casting off education, because they cannot generate that kind of income. I guess that follows up on the question that you asked earlier. To my knowledge, as part of UWS's restructuring, they never considered actually ditching education. They have a strong commitment as a university to education as a social justice issue for people in more disadvantaged communities. But the huge question was around affordability. Although clearly issues of quality and the research about graduate entry and so on influenced them to develop that model, it would be naive to say that money did not enter into it and that graduate courses get funded at a higher rate. So I think it is a little more complicated.

Mr SAWFORD—Do you think that state and federal governments are aware of the restructuring that has happened at the University of Western Sydney?

Prof. Wilson—Our vice-chancellor tells us that she is out there and that people do recognise that. I do not know. I do not think that people take a whole lot of notice of the University of Western Sydney. We have been very inwardly focused, I think, probably for six or seven years now, coming to terms with these sorts of inherited structural issues that we have had. I think we are at a point now where—and in fact we have agreed as a community that—we can focus on quality. On the sorts of structural issues about campuses, courses and all of that, the budget is now in line. We will never be a wealthy university, but we are now in a situation where we can make better strategic decisions.

I must say, certainly in terms of the question you asked previously, in this university, education is seen as a very important element not just in school education but in capacity building in the whole region. One of the pressures on us as an education group, I think, is that the university is expecting us to reach out into more broad forms of community education and how education can make a difference to adults as well.

Mr SAWFORD—I will finish here, but I have a lot of other questions that I might put on notice and send to you. I think one of the concerns of everybody on this committee is that in the last 25 years there have been numerous inquiries into teacher education. Some of them I think have had very good recommendations in them—and our secretariat has put all those recommendations together—yet, at the same time, they seem to have been relatively ineffectual. That is a view coming back from universities, schools and so on. The reports have sat on the windowsill and gathered dust. Maybe governments have not taken as much notice of them as they should have; maybe some universities, schools or education departments have not taken as much notice as they should have as well.

This House of Representatives committee inquiry is the first time we have actually tackled teacher education, and we are a bit under the pump, to be quite honest. We pride ourselves on presenting good reports, and we do not want to fall into the trap of putting together just another report. If you were to make a recommendation that would change teacher education in this nation for the better, what would you focus on? Even if you do not give us the words, you could perhaps give us the area that we ought to be looking at. If you have a particular individual view, that would be welcome too.

Prof. Wilson—Michael, I might invite a comment from you. Michael has a very broad perspective of education. I think we would all bring a view, and there would probably be a lot of commonality, but we like Michael's perspectives on these things.

Prof. Singh—There are a few issues that we have got to take on board seriously in teacher education. One of the ways would be to look at the different levels that are already implicated in educational reform—teacher education institution entities, the employing agencies, the school sector, the governments—and to explore the different interests and stakes that each of those entities has. Each of them has a different purpose and wants different outcomes. We need to identify what those are and recognise their importance. We need to recognise that the local school down the road wants good teachers who are able to do this. At the other level, the government wants teachers to be able to deliver on international standards in terms of assessment and so on.

One way to begin to look at it is in terms of the conditions and the knowledge that is required. I think there are questions about the nature of the people who will be constituting the teaching profession and the educational institutions we are sending graduates into. For instance, looking at the ethnic linguistic profile of the Australian teaching force, there are a whole lot of questions about how this is connecting up with the changing student population and the demographics of the Australian population collectively, and how that population now links Australia differently into the world.

There is the whole question of the nature of knowledge production and reproduction that now confronts education systems and schools. Schools have been quite successful inventions as mass education institutions for the last 100 years. They have delivered quite successfully in achieving high levels of literacy and numeracy in the population for the tasks that were set for them, basically delivering an industrial workforce to the society.

The nature of the requirements of the workers in the society has changed and the way in which we are now able to produce and generate knowledge has changed markedly. Schools and universities are not the only places where these things occur. People now begin to think about knowledge networks. These are the things that Margaret has been talking about. The fact that knowledge networks now exist outside of schooling institutions and universities is important, and we need to develop new kinds of pedagogy that enable that knowledge to be accessed and accredited as part of the students learning systems.

All of that requires different kinds of teachers and different kinds of teacher education. I do not think that school based teacher education is necessarily the solution to these problems. Some of the knowledge production actually occurs in institutions outside of schools. Some learning, some education and training, can take place in other places. We should probably begin to look at where else students can acquire and gain knowledge, document the knowledge they generate, and have that accredited and validated within the teacher education system. I could go on, but I will stop there.

Ms BIRD—I have a question. I find it very interesting that you have arrived with a DET person. I said this to the other two universities yesterday: one of the things we constantly hear is how wonderful their practicum programs are. Then you talk to the students and you find fairly frequently that there is a disconnect. It appears that most of that disconnect is around the fact that

they do not have a person who coordinates, looks after and follows up on their practicum experiences. I gave the example yesterday of one of the other universities. They had a student turn up at a high school to do their practicum placement, and they said, 'All right, you're with Mr So-and-so, the maths teacher,' and he said, 'But I'm a science trainee.' The school got really annoyed and created bad feeling because of that. I am just interested in your model for managing the practicum. Do you have a permanent position?

Prof. Sinclair—Yes. The position has only been established for this year.

Ms BIRD—Yes, it is quite unusual. I do not think I have seen it elsewhere.

Prof. Sinclair—We have had very program based teacher education until this time. We still are program based, but it is looking at capacity building and management across the programs, so that is why this position has just been instituted. We still have primary professional experience coordinators whose job it is to ensure that the right students are placed in the right places. Particularly in the primary program, we have tried to match our students with their supervising teachers as much as we can by asking them to present an autobiographical account of themselves to the schools. The school coordinators then match them with the most appropriate teacher for them. We have tried to avoid the problems when turning up on the first day. Over the years, we also have put resources into putting our own staff into the school settings in significant ways, throughout all our programs, to build relationships with schools. We send our own university lecturers back to the same schools semester after semester. We develop programs and projects in partnership with key stakeholders—whether they be the Department of Education and Training, other organisations or groups of schools, and we have lots of examples of that.

Ms BIRD—You are funded to do that only? You do not have a teaching program on top of that? Are you a permanent employee of the university?

Prof. Sinclair—I am a permanent employee of the university. I am currently given a 75 per cent workload, so I have a 25 per cent workload of research. I also have a teaching load and postgraduate supervision on top of that—and community service.

Ms BIRD—We asked other universities how they would feel about targeted funding for some of these positions, because they seem to just drop off. Some casual lecturer who happens to be doing that subject gets told to coordinate the placements and things.

Dr Newman—We have an early childhood coordinator and a secondary coordinator for professional experience as well.

Prof. Wilson—Catherine's job is basically to drive a whole-of-school approach. We had a major meeting in the school in the second half of last year. It was quite interesting because it was very open-ended, and it ended up reaffirming the centrality of our own academics being involved in professional experience. The economics of the whole thing tells us we should go the other way but, in our university engagement agenda, we feel that it is important. It is a pity that it sounds like these guys will not have a chance to present, because in the early childhood program they have a model for dealing with schools as hubs or clusters, whereas our university academics have ongoing relationships with a cluster of schools throughout the year—

Ms BIRD—We have seen all of those.

Prof. Vickers—And local councils.

Ms BIRD—Basically what I am saying to you is that we need to come down with hard-core recommendations about why something good does not happen across the place. I am wondering. You have obviously made a call, and you have said that you have now been able to move away from worrying about the budget bottom line and are doing some quality stuff—

Prof. Wilson—But it is because of the fact that the bottom line is now under control that we can invest in a position like Catherine's.

Ms BIRD—Exactly. And I think what we hear from the others is that, with the financial pressures they are under financially, they do not fund these types of positions.

Prof. Sinclair—I also have a research and substantive PhD in the area of professional experience and ongoing professional learning, which is less common—and particularly less common in this kind of position.

Ms BIRD—That is interesting.

CHAIR—Moving on, do we get another presentation?

A PowerPoint presentation was then given—

Prof. Woodrow—I am going to do a bit of this and then Linda is going to do a bit more. As part of that restructure, we took a very hard look at the early childhood teacher education delivery. For early childhood teacher education, I am talking about professionals who prepare student teachers to work with children between the ages of zero—or six weeks—and eight years of age. We are talking about teachers in New South Wales. The child-care regulations require qualified teachers to be working in long day care programs, preschools, kindergartens and the first years of school.

We have identified a campus differentiated model of offering pathways into early childhood teacher education that are distinctive for each campus. One is catering especially to people who have graduated with a diploma from a TAFE institution or a private college at level 5 of the Australian Qualifications Framework. We have a particular pathway which caters to only those students operating now out of the Penrith campus. This year we made about 186 offers for that program, and we now have 160-odd in it. That is an extraordinarily high take-up rate.

Ms BIRD—Did they increase?

Prof. Woodrow—Yes. What is particularly interesting about that is a new pathway that has emerged for people to obtain a university qualification, and that is to go to TAFE first. We give them two years credit in a three-year Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies. That is good value for your dollar. They complete that one-year full-time degree and then they move into a Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) which complements the whole school approach to graduate entry. The other pathway is obviously for school leavers or mature age entry, and that is at our

Bankstown campus. That is a three-year program. After graduating from that, they go into Master of Teaching as well.

I am going to zip through these slides, but I make the comment that we are talking to you today about delivery. We have not focused a lot in our presentation on content—we cannot do it all. We think there are some distinctive features about what we are doing that may be of interest to the committee. We have based our course redesign on research. We have studied the first year of university experience closely. There has been university based equity research about the articulation from TAFE to university. We have been researching our students as well.

Dr Newman—And also in the professional field.

Prof. Woodrow—That is right. We have taken a very brave step to move into what we have called blended learning. We are going to talk about that in a moment. I have talked about the pathways. We have very clearly articulated, through an extraordinarily demanding process last year, philosophies of teaching and learning and are in the process of creating a public portfolio about what UWS early childhood teacher education is actually on about.

We have developed something that communities have practised. Linda is our professional experience coordinator, and she is going to talk about that. It is about engaging at a meaningful level with our partners in the field to develop models that build the field's competence as well as the field building our students' competence. We are also doing some interesting things with other parts of UWS.

The research with our students has showed us things like the fact that they are full-time in the workforce. When I was at university, when people asked, 'What do you do?' I said that I went to university. These students say, 'I work at so-and-so—oh, and I go to university.' Some of them are attempting to do these two things full-time. We know that there is a huge shortage of early childhood teachers in the field, and so the engagement with the profession tells us that they want good graduates and lots of them. That was important.

We are trying very hard to raise the retention rates of our students. A lot of people who have aspirations about going to university get in and then it does not quite work. That costs the university money and it costs the community socially as well. So what have we done? We have done all this research with our students, and that is ongoing. We have done that unfunded, so when you are talking about money, what we really would like access to is pools of money for innovative trials, pilots and things.

We had a commencement week program which the entire early childhood teaching team—there are about 12 or 13 of us—put together, without any workload allocation. It was an amazing program for these students that created excitement and buzz and taught them how to use our web platform for learning, WebCT. We are working in teams rather than as individual lecturers, so we have lots of staff who actually know what happens in that course, in that course and in that course. We have paired units, and we have a coordinated timetable. So in the Penrith pathway the students come on Mondays and Thursdays only. They are huge days. They come from nine until four, five or six, but they are only there on Mondays and Thursdays and in between they are e-learning.

The last thing we have done is the peer support. We have students from Wollongong, from the northern beaches, from the mountains, from across the greater part of Sydney—from everywhere. We have put them into tutorial groups according to postcode area. What we have learnt is that learning is a social activity, and the capacity to engage with other people and build your own peer support network seems to be singularly important in success. So we now have people who did not know each other before who are leaving their cars at a central point and coming together on those big days and building support networks. Already, we know that is successful. Linda is going to take over and talk about blended learning—at 35 miles an hour!

Dr Newman—Ever so briefly, our flexible and blended delivery strategy has been, as Chris mentioned, a huge exercise in looking at the philosophies of the course and mapping—and I will show you an example of some of the mapping we have done—within every subject and across all of the subjects to link assessment with content, philosophy and delivery methods. We have spent a lot of time building resources for the students. What you cannot really see on the left-hand side of the slide is a web based early childhood hub site. That has learning skills supports in it. We have worked with the learning skills unit and we have worked with the educational development centre, so all of our sites have a particular design focus that has a philosophy behind it. You will see an example of one of the introductions to one of the subjects on the right-hand side of the slide. For us, the exciting part of it has been the opportunity to look at and link everything together across the whole program and to do that in teams.

One of the philosophies that we have embedded very strongly into the flexible and blended learning method is a communities of practice philosophy. Chris mentioned the research. We have also gone out and researched in the professional field. We are all too aware of the retention difficulties in early childhood and the critical staff shortages. One of the things that the field finds very difficult is keeping good professionals and developing their skills and knowledge. There is research to show that one-off hit professional development sessions do not really work very well. We have—a bit like in some of the other programs—engaged the students in a semester-long professional experience program out in the field. It has been jointly constructed with professional partners in the field. In this instance, they are three councils, one major employing body and one smaller group employing body. They have helped to design the program and they have a commitment to the program. The students will be out in those centres two days a week for the whole semester.

One of the significant foci of that program is the communities of practice, where the teachers are being released from their face-to-face teaching so that we construct the learning, the understanding and the knowledge together. We will be sitting in small round table groups and doing all of the learning and the assessment, which will be situated in the early childhood centres—so it will be context specific situated learning. That also provides an ongoing professional development activity for the teachers in those services to engage in a semester-long professional development program. Some of those teachers will also come into subjects in our degrees and be able to gain credit as part of the work of engaging in that program.

Heutagogy is another of our underpinning philosophies. It is moving away from pedagogy, which is literally ‘working with young children’, past andragogy—‘working with adults’—to heutagogy, which is an independent learning approach. So it is building the students’ independent learning skills through the flexible and blended delivery models and all the supports we are offering them to do that. You cannot see this on the slide, but it is an example of a map

for one of the subjects that shows how the assessment and the learning supports are all linked forwards and backwards across the content and the outcome for the unit. We have done these exercises for all of our subjects and across our whole course. They will become part of the portfolio that we present.

I think I have touched on most of the communities that practice professional experience, so I probably do not have to go into that. This is just an example of one of the many sessions we have had with professional partners in the field to coconstruct this model of delivery. We are really hoping that, rather than the one-off professional development centres for some of the teachers who are struggling out in the centres, it will be sustainable in terms of a professional development exercise.

We have worked very closely with other parts of the university—the Learning Skills Unit and the Educational Development Centre in particular—for the actual construction of the model and the work with the mapping and the development of all the information communications technology based resources. But part of the model of the new degrees that Chris has not mentioned is our work with the schools of languages, welfare and social policy. Chris might like to touch very briefly on that.

Prof. Woodrow—Similarly to the primary and secondary programs, we are trying to build a broader knowledge base in our graduates. We have structured the undergraduate degree so that there are some core units in welfare and social policy. They are also required to do a minimum of 20 credit points of LOTE, with an option to another 20 if they want. So we are linking them across the university. Early childhood has traditionally been very focused on itself. We are trying to say, 'Look, there's a wider world here.' I want to make a comment about the two top dot points on this slide. Both the Educational Development Centre and the Learning Skills Unit are absolutely integral to the success of our program. The Educational Development Centre has helped us develop the technology and the Learning Skills Unit has helped us embed academic literacy in the program and gives us a lot of support. Both of us are this year subject to quite severe budget cuts. So there is a huge interrelatedness. When you are doing a teacher education inquiry, it is not just about the faculty of education; it is about other parts of the university as well.

Dr Newman—I think another answer to your question about what you could give us is that this project has excited us and invigorated us and we have learnt lots of new things—and most of us have been teaching for 30-odd years. So I think the opportunity to engage in projects like this, with some support, that can refresh our teacher education programs might be an incentive to keep us in teacher education, because that is sometimes hard.

Prof. Woodrow—We get very tired!

CHAIR—We cannot do justice to the final element of the presentation. What I would ask you to do is to give us the text of what you proposed to present. No doubt there will be further questions from the committee. I will not go to questions again, in the interests of staying on time. I certainly thank you for the material so far. But I will ask one final question. Being the chair, I get to do that! I am interested in Indigenous students. You have indicated the number of graduates that you are turning out—900 to 1,000 was, as I recall, the figure that you quoted.

What are you doing in relation to Indigenous students and how many Indigenous graduates are you turning out every year?

Prof. Wilson—We actually have a specific program in Indigenous education in primary education, which is the Aboriginal rural education program. That is part of Bronwyn's brief. The recruitment is very solid, and it does not require completion of secondary schooling. It is based on some criteria around mathematics competence, language competence and so on. We test out in communities and so on to get people into that program. Historically, we would probably get 35 to 40 people in that program at its best times. Lately, it is probably around 20.

Dr Cole—It is about 20 each year. It is actually our four-year Bachelor of Education degree but it is extended over a six-year period.

CHAIR—Offered in blocks?

Dr Cole—Offered in residential blocks. There are some study skills and academic skill development embedded into the program in the initial 1½ years before they then phase into doing the Bachelor of Education (Primary).

Mr HENRY—Where are the students drawn from? Where do they come from?

Dr Cole—All over New South Wales.

Mr HENRY—So they are drawn from regional and country areas. And it is similar with placements—do they go back to those areas?

Dr Cole—Yes, although that is tricky. We have a couple of schools that we work with closely. Again, it is partly a funding issue, because, when we are placing them out in rural New South Wales—

Mr HENRY—The practicum?

Dr Cole—Yes, the practicum. Is that what you meant?

Mr HENRY—No, I meant when they graduate.

Dr Cole—Yes, they go all over. But, in terms of their professional experiences, that is tricky because, as Cathy alluded to before, we do not totally advocate an internship model. We like our staff to be with the students when they are in schools, to be the mentor between their experience in the school and what is going on at the university. So that is in all of our education programs. It is very expensive for us to send our staff all over New South Wales so, even though they may come from all over New South Wales, we use a couple of Sydney schools, with which we have developed very strong relationships and which are very sympathetic and empathetic towards Indigenous students and work with groups of those students for their professional experience.

Prof. Wilson—We also take some Indigenous students into the mainstream programs. I can get those numbers for you if you would like them.

CHAIR—Yes, if you could.

Mr SAWFORD—I have found your contribution this morning very professional, very practical and very passionate. Linda, you summed it up towards the end when you said there has been a renewal. You have made a very valuable contribution. The chair and I will probably be in contact with some of you again for some of those further details and also to elicit a little more information. Your written submission does not do your university justice. I found it a bit negative, reactive, ambivalent and quite contrary to your presentation this morning. So maybe you need to have a look at that.

Prof. Wilson—It was written at a difficult time in the university sector.

Mr SAWFORD—Someone had a bad morning when they wrote this.

Prof. Wilson—The point is taken.

CHAIR—It is not the only case where a presentation has far exceeded the submission.

Mr SAWFORD—You need to be fairly careful of what you put down in writing because it is up on the net and the public have access to it all. You need to be a little more conscious of what is out there.

Prof. Wilson—It confirms your view in a way. Teacher education groups across the country are under significant pressure, and that does come through.

CHAIR—Thank you for your appearance today. It is unfortunate that we did not get right through it and do justice to your whole presentation, but we do have to stay on time. We look forward to receiving that extra material and we will no doubt have some extra questions to put to you. We would appreciate a copy of your PowerPoint slides. The secretariat will provide you with a transcript of your evidence and a copy will also be posted on the parliamentary website.

[12.00 pm]

FOREMAN, Professor Philip Jack, Member of the Executive, New South Wales Teacher Education Council; and Dean of Education, University of Newcastle

REID, Professor Jo-Anne, President, New South Wales Teacher Education Council; and Head, School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University

RIORDAN, Associate Professor Geoffrey Paul, Member of the Executive, New South Wales Teacher Education Council; and Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, University of Technology, Sydney

CHAIR—Good afternoon and welcome. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard, and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's website. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Prof. Reid—I thank you for the opportunity to present to this inquiry and to be able to elaborate on our submission and answer any questions you might have. Our submission was a supplement, a complement and a variation to the submission from the ACDE. The Teacher Education Council of New South Wales comprises members who are also members of ACDE. We are not a statutory body; we are not a formal arrangement in any way. We meet with representatives from every university, focusing on teacher education in New South Wales, to give ourselves support and to give ourselves the opportunity to respond and be proactive in policy decisions, but not as a body that makes policy for its members.

That means we have a certain degree of freedom to think of the big picture in a way. As members of the TEC we are not constrained to abide by the things that we may be individually constrained by in our universities. We can discuss issues that affect all of us. In the presentation that I make today—I am going to invite both Geoff and Phil to follow on from that when I finish—I want to raise three or four things that seem to us to be major issues for all of us as teacher education schools and faculties.

I know in the ACDE submission they said that education faculties are wider than teacher education. We are not; we just focus on teacher education in TEC. For that reason, the issues that impact on us most strongly are the ones that you have probably heard about from every individual institution over the last few months. There are issues of funding. We all suffer from them, we talk about them and we worry about how we can actually address them. The funding issues include things like the bitter-sweetness of the national prioritisation of nursing and teaching, which has not been only a good thing for teacher education in particular. We worry about the increasing casualisation of our work force. We worry about the inability of many of us to provide our staff with the sorts of rewards and acknowledgment that we think, as a professional group, we would wish to.

We also have a large worry about professional experience. As a group, that is the thing we work on most proactively. We try to support each other, and I will talk a little bit about that in a moment. We also try to support ourselves in giving a different perspective on the quality of our graduates from that which is most obviously noted in the media. We think that we do a very good job of producing graduates for a changing world, and we do it in circumstances that are probably not desirable, to us at least.

So one of the things that we have done as TEC recently has been to commission research that speaks to our belief that we are doing a good job and also finds out what principals and our partners in schools think and their concerns about our graduate teachers. We have done that simply by interviewing 10 or 12 from each participating institution with which we have the closest connections to try to find the strengths of our graduates, the strengths of our teachers-in-training, the areas that are problematic about the young people coming into their schools and the areas that we could work on as individual universities and as a joint group with our partner institutions. We are working proactively on that issue of professional experience.

The other thing we do as a group is concentrate on how we can actively address the shortage of teacher education prac places in this state. TEC draws from an area that I would probably call 'Sydney and the bush separated by the divide'. We have Newcastle university, the universities in Sydney—Macquarie, New South Wales, UTS, UWS—Australian Catholic University and Wollongong in the south. Beyond that there are three bush universities that take up the predominant responsibility for teacher education in the bush: Charles Sturt, UNE and Southern Cross. If you think about the relationship of where the universities are placed, the issue of placements in Sydney schools becomes extremely obvious. Universities are competing with each other for places. More and more we are competing in a situation where we have scarce places, and we are finding that schools are not as eager as they have been in the past to take prac students. We are finding that some of our institutions actually employ people whose job it is purely to phone up schools and try to get prac places. That is an issue that many of us have not had in the past, and that is something that, together with our industry partners, we are trying to address.

We have procedures such as the sharing-out of places where we are allocated areas. In recent years, that has broken down to some degree where universities have had to have different campuses and new campuses have been brought up. That problem is one that we would like to see addressed. I do not know whether this review can do it, but we are working ourselves to try to find ways of ensuring that our student teachers have the opportunity to get good, professional experience in schools and outside of schools.

The other issue that I wanted to highlight in this initial presentation is the relationship with industry partners and employers. We have very strong relationships built up through TEC with the major employer in New South Wales, which is the Department of Education and Training. We have regular meetings with the staffing and supply branch of that department, and we work actively to support programs they have for the recruitment and retention of teachers for hard-to-staff schools—particularly the rural schools and the Western Sydney schools. The issues for them and for us are very similar: how do we get prac placements in hard-to-staff rural schools where distance becomes an increasingly important issue for funding? How do they get teachers in those schools? We have a shared area of concern there.

We also have good relationships—and we have had them in the past and they seem to be probably not as effective at the moment—with the transfer of duties from departmental staff to the universities to provide our students for a year or so with lecturers and teachers who have just come out of a school. They are actually practising teachers on secondment or on transfer duties to us. I think departmental exigencies of funding have meant that the gift they were able to give us in the past of releasing the teachers to work with student teachers has had to stop. We are now faced with the issue that we cannot afford to pay teachers the salary they were getting in a school to come and work in a university. We find that a very difficult problem to overcome. We do not have a solution, and we are using up budget for things like market loading to try to attract them. But that, of course, takes away from the available funding we have to run our schools.

What that means, of course—and I think most people would have already spoken about this—is our increasing resort to casual staff. That is an issue that I think many of us would find unsatisfactory from the point of view of both our students and our own delivery of programs. The third thing that I wanted to mention briefly is the relationship of TEC with the professional body of teaching here in New South Wales, which has been through the formation of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. We have had very close and productive relationships with the institute's development over time. We still have a concern about the minister's decision to implement an act that allows conditional employment of teachers without any qualifications at all. We are still working towards ensuring that, where possible, we can make sure that places are available for practising teachers to get teaching qualifications. At present, we are not particularly happy with the idea that people can be appointed to and accredited in their schools without having any external input or opportunity to go beyond the particular place of their employment.

In saying that we produce excellent teachers—and I think we do produce excellent teachers across New South Wales—those teachers, as we said in our submission, are historically never good enough for what the public, the industry and the economy need at any particular time. I think the point of our submission is that it is always an ongoing process. A teacher is never fully formed and never finished. Our responsibility as teacher educators is to make sure that they start their professional lives able to continue their professional development.

Prof. Foreman—I just want to mention a couple of points of difference with the ACDE and TEC submission, because that is really what we are speaking to, just to clarify where we stand. As Jo-Anne said, the TEC has put in a submission that we generally agree with, but there are some points of difference. Firstly, I would not agree with the suggestion of graduate entry to teacher education programs that is in the TEC submission. I would be supportive of continuing to have a range of entry points—school leavers, mature age students, recognition of prior learning and graduate entry.

Secondly, I would support the UAI or GPA or equivalent as a standard means of selecting students with a possibility for additional criteria for equity or for the assessment of special talent—for example, for music students. I would not support interviews or written applications as a general process, for a variety of reasons. I think those have been canvassed in other places, but they include the expense, the lack of evidence of validity and, most of all, the danger that interviews can be used as a subtle form of discrimination against people with disabilities or anyone who is a bit odd. It is a form of gatekeeping which I think is a bit problematic.

Thirdly, I disagree with the ACDE suggestion about having separate education universities. I think Australia is probably too small to develop institutions such as those described in China. They may become prestigious and fully functional in China, but I do not think it could work here. I think there is a big danger that that sort of thing would return us to the former bipartite system and also that it would lead to a separation from the underlying disciplines, which I think is very important. Apart from that, I agree with all that my colleague has said.

Prof. Riordan—There is only one thing I would like to comment on. Jo-Anne was talking about the role of the TEC, which is to not only support us as a professional association but also address some ill-informed negative perceptions of teacher education. I notice that, in one of the submissions, for example, something was put to your committee by the Australian Secondary Principals Association in their executive summary. This is in supplementary submission No. 50.1. They are referring to two online surveys that they have done of teachers in their first three years of teaching. They summarise it by saying that these surveys:

> ... indicate that in all areas related to the profession of teaching that beginning teachers feel that their preparation was at best satisfactory. In several areas it is clear that they felt that they were significantly under-prepared.

I have been through their presentation, and I think that is a typographical error, because their data do not support that. I refer to page 8 of that submission, where they have two tables showing the extent to which the teacher education institution prepared graduate teachers to teach literacy and numeracy. By sight, there was 18 per cent or less dissatisfaction. So 72 per cent of respondents said they were satisfied; they thought it was good, very good or excellent. I cannot find one example where their original statement was true. The figures are: 18 per cent dissatisfied and 12 per cent dissatisfied. Reading it, it says that the modal score was only satisfactory. Out of excellent, very good, good and satisfactory, it is not even true that the modal score on every item was satisfactory. The highest mode for—

Ms BIRD—Perhaps they missed the 'or better'. We did not lose any sleep over it, so I am just saying, 'Do not agonise about it.'

Prof. Riordan—This is the sort of thing, though, that we find we deal with in the media when we are dealing with schools. I am sure other professions do as well. We do not accept that we are doing a poor job. I have not seen convincing evidence in any study anywhere to show that graduates today are less capable or less well prepared than they have been in the past. I do not know how you would conduct research to find that anyway. I think it would be impossible to demonstrate empirically. We have to defend ourselves against this type of assertion.

CHAIR—When this inquiry started, some in the media adopted the position that the purpose for convening this inquiry was that there was a crisis in teacher training. We had to make the point on numerous occasions that really it was a case of looking at what we do and how we can potentially do it better, rather than responding to a crisis that exists. We have had evidence from a number of witnesses who come from a practising secondary background who have indicated to us that they have some concerns as to the quality of graduates, but we have received contrary evidence to that, so there are a range of views.

Prof. Reid—Our submission picked up the historical continuation of reviews into teacher education for just those reasons.

Mr SAWFORD—Just remember you are talking to the most misrepresented profession in the world. You come from a profession that is not very good at marketing itself.

Prof. Reid—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—I am a former teacher and so is Sharon, so we both are aware that the media like to highlight confrontation and conflict. If there is a good story to tell they are not interested. I think it is also true that the teaching profession as a whole is not very good at marketing itself and it does not have the PR skills that are necessary. In a previous inquiry we suggested that there be a public relations unit in education departments. I do not think that has ever seriously been taken on board.

Ms BIRD—It is pretty thoroughly done in New South Wales.

Prof. Reid—Teach.NSW does it.

Mr SAWFORD—The media latch on to crisis or difference and blow it out of all proportion. Some people in the teaching profession add to it, because they contribute to the confrontation.

CHAIR—Professor Riordan, I interrupted you.

Prof. Riordan—I have made the point. I am happy with that.

Ms BIRD—In the verbal evidence the point that was made to us was that the vast bulk of graduating students they pick up are great. Those comments may reflect the reality of anybody who does professional training then goes into the real world. That comment was verbally made.

Mr SAWFORD—The verbal contribution to the inquiry was very positive. I assure you that it was positive. It was not negative at all.

Prof. Riordan—I think that it is essential that we have quality assurance processes in place in our courses that are external to our universities, to assist us to address that sort of perception. The development of Teaching Australia, formerly NIQTSL, and the introduction in New South Wales of the Institute of Teachers, with course accreditation and teacher registration, I think are really welcome. They give us a much firmer basis upon which to back up claims that we may wish to make that we are doing a good job. If we are not doing a good job, we want to know where so that we can improve.

CHAIR—Having the Teacher Education Council here gives me the opportunity to ask a broader question on the issue of Indigenous education and turning out Indigenous teachers. I think that if we had an area of 'could do better', this is probably it. We are not turning out large numbers of Indigenous teachers. If we were, it could have a very positive and obvious effect on the educational outcome for young Indigenous students from both a role model point of view and a straight education point of view. I am interested in your thoughts on innovative things that we can do in Indigenous education. We have heard from a number of universities here over the last two days, and I have asked them about Indigenous education. They have programs in place, but I am interested in your thoughts. What can we do to improve the number of Indigenous teachers that we are turning out?

Prof. Reid—Interestingly, I am researching Indigenous teachers. I have an ARC grant with colleagues from other universities who are looking at the career pathways for Indigenous teachers over time in Australia. We have found from interviews with past, present and future Aboriginal teachers—we do not have Torres Strait Islander people there—simply that the racism of institutions as well as schools is something that we need to address. It is not an issue that schooling can necessarily address on its own. I think it is a much wider cultural issue that as a society we have to keep addressing.

I think the issue of the education of Indigenous children is almost at crisis point, particularly in this state. The population of Indigenous kids in the western region is getting larger as we speak, and the difficulties of attracting Indigenous teachers to the profession do not go away. At my own university—we can talk about this later—we had a large intake in earlier years. We are now having a much smaller intake of Indigenous people wanting to join teaching than in the past. That seems to be not only around issues of pay, which is the obvious one that people keep telling us about, but about their experience of schools. Schools and universities are generally not places that are friendly to Indigenous people. That is where I believe we need to start. There are simple binaries that I think in education we can try to reverse. That is where my hope for the future may be. The issue of mainstream and Indigenous teachers working side by side instead of separately would be one of the key ones.

We have just had a review of Indigenous education in New South Wales. The review was challenged by the minister to come up with something that would work when centuries of Aboriginal education have not worked. One thing that has arisen from that is the opportunity for universities to develop pilot programs for one year to prepare teachers to teach in schools with high Indigenous populations. That to me is not going to be a solution to our problems. We have to look much more largely. We have to start with Indigenous studies in schools as well as cultural awareness being compulsory for all of our student teachers.

There are approaches in other countries that I think we can learn from. For instance, in New Zealand every student teacher must spend a week a year on a marae working and getting to know the culture of the indigenous Maori there. We have very little opportunity to give our students any experience of working, living and interacting with Indigenous people. They are always other, in both our curriculum documents and our practices in teacher education in many instances. Because that is my hobby horse, I will not keep on with it. I will give Phil and Geoff the opportunity to add.

Prof. Foreman—At Newcastle university we have a pretty strong commitment to Indigenous education generally, particularly through our School of Medicine and Public Health. I think the largest proportion of Indigenous doctors in Australia now comes from Newcastle medical school. As far as teacher education is concerned, we do not have a separate special program for them. There is special entry that is organised through the Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies. Once students are in, they are supported by the Aboriginal education centre, which support students from across university. It is very well supported by the university and has a fine building. The school of Aboriginal studies is fairly small, probably the smallest school in the university, but it has managed to keep a school status because of the university's recognition of the importance of Indigenous education. Once they are in the school they are not treated separately or differently in any way other than through the appointment of an Indigenous liaison

officer who works between the school of Aboriginal studies and our own students just to make sure they are well supported.

CHAIR—How many graduates would you be turning out a year?

Prof. Foreman—I am not sure of the numbers because they are not separated. But I understand it is proportional to the expectation from the community, so whatever the percentage is generally, that is about the percentage of Indigenous students we have in teacher education.

Prof. Reid—I think that word 'expectation' is one that we need to act on because the expectation is that there will not be many Aboriginal teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—It is not only Indigenous people who are lacking in teacher education; it is also people from provincial and regional Australia. We have difficulties staffing rural schools. That just does not seem to make sense to me. Increasingly, we are taking fewer from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. It has been reported to this inquiry that there is an increasing trend towards mature age people who have made a career change. In some ways that is a very good thing, particularly in areas of technology where there is a great lack of teachers and no teacher education to speak of across Australia. Nevertheless, there is a feeling that in metropolitan Australia the graduates are now becoming metropolitan, middle-class and female. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with any of those categories, but it does tell a story. I think it reinforces a blindness to the problems that are facing Australian schools. What is your organisation's attitude towards that diversity and can you do anything to encourage a greater diversity?

Prof. Reid—As TEC we have not discussed this as an issue among ourselves. This is a concern for our individual institutions. I will talk later about that when I talk about CSU. As TEC we do not have a policy on Indigenous teachers.

Mr SAWFORD—Should you?

Prof. Reid—I definitely think we should. I think that would be a major success of a review such as this and also the review of Aboriginal education.

Mr SAWFORD—Back in the sixties or the seventies, there was a deliberate attempt in my home state of South Australia to get people from all of those areas—and I will add people from non-English-speaking backgrounds to that. It was a deliberate and powerful attempt to do it. It is interesting that South Australia was regarded as the lighthouse in English language education around the world from 1965 to about 1980. It was regarded as a superior education system. If you go back and look at the leader of that movement, it was a fellow called John Walker, who was probably the best education director in the world. Unfortunately he only lived to be director for 18 months, but his impact was very powerful around Australia. We probably need another John Walker. They are very hard to find, of course.

Prof. Reid—We had Peter Board in New South Wales a century ago. He made the same sort of attempt to uplift the teaching profession.

Mr SAWFORD—I started to ramble on then but the question I wanted to ask is: do you think there is a lack of powerful educational leadership that is necessary to inculcate a range of changes to meet modern challenges? Do you think it is too easy to be comfortable?

Prof. Riordan—I have some notes about Aboriginal education too. Teacher education in universities and larger education systems, or sets of systems, providing education operate within legal and financial constraints. A lot of the policy settings that are in place at the moment for education faculties in universities mitigate against the type of diversity you are talking about unless the individual faculties make a deliberate decision, like ours have done, to put resources into it. We cross-subsidise Aboriginal academic staff. For example, we have six full-time academic staff who are Aboriginal, and that is out of just under 60, so more than 10 per cent of our faculty is Aboriginal.

Ms BIRD—Can you please clarify what university that is?

Prof. Riordan—The University of Technology, Sydney. In order to give these people opportunities so that they can take a leading role in teacher education and postgraduate education, we give them reduced workloads and we are sponsoring them through research pathways and the like. The pressure is on us here to manage a budget—and we do not do that; we run at a deficit—with staff that we have to employ in a way that is informed by the RQF. I think one of the very important points the Australian Council of Deans of Education made in their submission—and it may not be obviously important—was the possibly unintended but certainly negative impacts of the RQF on a teacher education faculty. There is pressure on us from the universities to employ research-active staff who can compete in the RQF and get ARC grants, not necessarily only people from diverse social backgrounds or even expert practitioners. When you get to that, you get to the dilemma Jo-Anne was talking about earlier, about how we then attract expert practitioners into a system that does not recognise professional experience for remuneration. I completely support the view that we need to be more diverse. I am very aware of it in our recruitment. I am very aware of the white, middle-class, North Shore reputation that some of our programs have, but these are the constraints we have to work in.

While I agree with Phil that it may be counterproductive to set up teaching-only universities and while it may be technically impossible to have direct line funding straight to a particular aspect of a teacher education program, say, for practicum, I do think looking at that RQF and setting up different guidelines or quality criteria for education research would have the impact of allowing us to really broaden out our staff recruitment and the types of resources we could access to do the things that we want to do.

Prof. Reid—I second that. That ACDE mentioned a similar thing in their submission. If we were to have a panel for education as one of the RQF panels or a recommendation from your review that such a panel were to be set up, I think that would make a big difference in both the research capability and the leadership in education.

Ms BIRD—It was interesting that one of the Western Sydney universities whose research is very observation focused—I am very sorry that I cannot remember which one it was—has joint funding with one of the benevolent societies, a unit at the university that does basic literacy stuff. They use the observations of that to then produce research papers.

CHAIR—I think it might have been the Edith Cowan.

Ms BIRD—I think it might have been Edith Cowan. They were saying the structure of the research funding is such that it does not encourage even that type of research. If you cannot list a whole lot of precedent type research for what you are intending to do and so forth, you will not get funding. That is quite counterintuitive to the sorts of research that would be useful in education. That is why we end up with papers around constructed arguments that have been going on for years perpetuating themselves. Would you agree with those sorts of comments?

Prof. Riordan—Absolutely.

Prof. Reid—Absolutely. The research that school systems want is research into addressing immediate problems in practice.

Ms BIRD—Yes. That is exactly what they were saying to us.

Prof. Reid—RQF requires you to make arguments around impact, but you would then structure those arguments on impact around how this has led to a direct intervention in practice in one school in one state. Without a separate education panel, people on those panels then compare that to engineering, science or medicine, where you have global impact and it does not rate. We do not need the vast millions and millions of dollars for research that those other disciplines do. I do not know the statistics on it, but I would imagine the sorts of grants we need to do that research that really makes a difference and impacts practice is quite small. It is a real frustration, because we find that we are recruiting people who have no interest in practice at all but can tie into those very debates that you are talking about. You then get a process where they continue to cite each other and that meets RQF requirements. It is an unintended consequence of the RQF, which—and I think I am a bit alone amongst university staff—I think is a wonderful thing, because we should be looking at the impact of what we do. I think it should have a benefit back to the community. We should be able to demonstrate it. For our setting, that demonstration is at the school and classroom level.

Ms BIRD—Indeed, the schools and classrooms reflect back to us that the type of research that is happening is irrelevant and useless to them and they do not even bother accessing it.

Prof. Riordan—Because often it is originated by the academic thinking up some problem rather than listening to the practitioners saying, 'This is what we are dealing with.'

Prof. Reid—That also speaks to the relationships that members of TEC's individual institutions in New South Wales have with industry partners, in that many of our staff work alongside schools through projects such as the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program where we are working as academic partners directly in schools and with schools, but that is not recognised by the RQF.

CHAIR—I know Stuart has a question but, Professor Riordan, do you have a final comment on the Indigenous education that you were talking about?

Prof. Riordan—Yes. I will do this really quickly. There was a report recently from the New South Wales DET into Aboriginal education which I think is one of the better government

reports that I have read because it makes a number of really bold recommendations, including even reintroducing the idea of an Aboriginal teaching service. The conclusion of the report was that the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in New South Wales are very poor, and we need to do something quite drastic. I found that very informative.

CHAIR—Thank you for that.

Prof. Riordan—Just to comment on the representation of Aboriginal students in teacher education courses, at the University of Technology, Sydney we have approximately 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students out of a total Commonwealth supported load of 1,280, so it is about six or seven per cent of our student load. That is all on block programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, but most of them are in adult and community education, teaching literacy and numeracy to people in remote communities. Only about 10 of those 80 would be in straight, traditional teacher education programs.

Mr HENRY—I want to come back to page 3 of your submission relating to term of reference No. 3 in your comments about attrition. You say that:

> All evidence available on the reasons for attrition from teaching seem to point to industrial issues relating to salary, lack of professional development and incentive to stay, rather than lack of preparation from initial teacher education.

I am interested in what evidence you have to support that. Further to that, a lot of submissions and evidence that we have heard to date cite issues of classroom management, lack of practicum or preparation for classroom management in the teaching process as well as programming and outcomes based education as some of the other reasons for attrition after graduation. If teachers are leaving the course not being able to understand the realities of the classroom, has teacher education got something to answer for? There are two aspects to that question.

Prof. Reid—I do not think teacher education has something to answer for. I think teacher education provides its graduates with the skills that they need to begin to learn to manage classrooms beyond their preservice phase. The whole point about teacher education is that it is preservice. Learning to be a teacher, as I said in my opening remarks, is not something that finishes with your degree. The concerns of employers for professionally developing their students are such that the need to continually support teachers as they learn is something that teacher education is not responsible for. We are able to work with our partners to provide that.

Ms BIRD—The thing I am finding hardest with these questions is that if there is a massive attrition rate with accountants in their first five years, we do not presume that is because they were not trained to be accountants properly; we presume that they found the job deadly boring. We tend to do the opposite with teaching and assume that it is the training.

Prof. Reid—I agree. We know from the information from the DET sharing sessions that the attrition is not that huge. It seems to be 17 per cent, which is less than for architects.

Mr HENRY—I think early in the process of this inquiry we did hear of attrition rates as high as 60 per cent five years after graduation, which is very high in my view. It is only what we are hearing. I am just feeding back what evidence has been given in terms of the challenges in teacher education. You have raised the issue of industrial relations with respect to salaries. I have

got to say that in my recollection that has not been a significant issue, from other evidence that we have heard. You have raised it. So I was interested in getting the feedback on that. You have made the statement 'all evidence available on the reasons for attrition', whereas our experience is somewhat different.

Prof. Reid—I take Geoff's point that the evidence you may have heard may not actually be the right analysis.

Prof. Riordan—I would actually take a different line to Jo-Anne in understanding attrition. It may be different; it may not. I do not know. One of the things that I think—and what I know from my own experience as the deputy principal of a high school, working with new staff before I did this and knowing other teachers—is that we could be doing more to equip them better for the realities of what they encounter in their first years of school, particularly in the area of classroom management. I will just speak for our institution, UTS; I will not speak for others. This is such a complex problem. It is one that we are engaging with at our institution now, and we want to address it directly, particularly in our secondary teacher education program. So I do not think we are completely blameless here. I do think that we have some more work to do, and I think it is important we do it.

However, given that there may be parts that we are contributing to, there are parts that the employers contribute to. I think there should be a national approach to a limited full-time teaching load so that people get a graduated transition to full-time employment. I think one of the things that militates against that is that unions, for reasons known to them, have decided to pursue quite high commencing salaries that make it very expensive for employers to give teachers less than full loads. I have read that they are the third or fourth highest beginning salaries of all the professions, after dentistry and medicine. But the problem is that the pay scales do not go any further. I think that is back to front. What they should be doing is starting on a much lower salary so that we can continue to work with the employers. I think that would really address some of these things. We can be dealing with those very problems of practice. They could be bringing them back to university.

Ms BIRD—We heard some evidence about the Scottish model. I do not know if you would call it an internship, but in your first year of employment as a teacher you are employed on a reduced load, on a reduced pay scale. They seemed to think that worked quite well. Is that the sort of option, perhaps, that you are looking at?

Prof. Riordan—Absolutely.

Ms BIRD—But tying that with going back to university as well.

Prof. Riordan—Yes. A couple of universities are doing that now and offering marks through teaching programs. I think University of Sydney is an example. There is a second thing that needs to be looked at quite seriously: not just the beginning teacher load but the placements students are given in their first year. In New South Wales we use the term 'hard-to-staff schools'. Isn't that a winner!

Ms BIRD—In the university, to scholars, they are called 'job opportunity schools'.

Prof. Riordan—Imagine the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed graduates saying, 'I've got a job in a hard-to-staff school. I really want to get out there and get into this.'

Mr HENRY—It seems to me, though, that as part of our teacher education programs we are not creating a culture of necessarily wanting to mentor student teachers. The way I have interpreted the evidence, at least, is that the universities do have some difficulty in placing teachers for practicum—there is a disconnect in that process, often, because there is no real follow-up process in terms of what those experiences were and then how to manage that as part of the ongoing education of that particular individual. So there seem to be some issues there, from my perspective, which could be managed better by teacher education providers and which do not seem to be being picked up.

Prof. Reid—I do agree with you there. In our own institution we have started a program that actually addresses that in a roundabout way, which I will talk about later. Geoff is right insofar as we never can do enough to prepare our students as well as we would want, and we are constantly trying to find ways of improving that. Leaving five and seven years out is, I believe, an industrial issue. It is about salary. It is just the point that Geoff was making. There are high starting salaries and then they pan out, and you can move to a new profession and get a better salary when you have been out five or seven years.

Mr HENRY—That seems to be just one of the elements, obviously.

Prof. Reid—Exactly.

Prof. Foreman—My understanding from the latest briefing that we had from DET was that the attrition rates were nothing like the ones you have just quoted. They were saying that they were happy with the level of attrition.

Mr HENRY—This was in Queensland, I think.

Prof. Foreman—Obviously it is naive to think there is nothing more we could do or nothing more that the employers could do, and I think we have come a long way. Most of us now have internships where students finish up their programs by acting as teachers with the full responsibility of a teacher. But teaching is probably one of the very few professions where you move in, possibly, your first year to the most difficult role you will ever have. You might get a very difficult class, with full responsibility, because somebody who has been teaching for 20 years does not want to teach that difficult class. That does not happen very much in other professions.

Mr HENRY—That is a good argument for supporting the new teachers, isn't it?

Prof. Foreman—Even at our university, for example, all of our new lecturers are on reduced load for their first year. We recognise that they have to start off slowly, so they have at least a 20 per cent reduced load in their first year.

CHAIR—In the interests of staying on time, I think we should roll onto the regional university section. I do not want to exclude you, Professor Reid.

Mr HENRY—I know where UNE is, but where are Charles Sturt and Southern Cross?

Ms BIRD—We are not all New South Wales people.

Prof. Reid—Charles Sturt ranges from Albury, Wagga, Dubbo to Bathurst for teacher education, and Southern Cross is Lismore and the Northern Rivers area.

CHAIR—Coffs Harbour.

Mr HENRY—Thanks for that.

Prof. Foreman—I would say that the university regards this inquiry as extremely important for its initial teacher education programs. Our academic senate has determined that all our programs will be reviewed following your report, so we are anxiously awaiting the report and we are going to review all our programs based on the report.

Ms BIRD—That puts pressure on us.

CHAIR—We feel flattered.

Prof. Foreman—That was a decision of the senate.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you, as the University of Western Sydney has done, recently restructured?

Prof. Foreman—We have had a minor restructure recently, but not as significant a one as UWS. All our programs are due for review. They were due for review last year but a decision was made that because of this inquiry the review would be held off. We did not want to suddenly have a new lot of programs that needed to be reviewed again. Education is a very strong area of study at the university and accounts for about 4,000 bodies, which is about 15 per cent of the university's students and possibly a bit more than 10 per cent of its teaching load. It was a separate faculty for about 20 years but became part of a larger faculty in 2002, and this is a pattern that has occurred in many universities. It is a school rather than a faculty now, even though, as a school, it is probably larger now than it ever was as a faculty and is certainly comparable in size to other multi-school faculties in the university. The school's teaching is probably among the most casualised in the university, and the number of full-time staff we have now is fewer than half of what we had at its peak. We have 50 full-time staff—we have had up to 120—even though we have more students now than we had when we had the full number of staff. Part of that teaching load has transferred to the other disciplines, because there are other disciplines that are doing the teaching in double degrees, but the school still remains very reliant on teaching by casual, short-term and seconded staff. There have been recent activity cost analyses which show that the School of Education is not only functioning efficiently from a financial perspective but is cross-subsidising other parts of the faculty and the university. I can talk about that more if you want me to.

CHAIR—We would love you to talk about that a little more.

Prof. Foreman—Recently—and I think this has happened in a few places—there has been some cost activity analysis which starts with the full budget going into the faculty or the school and then charges going out. From that perspective, the Faculty of Education and Arts makes a substantial profit, which it does not receive. That profit is transferred to other faculties that are coming in at a deficit.

CHAIR—Could I just comment there that we have had evidence from other witnesses that the funding going to education is so limited that there is nothing spare to distribute to other faculties. I am interested in how you can achieve that in your education school when other universities could not.

Prof. Foreman—I think it is a matter of how the arithmetic is done to some extent. In the past, the Faculty of Education and Arts was regarded as a faculty that was making a loss or at least one that was having financial difficulties. When the costing was reanalysed in terms of what the faculty actually brought in and then the costs that went out from there, the answer was simply that the faculty was making a profit for the university. That profit does not come into the faculty; that profit cross-subsidises the rest of the university. We now work on what are regarded as expenditure budgets, which are budgets which do not relate specifically to the money we earn but the money that we need to spend.

CHAIR—I would be interested in seeing an analysis of that break-up that leads to a surplus being able to be distributed. Would that be possible?

Prof. Foreman—I can certainly ask. I have seen it, but I am not sure of the extent to which it is public information. But I can certainly ask for it.

Mr SAWFORD—One of your predecessors promised the same thing, but when they went back they could not do it.

Prof. Reid—Yes, they were told they could not do that.

Prof. Foreman—I can certainly request it. The contribution of the Faculty of Education and Arts to other schools and faculties in this way, both financially and in terms of student numbers, is something that has led to increased recognition of the importance of education within the university and to increased status. And I think teaching generally is taking its place now among the professions, with a sound research base and a place in a university. Most of the previous inquiries on teacher education and teaching, in particular the Senate inquiry in 1998, concluded that there was a need to enhance the professional status of teachers. I believe that teaching is probably at a reasonably high point at the moment, with most graduates receiving four years of university training and most states having or developing registration boards which are controlled by the profession. The result is currently a very high demand for places. We do not believe there is any evidence that there would be any improvement in teacher quality or supply if the role of universities in the preparation of teachers was lessened through the adoption of an apprenticeship model. I am making a point there about the role of universities in the training.

Apart from the staffing issues, the factor that I think is most heavily impacting on teacher education, as previously mentioned by Jo, is the difficulty of finding sufficient practicum places, and this is exacerbated by the pressure to take international students. I think the only way this

will be resolved is if universities are funded sufficiently to be able to reduce reliance on international students and if all teachers and schools accept their role and responsibility in preparing future members of the profession. That is all I want to say.

Prof. Reid—Charles Sturt University is also very pleased that this inquiry is going on. There is a history of teacher education at Charles Sturt, with the university based on the site of the former Bathurst Teachers College set up in 1951. As the colleges amalgamated, teaching and teacher education became a strength of our university. We are unlike many of the other universities, I believe, in that education has taken a pretty important role in the university in terms of its profile, its regional engagement and its graduate destinations.

We are also very much regionally situated; we are in Bathurst, Wagga, Dubbo and Albury. We attract, and we have a policy of trying to provide for, those who are disadvantaged geographically, both the disadvantaged in terms of age and education and those who have never had the opportunity to have the teachers who would never go bush. I keep harking back to history, but I think in New South Wales in particular the history of education staffing is one where the teachers who could get out of the bush got of the bush. So bush schools and rural education have suffered, and we can see in the UAI scores and TER results et cetera that children who are educated in rural locations do not do as well and do not have the same access to university as those who get sent away—most of the wealthy rural families, of course, send their children away to boarding school—outside of regional cities and rural towns.

Charles Sturt then has an agenda. Our motto is, 'For the public good', and we take that very seriously. We offer an early entry program into our teacher education courses, which is on a principal's recommendation. Often when principals have recommended students who do not meet our entry scores, we fight to keep the entry scores at the level that we want to have them. In relation to the kids who are trying to get in and who have been disadvantaged, we are still trying to address that. At the moment we hold the line that you must have a principal's recommendation and the entry score, but always, and particularly with the Indigenous students, we will make special entry provisions where we can.

I will just note, in passing around the Indigenous issue again, that our Indigenous students coming in at the moment do not need special entry. We have some very good and very capable Indigenous students entering our profession and, historically, that has always been the case.

Mr SAWFORD—Are they male or female?

Prof. Reid—They are female. That is a very broad generalisation and I probably should check, but I think they are mainly female. Most of our Koori intake is in fact female.

CHAIR—Roughly how many are there?

Prof. Reid—At the moment—and I was looking at a print-out yesterday—we have about only 40 or 50 Indigenous students, many of whom are not identified—apart from on the form; that is, they tick the box—among their classmates as Indigenous. Many of them choose not to identify until they have graduated, when it does give them access to better places when they are applying for jobs. Many of our Koori students take out the highest awards in the school. They are good students. That is where that question of expectations that we talked about earlier comes in. They

do not need special programs. We have to encourage the best Indigenous students to come into teaching as a really worthwhile profession. I think many of them do see it as a profession for helping their own communities, as well.

Mr HENRY—Is this happening on any particular campus?

Prof. Reid—We are focusing on Dubbo, in particular, for Indigenous teacher education.

CHAIR—So there is a targeted approach in a way?

Prof. Reid—Yes, that is a young campus that is developing. It is our intention to situate a new form of Indigenous teacher education there, which I will talk about in a moment too, but I will just say a couple of other things about CSU. Because of our regional location too, we offer distance teacher education, and that is an interesting challenge, as you can imagine teaching PE by distance. It is one that we have become very well known at providing for. Education employs people all around Australia. Our students are not just New South Wales based; they are all around.

We have also made an innovative middle schooling push in our Albury campus to try to enable the students to be more marketable and have the skills that we think teachers do need from primary to secondary. Teaching reading, for instance, is something that secondary teachers have often not had as part of their armament when they go into classrooms. We believe that a middle school program will ensure that all the teachers going out have the primary and secondary expertise in that way. We also provide VET teacher education and an accelerated teacher training program in mathematics and science, which works with the department trying to provide accelerated, shorter teacher education in maths for skilled tradespeople or people with mathematics qualifications.

Our emphasis, therefore, is very much on the situated presence of the communities that we are working with. We have started, and particularly again in our more remote communities, trying to form prac relationships with community rather than school. So we are sending two students to townships, and the aim of their practicum placement is not just to work at the school but to get to know the community and to find out what other agencies are in fact impacting. Many of our students who go to Bourke, for instance, may never get outside the school because the local community distrusts the teachers. The experience I mentioned earlier of many Indigenous people with education is not a happy experience. So to actually place students in the community rather than the school is a very different way of thinking about how you might learn to be a teacher in that particular situation.

I also wanted to briefly mention that, because of our distance provision, we are trying very much to work with IT and new technologies, both for coping with remote schools and for coping with our own pedagogies in teacher education. That has led to quite a number of interesting ways of going. All of our students, whether they are internal or DE, are online students. So we are hoping that the expertise they develop with using new technology is something they will take with them, hopefully to rural placements, when they begin working.

The only other thing I need to note is that we have just recently set up a campus in Canada. We do not have the problem that many of our sister universities have in dealing with overseas

students. We have no overseas students unless they enrol full time in our New South Wales DE or our on-campus courses. We have had Canadian students come here, because in Canada you must do preservice education face to face. We have instead gone to Canada and set up a campus in Ontario, where they are very keen to take up the graduates of a program such as the one we have offered.

Ms BIRD—I do not want to go into too much detail but, Philip, you mentioned non-UAI admission processes, such as interviewing, and listed a range of problems that those have. I would argue that most of those apply to the UAI as well—the reasons not to do something are often in common. While I accept—and I think we have a pretty strong word from all of the universities—that your UAI has to be the fundamental thing, another interesting thing we have heard is about the vast numbers of mature age students who are coming in. I am interested first of all in whether you see anything useful in mature age entry processes, since you do not have a UAI, that might be applicable to Australian school leavers or whether you would argue that Australian university entry should stay with the UAI.

Prof. Foreman—The mature age people who come in usually come in based on an equivalent UAI or recognition of prior learning if they have had another career. That is done in a fairly structured way. We all see students from time to time about whom we think, 'It would have been good to have interviewed that person first of all,' but I do not think that occasional person you see—the one out of 200 or 300 or one out of a thousand—is sufficient reason to go through that whole process of interviewing, which as we have all said is expensive and also, in my view, not necessarily valid or reliable. There is evidence that the UAI is a reasonable predictor; there is not a lot of evidence that interviews are a better predictor. I know that in our own medical school we have a very elaborate and expensive process of testing and interviewing—

CHAIR—That was the first time it was done at Newcastle, wasn't it?

Prof. Foreman—Yes, and it is the only centre of the university which is now allowed to interview. I understand that one of the reasons for that is that, without it, you get all of your students from a very narrow sector of schooling, and interviewing is the only way of broadening out and having a more diverse range of students come into the medical school. That does not seem to apply to the other areas because there is a much broader range of UAIs that let people in.

Ms BIRD—It seemed to be an issue not so much with primary education—which, from what we are hearing from the department and so forth, has an oversupply at the moment, although with the retirement age we were told that will be addressed too—but with some of the hard-to-staff subject areas such as science and maths. Because there are problems with the way maths and science are taught, people might leave school with not particularly good results, go out and do an apprenticeship or something like that and pick up a whole lot of maturity and life experience. But you are saying that, through the mature age thing, although they have a UAI that would not have got them in, there is another mechanism.

Prof. Foreman—They might come in through recognition of prior learning. If they have demonstrated that and they have a TAFE certificate and some years of successful work experience, it might be sufficient.

Ms BIRD—People have certainly said to us that some of the mature age students that are going through are some of the most successful. They have made a committed decision at that point in their life to go and do education. Thank you.

Mr HENRY—Just picking up on your intake of Aboriginal students, what is the incidence of mature age in that cohort?

Prof. Reid—It is growing less. I suspect that mature age people are more likely to go to AREP in Western Sydney that you heard about just a moment ago. We have a career admissions program across the university and each year we do a roadshow and try to attract students to all faculties. The number of mature age Aboriginal people is much fewer than it used to be.

Mr HENRY—Given your geographic locations of campuses it would seem to me that accessibility to your course for mature age would be better for people than having them come down to a course in outer Sydney.

Prof. Reid—You are absolutely right and that is what we are finding at Dubbo. We are finding that increasingly as our primary teacher education and early childhood programs at Dubbo grow we are attracting more mature age Indigenous people as well as mature age rural people who did not have access to university.

Mr HENRY—I suppose I was just a bit concerned that we were not putting a barrier up there. I think that it is terribly important in terms of getting the education right for our Aboriginal people that we do maximise the opportunity of access to teaching programs.

Prof. Reid—We do things like ensuring that the people who are travelling from Nyngan or Parkes into Dubbo are not on a timetable five days a week. With those sorts of things we are able to negotiate on a small campus like Dubbo, which a larger campus just cannot do.

Mr HENRY—There is some evidence that suggests that they do a lot better as students if you keep them in their own locality.

Prof. Reid—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we need further information. You have some material to get back to us on, which we would appreciate as quickly as possible. Thank you again.

Proceedings suspended from 1.07 pm to 1.49 pm

ALEGOUNARIAS, Mr Tom, Chief Education Officer, New South Wales Institute of Teachers

LEE, Mr Patrick, Manager, Initial Teacher Education, New South Wales Institute of Teachers

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. May I remind you that public hearings are recorded and the *Hansard* record is made available to the public through the parliamentary website. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these proceedings are legal proceedings of the parliament and, as such, warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Alegounarias—We thank you for the invitation to present evidence to the committee. The New South Wales Institute of Teachers was established as a statutory authority for the regulation and promotion of the teaching profession in New South Wales under the Institute of Teachers Act 2004. The legislation took effect in January 2005. The institute was commissioned to establish standards for teachers at the levels of graduate teacher, professional competence, professional accomplishment and professional leadership. The particular functions of the institute include advising the minister on the accreditation of teachers against the standards, the approval of teacher education courses with regard to accreditation against the standards, and the approval of continuing teacher education—that is, professional development.

The New South Wales institute's standards are consistent with the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs—MCEETYA—endorsed national framework for professional teaching standards. The institute is a member of the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities—AFTRAA. Through AFTRAA the institute is working towards achieving consistent processes for recognising graduates against the appropriate level of the MCEETYA standards framework. The New South Wales standards, including graduate teacher standards, were developed in consultation with, and with the active input of, thousands of New South Wales teachers. We have copies of the standards for the committee's consideration.

For approximately a year-and-a-half, preceding its actual establishment, the institute has been developing advice to the minister on the endorsement of teacher education courses with regard to recognition of graduates against the standards. This work is continuing. The central principles underpinning this work are that teacher educators are part of the profession, and therefore are partners in the establishment of standards; that the profession generally needs to be involved in the processes of determining the approval of courses; and that it is inherent in such processes that graduates of universities meet the graduate standards. Generally, the New South Wales institute is concerned that the professional standards movement be effectively utilised to achieve more effective coordination between jurisdictions and educational sectors. In this context in particular we welcome this inquiry.

CHAIR—Could you please explain the process that you go through in the accreditation of teaching courses?

Mr Alegounarias—At the moment, the accreditation processes we are implementing are for teachers at competence. To be a teacher at competence—and this will come back to teacher education—you have to have achieved the standards at professional competence. Except in extraordinary circumstances, achieving the standard at competence entails having a degree and a teaching qualification or a teaching degree. Achieving the standard at competence is done while in practice, so there is a maximum of three years within which you need to achieve competence. The central principle there is that you become a teacher after a year or so, during which you have actually been practising, and there is a smoother transition between your training and your full entry into the profession. By the time you get competence you should have your teaching qualification as well as a degree or a teaching degree—they come together at the point of competence. You can come to competence without a teaching qualification. You can begin teaching without a teaching qualification as such, and this was the issue referred to earlier by the Teacher Education Council of New South Wales. But by the time you get competence you need to have a qualification and a degree, though the legislation does allow for us to develop other processes if we see that is appropriate.

The approval of initial teacher education is not yet being implemented; it is advice currently being developed, as I have mentioned. The intention of that is to determine which courses are recognised for the purposes of accreditation of competence. So when you first begin teaching, you will be either provisionally accredited, which means you have a teaching qualification, or conditionally accredited, which means you are going to get one. When we endorse teacher education courses, the intention is that endorsement will mean that you are recognised provisionally, so you are a step ahead of others who may have to undertake further coursework. The accreditation processes for accomplishment and leadership are also currently being developed. We intend to have those processes established by the end of the year.

Mr SAWFORD—How do you actually do the accreditation?

Mr Alegounarias—We do not yet. We intend to have the policy as to how we are going to do it established by the end of the year. We are currently consulting and working on measurement tools. As an insight into the process, we are essentially gathering data as to what practices are reliable indicators of high achievement and then what evidence is available with regard to each of those practices.

Mr SAWFORD—Who would assess that?

Mr Alegounarias—That will be the policy that will be developed by the end of the year. However, competence, on which we are accrediting teachers, is assessed by teacher accreditation authorities. Teacher accreditation authorities exist as such under the institute's act. They vary across schooling: in the independent sector, the authority is largely the school itself, almost by definition; in the government sector, it is school education directors. In becoming teacher accreditation authorities they undertake that responsibility. The responsibility is inherent in our act, so their responsibility is to implement the intentions of our act. Our processes include a quality assurance element where decisions of teacher accreditation authorities, detailed reports, evidence and annotations et cetera are forwarded to external assessors. The external assessors are

independently appointed from the institute, from all sectors, and their job is to moderate the judgments—to ensure that there is a consistency to identify aberrations of judgments where teacher accreditation authorities are not doing as well as they should—and, most constructively, to provide advice as to how best to support teachers and make consistent decisions on accreditation.

CHAIR—You talked about achieving competence and the accredited course as being two issues. How can you have achieved competence without having already completed a course that is likely to be accredited?

Mr Alegounarias—Theoretically, the legislation allows for it but at the moment—

CHAIR—It is not a practical—

Mr Alegounarias—It is not an issue. We are not pursuing that pathway at all. The legislation allows for it because essentially it is possible, for instance, within the legal profession, and we could if we were confident enough about our measurement tools. It is a point of principle that the profession should reliably determine who is a teacher. Lawyers do it through a solicitors and barristers admission board et cetera. But it is not a practical issue that we are pursuing.

Mr HENRY—I am looking at what has come off your website about preservice teacher education. You talk about how the institute will ensure the quality of preservice teacher education and then you talk about graduate teacher standards. Certainly, there seem to be some differences across the board in the attitudes of universities and others about what level of practicum is provided in teacher training. Can you enlarge upon how you see that? What is a graduate teacher in terms of their competencies to teach?

Mr Alegounarias—I will address the broad question of how we see a graduate and then I will allow Mr Lee to speak about the practicum issue. Firstly, we need to recognise that teacher training does not create or complete the creation of a teacher; that it is inherent in the process of universities; that it is relatively theoretical, particularly given the short amount of practicum that is available; and that there is a wide range of approaches by and intentions of universities. We—neither the institute nor New South Wales generally—are not in a position to determine the nature of university degrees. We are in a position to indicate to universities what we think is appropriate for teaching in New South Wales schools, which is within the legitimate domain of the state government.

CHAIR—To expand that a little: do you see that you will have a role in driving the development of the courses?

Mr Alegounarias—No. There will necessarily be some effect on the development of the course, on the basis that this is what the institute and employers through the institute are requiring. So it is practical and it is relevant to schools, and that is a priority for us. But we do not see ourselves as having an input approach where we will actually say, 'This is what you should have in it' or 'This is the nature of the degree.' I think universities quite jealously guard their idea that this is a degree for all sorts of purposes, and the reality is that people do teaching degrees for reasons other than to teach. That is perhaps an arcane distinction but nonetheless an important one. It is artificial if I am saying that we want the teachers to have these characteristics

but we do not care what you put in your courses, because in effect we are saying that these courses should have this content, we are going to be looking to see if this content is reflected in the standards of your graduates and, on that basis, we will be recommending that the graduates of your courses are recognised.

Mr HENRY—Just to clarify that in my mind: I could actually be a graduate teacher without any classroom management skills.

Mr Alegounarias—That goes to the practicum issue—but, before that, you cannot, because the standards address classroom management skills as capacities. You need to have classroom management skills, and the standards are expressed in simple and direct terms.

Mr HENRY—So how do you measure that in the standards?

Mr Alegounarias—The standards of a graduate are distinguished from the standards at competence because they are knowledge of a range of classroom management practices.

Mr HENRY—So it is 'knowledge of' rather than 'able to'?

Mr Alegounarias—Yes, because reliably we cannot really assess your 'ability to' consistently over a period of time. Having said that, you can red-flag individuals who are just not capable of doing it in the practicum, but in most university courses you cannot determine whether someone can do it reliably for a full teaching load over a period of time. That goes to the issue of the difference in the expectations of the profession about graduate teachers relative to what graduates can achieve on the basis of having done a course. I will ask Mr Lee to address the issue of our practicum requirements and our attitude to that.

Mr Lee—I will just add to that last point. It is under our act, which establishes this other pathway. As Tom has said, the door is not wide open at the moment, and it may never open very wide, but our act sets it there. But it sets some conditions—which might go to the member's question—where it is a condition of being employed as a graduate but without a teaching qualification that you are supervised. So that is a difference, and it goes to the question that you raised. Also, the employer or the teacher accreditation authority have the responsibility, if they wish to pursue that path, to construct—on advice from the institute over time—a program of professional development and further education which is built into the progress of that person.

Ms BIRD—For example, if you were a school wanting to offer legal studies, you could in effect get someone with a legal qualification who is saying, 'I want a career change'—

Mr Lee—This act allows that.

Ms BIRD—and put them in place with perhaps a two-year time frame to pick up a Dip. Ed. or something like that?

Mr Lee—Under supervision, yes—

Ms BIRD—So that is to allow that sort of thing?

Mr Lee—it is allowed.

Mr Alegounarias—Conditional accreditation is designed to allow people with a degree to begin employment, and they will have to get a teaching qualification. One of the issues here is that we want to not set regulatory barriers to entry; we want to set quality standards.

Ms BIRD—Yes.

Mr Alegounarias—Attracting people with degrees and higher degrees is a challenge for teaching, and we want those people to come in. That might be a particular circumstance. They will then have to get a qualification but, in today's multiplicity of pathways for getting a teaching qualification, that should not be a problem. Of course, it does contribute to that issue that I know has been discussed at the hearings—that is, the desirability of a more complex continuum between preservice and actually becoming a teacher. We want to remove that sort of artificial dichotomy between 'You are in training' and then 'You are'. It is a smoother transition.

Mr HENRY—Picking up on your opening comments, you spoke about a two- or three-year period for competency. Was that part of the graduate course or was that following graduation?

Mr Alegounarias—That is following graduation.

Mr HENRY—Does your institute then classify them as a professional, or are they still a graduate teacher?

Mr Alegounarias—If you are a graduate and you are provisionally accredited, you have a maximum of three years. We think it is typically 18 months. If you are conditionally accredited and employed—that is, you have a degree but not a teaching qualification—you have up to four years, which allows for being able to gain the teaching qualification while achieving competence.

Mr Lee—The point I was trying to clarify is that it is called conditional accreditation, so it is not just an open slather. There are requirements of PD and further study, and there is supervision. There is information in the act with regard to the skills, knowledge and relevant experience of a person. The accreditation authorities under our supervision are required to make judgments about all of those things, so it is not accurate to draw from that that someone would be in there without any consideration of their capacity to perform. In relation to the question about practicum: as Tom has said, we are developing the policy in consultation, but it is one of our functions to approve courses. Views get expressed about the desirable length of practicum—

CHAIR—And there is a range.

Mr Lee—It tends to be fairly simple, actually. If you prescind from questions of cost, people generally say that if it is of high quality there should be lots of it. If you bring cost into it, people say there should be less of it, particularly if they are an institution that has to pay for it. If they recommend to you, perhaps, that you should recommend that the Commonwealth pay for it, then they will be happy and then it could get longer. I think that is just the way it is. Generally, there is a view expressed in submissions to this hearing, and certainly expressed by the teaching profession to us, that high-quality, longer time in schools as part of a proper program is

desirable. We heard strong statements this morning from Western Sydney about that—I do not have to reiterate them. It is a question of practice, and I think there is a consensus around that.

There are different studies as to whether adding merely another week—going from five weeks to six weeks—makes it proportionately better. Some studies say it is hard to prove that, and the Victorian parliamentary inquiry reported some of those studies. Nonetheless, it is hard to get away from the fact that in this area, like in any others, if you do not have the reality of practice, there is a gap and you are going to hit the wall. The more difficult the school; the lower the level of support that you have and the harder it is going to be. This is not rocket science.

For us, there is a range of views on mandating a particular number of days, and we have not come to a determination. In our consultations, we are emphasising quality so that the onus that will operate in any policy that we finalise will be on the universities to demonstrate in their documentation to us that they have: strong relationships with schools; defined roles in place for their staff; a relationship with the hierarchy of schools so that there is a range of things to deal with and respond to typical issues which arise—the student teacher that is having difficulties and the like; and clear protocols in place to deal with the failing student teacher. Things get said about schools and universities not wanting to fail them. It is up to the university. This is their program. They are preparing teachers. They are required to deal with this, and they will be required to demonstrate to us that they have a scheme in place for all of those things.

Will there be one model for practicum, internship and the rest of it mandated by us? In principle, the answer is no. A range of models is a good thing. There has been enough evidence before your inquiry and others of experimental things. It is the underlying principles. Nonetheless, at the end, do we mandate a number of days? While we have not decided, we take note of the fact that in different places different days are mandated. Victoria has 45 days for a one-year program, 60 for two-year programs and 80 or 90 for four-year programs. Queensland has another regime. I notice the Northern Territory has 45, but the four-year program has 102. So things differ.

If we were to try to accommodate a broadly national approach, through cooperation across institutes like ours—which I think Tom will say something about—then we could pick 43 days. That would be a great contribution to national consistency! Universities like Charles Sturt University—which appeared earlier—operate on the border of Victoria and New South Wales. At the moment they accommodate both. The New South Wales department of education guidelines for the approval of programs in the past was 40 days practicum for one year. People on that program did 40 days practicum if they were going to teach in Wagga Wagga but 45 days if they were going to teach over the border. Maybe through a national approach, whereby we discuss it with the Victorian and Queensland institutes, something more common might emerge. In principle, we want to contribute to that.

We certainly are not in the business, as a predilection, of trying to minimise the number of days. We are aware of the problems that universities say that they have regarding placements. We are also aware of what is said to us by teachers: that the rate of pay for performing that task has not moved since 1991. There are not many rates of pay that have not moved since 1991. Perhaps that could be noted and there could be a recommendation to move it, and the teachers would applaud this inquiry. But, as the child-care workers said yesterday: ‘Someone has to pay for it.’ That will be out of our hands. But our commitment would be to high quality, an onus on

the universities to put together intelligent packages that take not only schools seriously but also the roles of supervising teachers seriously and for that to be done to our standards and to our graduate standards in a way that has some continuity with the higher level competence standards so that it intersects with the mentoring of trainee teachers.

Mr HENRY—Do you have a view on whether some of that should be front-end stuff in the classroom practicum to give new trainee teachers going into the course that opportunity of assessing classroom behaviour and style?

Mr Lee—By 'front-end' do you mean early in, say, a four-year program?

Mr HENRY—Yes.

Mr Lee—It will not be built into the policy. That is the kind of thing that we would leave to universities. There are two arguments on this. You heard one this morning: you have more mature outcomes, better decisions, by having the three-year degree and then people opting to go into the end-on programs. A suggestion was put today that that led to a higher retention rate. I do not know whether that is right, but I presume that it is. That was an argument, in fact, where the first hitting of the classroom occurred in the fourth year. The alternative argument that was put was: 'Let's get into the classroom very quickly in the first year of a four-year program and people will sort it out.'

Mr HENRY—We have had both arguments.

Mr Lee—You have had both arguments and seen that research this morning. So it seems to me—and this is not an institute position—that if you have a four-year integrated program then it is an integrated teacher education program. There is already an election for teaching; you may as well get started early on. If it is an end-on program then it is an end on—it occurs at the end.

Mr Alegounarias—While we are stating positions, they are not necessarily institute positions. Anecdotally, it is always a tragedy when you hear about individuals who have struggled through their education training—for example, single parent mums who come to their third or fourth year and do their first prac and realise, as have their students, that they are not suited to teaching. That puts pressure on their supervising teachers, on them and on schooling generally. While recognising, as our standards do, that the inherently theoretical or conceptual basis of teacher education constitutes a large portion of it, the practical element is a crucial or inherent part of teaching, so the earlier you introduce it the better it is for everyone.

Mr SAWFORD—Tom and Patrick, there are scores of Australian arms of government and arms of professional bodies that have failed because they have had to serve two masters. Are you an arm of government or an arm of the profession?

Mr Alegounarias—Both, and I think what reliably indicates that it is doable are the standards themselves. Before we began, I lost count of the number of individuals who told me that you cannot articulate the profession's requirements in a way that is consistent with the requirements of the community. But the standards themselves have not been questioned and are simple, commonsense attributes of teachers that ring true for teachers. They are recognisable by the community generally and are therefore acceptable to government.

I think, and the premise of the institute is, that you can represent the interests of teachers and contribute to the status and standing of teachers if you help assure the quality of teaching in a way that makes sense to the broader community, and that is in government's interest as well. That core element is the premise of the institutes. Whether it is successful in the long term, we will see. But it is the premise, and so far we have not found a contradiction.

Mr SAWFORD—You have just got established and are not fully expanded. I was very attracted to the concept of the Victorian Institute of Teaching, which is a similar concept to yours. When they came before us and we started digging a bit, it became clear to me—maybe I was bit biased; maybe I woke up on the wrong side of the bed that morning—that they were an arm of government and that it was a ploy of government to create a situation where that group would deal with criticisms of education. If something goes wrong at school X or school Y or teacher X does this, instead of the issue going to the minister, it goes to the Institute of Teaching and they become the public spokespeople for a government. I think that is very dangerous.

That is why I am asking the question. I am very serious about this: you cannot serve two masters. I do not think any organisation can do that. If you are an arm of government I do not have a problem with that—there is nothing wrong with that at all—but you should come clean and say to us which one you are. Nor do I have a problem if you are basically an arm of the profession. I think the profession needs that, by the way. But you have a problem with being both. Do you see what I am getting at?

Mr Alegounarias—Absolutely. The paradox or the potential contradiction would be more of an issue for us if our charter were all-encompassing of the profession—say, if we claimed to be a spokes-organisation for the profession and represented the interests of all aspects of the profession. But we do not; it is a defined set of activities. It has to do with assuring the quality of teachers against a set of professional standards.

Our charter, explicitly for the reasons that you have recounted, does not go to industrially related issues or to our being spokespeople for the profession as such. Professional associations do that. Professional associations will channel those views through us partly but also independently. Our charter is expressly on the accrediting of individuals against professional standards. The premise—and the proof will be in the pudding—is that that practice will serve the community, government and the profession. That is the premise under which we have taken this work.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not have a problem with that.

Ms BIRD—Can I just follow that a bit further? One of the reasons they raised that with us was that they also have the capacity to remove accreditation. Does your organisation have the same capacity?

Mr Alegounarias—Yes, through teacher accreditation authorities.

Ms BIRD—The non-renewable or—

Mr Alegounarias—Just as the legal responsibility for making the decision to accredit rests with teacher accreditation authorities at the competence level, so the policy to remove

accreditation rests with teacher accreditation authorities, which is based on the judgment that the teacher does not meet the standards of competence. It is an important part of the function, because not being competent means you are incompetent.

Mr SAWFORD—You have only got established, but do you have a view about national accreditation in a country of 20 million people?

Mr Alegounarias—We have a firm view on national accreditation. We think it is crucial that we accommodate it. To that end, we are working with AFTRAA to ensure consistency. We think there is a role for the Commonwealth and potentially for Teaching Australia. We are not quite sure how the constitutional structure of Teaching Australia might allow this to happen. Nonetheless, a crucial role for the Commonwealth is to ensure national consistency and mutual recognition arrangements. That is in the national interest.

Mr SAWFORD—Gregor Ramsey's group, for example?

Mr Alegounarias—That is Teaching Australia. We are not sure how the constitutional base of that organisation might allow this to happen. But noting that with previous presentations you have asked: 'What is it that you would like to put as being in your interests?' our emphasis would be that Teaching Australia or the Commonwealth generally undertake an active role in ensuring national accreditation. We are not about protecting territory; however, we think that, specifically, a national process should have regard to three things. The first thing is that it be on the basis of the national framework of standards. In that way our purposes are expressed similarly and the standards are endorsed by all ministers. The second thing is that the processes have regard to the circumstances of schools. A central principle that we have worked on is that, as an established bureaucracy that makes a judgment from a distance, we cannot establish whether or not a person is a competent teacher. We want assurance processes that will defend the credibility of those judgments, but those judgments have to be in practice and at school level. Therefore, schools and senior members of the profession, including principals, have responsibilities to the profession to make those judgments, and our job is an assurance one.

Ms BIRD—Would you see it as the appropriate body to individually and only do accreditation of overseas trained people because of its capacity to do that?

Mr Alegounarias—I think one of the issues that fall at the heart of Teaching Australia's potential role is the overseas issue. It highlights what I was going to say was the third point, and that is that the work is done in relation to state and territory registration and accreditation authorities and schools. To indicate why that is not just a self-serving comment, at the moment we have some circumstances where visas might be granted to teachers who may not be able to get recognition at state and territory level. The states and territories have a legitimate role in protecting the quality of teachers in their schools, so a mechanism and the substantive elements of that mechanism need to be described urgently to allow a national process to be established that will fulfil those crucial national interest issues of overseas qualifications, with genuine reference to the regulatory frameworks that exist differentially in the states and territories. Our point is that the national standards framework, the interests and the genuine role of schools in the process and the regulatory frameworks in the states need to be described in substantive terms and pursued by a national process.

Mr SAWFORD—I appreciate the fact that your role is still evolving, but who established the New South Wales Institute of Teachers?

Mr Alegounarias—We were established by legislation. The lineage goes back to Gregor Ramsey's group. It worked through a task force chaired by Dr Jim McMorrow, which led to an interim committee chaired by Dr Alan Hayes, which then led to the legislation.

Mr SAWFORD—Does the New South Wales Institute of Teachers have a role, should it have a role, will it have a role or could it have a role in the induction of beginning teachers?

Mr Alegounarias—It does inherently, because the accreditation at competence, if it is to be appropriate at all and within the realm of a professional function, has to describe the processes that induct individuals into the profession. By 'induction' we do not just mean: 'Welcome to the school. This is the staffroom. These are your super arrangements.' Rather, we mean: 'This is the nature and quality of effective teaching. These are your professional collegial arrangements that will allow you to reflect on that and improve on it.' That is inherent in the accreditation process and, for us, constitutes the vast majority of what is an effective induction process: it is a focus on the quality of the work and how you make the transition from a student to a fully competent member of the profession.

Mr Lee—One of the levers that the institute has is the fact that we have standards at four different levels. At the higher levels, accomplishment and leadership under scrutiny and research are not explained at the moment, but as they get implemented, when you go through the system, there are 46 standards and they map across in increasing order of complexity as you go up. Embedded in those higher standards are elements which go very much to the heart of being a leader and working with your colleagues in oversighting things such as induction and the activity of supervising teachers, mentors and the like.

There are a couple of things about that. As the system gets fully embedded, for people who are doing the supervision, the mentoring and the induction there is an incentive for doing that well and in a skilled manner, to show that you are meeting those higher level standards. You will not do it exclusively by that path because there are a whole lot of other things about higher levels of knowledge in your own skills, but it is embedded in there.

Now to the extent that the schooling system and all of the partners start to make something serious in the career path at those higher standards, we are able to build an infrastructure, if you like, of some attractiveness about taking those roles very seriously in schools. At the moment, they are somewhat left to the willing and the like to actually push for those to be more articulated into the career path. The full level of our standards allows us to, hopefully, have the time and make a major contribution to that role being taken seriously.

Mr SAWFORD—Some of the best educational leaders in Australia have not fitted the conservative, conforming role that many teachers do. They have been radical, progressive and innovative. They have broken or questioned the orthodoxies of the day. Within the New South Wales Institute of Teachers can you accommodate people like that? In many systems some of the very best people are often pushed aside because they do not fit the norm, but they are very effective teachers.

Mr Alegounarias—As an example, if you were to tie together the elements that constitute leadership—and in the way we tried to describe them, we think successfully—they add up to an individual who has the intellectual and personal capacities to analyse the causal relationships between kids learning and teaching—how you are actually effecting it—who is able to create change and improvement to those circumstances, for the sake of improved learning, and then bring people with them. There is nothing in those leadership standards that really goes beyond that and that accommodates, we think, what you are saying. They are not administrative. You can do the timetable. They are about the talent—as I say, the intellectual and personal capacity to see the issue, particularly with regard to teaching, to create change and improvement and to bring people with you. For that reason, our emphasis has not been on the regulatory aspect—that is, the need to have your postgraduate masters in something—but on the need to meet those characteristics. Your colleagues will say, 'Judith is a great teacher.' If those are the people we are accrediting then we will be successful.

Ms BIRD—Do you think employer bodies will then move their promotional recruitments to match the standards that you are talking about?

Mr Alegounarias—I would have to go with a disclaimer first—that is, it is not our role; it is an employment function, but I would say it would be consistent with what we have seen in the past—but only if we are very successful.

Ms BIRD—Yes, so they will sit back and wait to see how well you do it.

Mr Alegounarias—We intend to be successful because the central principle—and it goes to the issue about representing the interests of the profession—is that if the profession can credibly and reliably enough select the best people then it will have leverage over the employment decisions because they are the right decisions.

Ms BIRD—Do people pay a fee?

Mr Alegounarias—Once you are accredited. It is not a mandatory fee for current teachers unless they choose voluntarily to be accredited. It is only for new teachers. Our calculation is that we will have covered a majority of the teaching workforce in seven or so years. We could have accredited all existing teachers but it would have been a non-genuine tick-a-box approach. This is a genuine judgment of people's capacity to teach through a genuine induction process into the effectiveness of teaching. To do that properly will take us a few years.

Ms BIRD—It is just a bit different. I think some other places have bent their processes to tick everyone off in a box.

Mr Alegounarias—We quite consciously do not use the term 'registration'. We do not keep a register on the fact that you have a teaching qualification. We accredit people on their capacity to meet the requirements of teaching.

Ms BIRD—What is the fee? Have you set fees yet?

Mr Alegounarias—It is $80 for full competence.

Ms BIRD—Is that an annual fee?

Mr Alegounarias—It is an annual fee of $80.

Ms BIRD—What if I wanted to go up the scale? Do I pay increasingly more for higher levels?

Mr Alegounarias—In principle I expect that to be the case, but it is contingent on what we develop as a policy. We would expect that to be the case.

Mr HENRY—Patrick, earlier, in one of your responses, you mentioned national consistency. Is there scope for national standards and national accreditation? Would it be desirable?

Mr Lee—As Tom said, in principle our view is yes, but I would put three riders on it. I think they are natural riders because, if they are not there, it is a bit empty. You can get a national thing fairly simply, but if it does not have purpose in the schools, the work of teachers and their reality then what is it all about? You are hearing daily about the importance of the reality of schools. If it is a national thing which is a long way distant from that, it is a fairly pointless exercise.

So there are three riders, I think, and they are pretty important. The first one goes to the MCEETYA national framework of professional teaching standards. A number of institutions have been working on standards like these. They are not identical, but they are common enough. Not all have done it, but a number of them have it as their brief. What happened under the MCEETYA direction was that there was an instruction from all state ministers, including the Commonwealth minister, to get the collective act together and see if there was a framework that could accommodate those things. That was done. I have to say that our institute is very happy because they look rather similar to ours. They are not the same but we made the accommodation. So we are comfortable that our standards and that national framework are pretty much on foot. Three or four other institutes around the country are in the process of developing standards. For example, the new Queensland college has that on its work program for this year and next year. It starts off with a national framework of standards that is already there. It will have to workshop that with its own teachers, of course, because, if it has no local reality, it is also pointless.

On the assumption that there is something like a national framework of standards and there is a national vehicle or set of processes for the approval of programs which takes into account the requirements and interests of states, schools and mechanisms—we could spend time saying how that might happen, but that is the general principle—then our answer is yes. Our act allows that, in our advice to our minister—and what we are chartered to do is to advise on the approval of programs—nothing prevents us from taking into substantial account such a national process of approval or prevents that national process of approval in fact being the basis on which advice would be given. So there is no inhibition on that.

As Tom said, there is a view on our part that it is a natural area for national consistency, but it has to take into account that there are debates in all states. There are local realities that ministers, those who administer schools and teachers want to see taken into account. You would know that in the Northern Territory the preparation of teachers to teach Indigenous students is a very important issue. It may have been mentioned here. They build that in up there as a kind of pre-service requirement. A national approach which just decided to ignore that and say that the

legitimate interests of the Northern Territory for ensuring that their teachers had particular capacities to teach that large and important part of the population did not fit into the needs of some other players would constitute a net loss in terms of quality. I think if you are trying to staff schools in the Northern Territory you would come to that view very quickly. So a national approach which is immune to sensitivity to that would be a failure.

We would not ask this inquiry to recommend such a national approach willy-nilly. It is not better in itself without these other things. There are issues about literacy and all kinds of important things which should be built into teacher education. There are legitimate public debates about it. They are on now. They are good things. Your own terms of reference obviously reflect some of the important areas for the minister in setting it up and they overlap with the concerns of state ministers. A national approach which dropped that out and had a rather technical process of ticking a box and accrediting would be a pyrrhic achievement. We would support it, but it has to have substance and we need to be involved in it.

Mr Alegounarias—A generalised and abstracted approach or a separate set of standards or something that is done from a distance that did not build in regard for the legitimate role of states in ensuring the quality of teachers and the role of schools in judging quality would be counterproductive and short-lived.

Mr HENRY—Are there any barriers to recognition of qualifications from one state to the other?

Mr Alegounarias—We have not had mutual recognition arrangements, but we will have mutual recognition arrangements by the end of the year, because we now have standards and common processes. All other states and territories function under mutual recognition arrangements. So in effect there is no problem with portability at all.

Ms BIRD—Except that you have to pay a fee to each one as you apply?

Mr Alegounarias—When you are seeking to work in that jurisdiction you will pay a fee.

Mr Lee—But you do not have to send one back to us. This is a great flaw, I have to say.

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

Mr Alegounarias—Thank you, Mr Chair. We will leave you with multiple copies of our teaching standards for your information.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[2.40 pm]

BAKER, Mr Ian George, Director, Policy and Programs, Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales

NOTT, Ms Rosalie Mary, Assistant Director, Education Policy, Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales

RODNEY, Mr Paul John, State Coordinator, Vocational Education and Training and Teacher Development, Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales

CHAIR—I welcome witnesses from the Catholic Education Commission. I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard and the record is made available to the public through the parliament's website. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Baker—We understand we are here really to engage in a conversation, so the introductory remarks will be fairly brief. The commission made a submission on 10 May 2005. I understand you have that submission. I do have some copies if you do not have any available. With your indulgence we table a supplementary submission, which is really key statistics in relation to the employment of teachers in Catholic schools in New South Wales and also some statistics on teachers involved in professional development programs which the commission manages.

I have a couple of points to make about the commission. The Catholic Education Commission is established by the bishops of New South Wales and is responsible to the bishops, but we do not actually own or manage Catholic schools in New South Wales. There are some 584 schools. They are owned and managed locally by dioceses, and we do not actually employ teachers. They are employed locally by the dioceses and/or the schools. But again we represent the different Catholic authorities in New South Wales which do employ the teachers, and you see from the statistics that, as at this headcount, there are some 18,000 teachers in Catholic schools in New South Wales. We are not directly involved in preservice education. You might be wondering why we are here, given the litany of what we are not doing!

CHAIR—I am sure you are coming to that.

Mr Baker—That is right. We are involved in aspects of teacher in-service or continuing education. And, of course, we have views on behalf of the people we represent in relation to preservice training. Obviously we have done a bit of homework. We have noted the comments along the way that there have been many teacher education inquiries. We do not see that in itself as a bad thing. Teaching is something that needs to be constantly reassessed and re-evaluated. The first Catholic teacher education inquiry was, arguably, conducted in 389 AD, when Saint Augustine wrote 'The Teachers'.

CHAIR—I am pleased to hear you are well ahead of the game!

Mr Baker—Yes, we trace our involvement from 389 AD. Without sounding pompous about it, I think Winston Churchill's observation is very apposite to teaching: a job is the way we make a living, and a vocation is the way we make a difference. We hope that teachers in our schools, in the ideal, would see teaching as a vocation. I am now going to hand over to my colleague Paul Rodney. Paul is our state coordinator in relation to matters of teacher training. Paul will give you a quick sketch of our involvement in continuing teacher education. There is some data on the third page of our supplementary submission.

Mr Rodney—Thank you Ian, and thanks for the opportunity to present this afternoon around the issues that Ian described. I will be talking about term of reference No. 10, which is the 'construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning'. The two areas of significant professional learning in the state are through the sponsorship of the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme and the significant number of DET teachers that we train in New South Wales.

The Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme, as you would be aware, has been running in a similar format since 2000. Since that time, we have delivered in excess of 100 individual projects within our sector or across the three sectors and we have directly engaged in excess of 23,000 teachers. As Ian said, we have passed more accurate statistics on to you for your record. The success of the Quality Teacher Programme in New South Wales is that we have approached it cross-sectorally. The other school sectors and the commission work very collaboratively. We have always been that way, and we have been successful in working that way since the start of the AGQTP in 2000. A number of projects have achieved their high level of success because of that collegiality.

One of the focus areas that we have worked on together is the delivery of curriculum with information and communication technologies. Certainly it is a growing area of curriculum in New South Wales. Because it is common curriculum, obviously common approaches to that pedagogy are a significant way to take it forward. We have also worked on areas of safe schooling. New and emerging pedagogies have been brought to attention through government policy, through professional associations of teachers and through our academic colleagues.

I will move on to describe two of those projects, just so you get a sense of the range. At one end, we have a very large cross-sector project and, at the other, a very small one. I will start with a project that we are working on at the moment across the sectors. We are working with the Institute of Teachers, our academic partners, the Professional Teachers Council and the unions to produce a structure and product to support those beginning teachers. Those teachers need registration with the Institute of Teachers in their first year or years of teaching and we acknowledge across the three sectors that they need that additional support.

The area that our research and national research are showing us is that area in the document that Tom handed to you. Element 5 of the standards is classroom behaviour management, which is of particular concern to our beginning teachers. Our beginning teachers are arriving with significant pedagogy and specific area knowledge. It is difficult, obviously, to fully engage students with those pedagogies and to deliver that knowledge without that management. Even

though we will be working with all standards, our particular emphasis in this project will be around element 5.

We are approaching it with a three-pronged attack across the sectors. As I said, we are working with our partners on this. We are doing 10 case studies where mentors and beginning teachers—what we call our 'new scheme teachers' in New South Wales—will work together and be supported to work together around what will in most instances be a lesson study. That is the means by which professional learning occurs in Japan; we are trying to adapt that for use in Australia. Colleagues will work collaboratively in each other's classroom to adapt means by which curricula can be delivered, discuss it at the professional level, enhance it and then re-deliver it.

For the second part of the project we are bringing together those colleagues we talked about before: academics, the Professional Teaching Council, the institute and representatives of the school sector themselves. They will work together in symposium to come up with what we believe to be targeted funded elements of the project to produce product that will feed back into that case study but also make a collective group of resources that will be shared later in the year when those case studies come back together. They will be put together and become a shareable resource through a CD-ROM interface.

Just quickly, one other project at the other end of the scale—very small by comparison, but geographically very large—is in our diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, which is about half the state, that has had a project called *Acquiring information literacy*. A Marist brother consultant was able to access computers that were hand-me-downs from a government department in Canberra and visited schools with a car load of three or four of these computers. He introduced teachers in these rural and isolated communities with schools of two, three or four teachers to ICTs, and built a network or, if there was a small network, acted as repairer and enhancer to push it that little bit further. He would usually stay at that school for a week and work with those teachers, their level of skills, their infrastructure, their software, their children, with all those limitations that they offer. It is taking PD to the teacher. Certainly, all the quality characteristics around PD were on show in that particular project. It was very well received and it continues. Upon leaving a school, he will have established networks between those teachers and brought their skills up to a level where they could be interacting with each other across the internet as a network.

The last thing is that we certainly look forward to further collaboration with the Australian and state governments, our colleagues across the other sectors and our academics. We are having a lot of success, which only encourages us to approach professional learning that way.

CHAIR—Thank you. I think professional learning is a really important element and, given the information explosion, I do not envy the task of any baby boomer teacher of trying to teach computing to a class of bright nine-year-olds who are probably pretty quick on the computer. It certainly provides a challenge. You talked about delivering professional learning to teachers in the remote and far reaches of the New South Wales area where you have the added complication that, for a teacher from an isolated school to attend formal professional learning in a capital city, there are a range of transport costs, the need for accommodation while they are away and the potential cost of flying in a replacement teacher while that person is away. There are some real issues in relation to providing professional learning for people in rural and remote Australia. I am interested in your thoughts on that and any program initiatives you have in mind. Obviously,

some things could be delivered via the internet, but I would imagine, like for any professional, there is a great benefit in some actual face-to-face brainstorming sessions together with their peers rather than doing everything via the internet or through a range of remote methods.

Mr Baker—I will make a couple of comments and then my colleagues might want to elaborate. The project Paul just outlined was a classic case of taking the in-service to the teachers, not expecting the teachers to come to the in-service. Paul could elaborate further. In relation to your reference to the ICT challenges around the older teachers, at the risk of stereotyping people, on the second page of the tabled supplementary submission you will see the years of experience. I know you have had evidence on this before from other jurisdictions but, like almost all agencies responsible for schools, we have the famous bimodal distribution. You can see on page 2 that we had two peaks. One is from teachers in their first five years, and then teachers with more than 20 years experience. It has been remarked upon that in many of our schools we will have new teachers who have been taught by some of the older teachers, if not literally in that school then teachers who are still on the establishment, as it were.

To bring that back to your question, we are mindful—again at the risk of oversimplifying it—that there are two ICT agendas. One is for the more established and more mature teacher. We are at risk in getting into stereotypes because there are some very technologically proficient older teachers and, conversely, there are some new teachers who are not. We are mindful that, as a generalisation, for teachers with more than 20 years of experience there often needs to be a program different from that for new teachers.

CHAIR—I guess that would apply as well to the science area, where there are new fields that did not exist when some of those teachers trained.

Mr Baker—My last comment before my colleagues might want to comment is that, apart from the technical skills—actually being able to turn the computer on and do a few things—the more challenging PD task is to skill teachers in the pedagogies—that is, how to use computers as a teaching tool. The danger with computers is that they just reinforce the administrative role of teachers. That is nice but we actually want them used as a teaching tool, so a lot of thought and energy is going into how you better use computers as a teaching tool. They are well established in schools as part of the administration. Perhaps my colleagues would like to make a comment.

Mr Rodney—I would certainly like to comment on the issue that you raised. That is why I chose that as an example—

CHAIR—That is a great example. It is a great idea.

Mr Rodney—The alternative would have been what you have described. But the risks in doing that would be that the computers on which you would deliver your training may be in Sydney so that, while the skills they would learn would fascinate them, they would certainly not be transportable to their location, where they might be using with limited skill 10-year old computers with limited bandwidth and would not have access to the software that was part of the actual program in Sydney. As far as we can we, as part of the delivery, work with teachers so that the projects produce a shareable product. Although there are the 34,000-odd teachers that we have professionally developed directly, there are many tens of thousands more who have

benefited from the actual CD-ROM product at the end of each of the projects, so it is a wonderful way to distribute the learnings across a broad community.

The cost of producing the CD-ROMs is low comparative to any other means. If you make them interactive and not just an electronic textbook, we find that teachers tend to engage with them more. We try to make them so that they are usable in three contexts. The individual teacher can engage with them and work through them at their pace for their learnings. They can be used in faculty group where the faculty work through them in a process, and those steps through the process are usually mapped out on the CD-ROMs. Also, if teachers have the IT skills for using the internet as the means by which they network, the CD-ROMs encourage them to do that as well. As you said in the last part of your question, we have found that, for that last structure to work, some, even if it only be once, face-to-face engagement—so that they actually know the person at the other end—continues that network far longer. If you try to establish a network without any person-to-person engagement it is difficult to maintain.

Ms Nott—There are a couple of other initiatives that our schools are involved in. The first is the Learning Federation work, and I am not quite sure how familiar you would be with that. It is a national cooperative effort to develop online curriculum content. It has been in development for quite a few years. It is really at a point where across the school years some quite unique resources are now available to teachers no matter where they are, because it is online. In our dioceses the IT people and the curriculum people are working together. That is a major challenge. No matter how many years of teaching experience you may have, it is about integrating the IT capacity into your pedagogy while taking account of the curriculum demands that you are meeting. So across Catholic schools in New South Wales there is some exploration through the work of the Learning Federation to access online curriculum content.

CHAIR—Do you see virtually all your professional learning being delivered online rather than through having people travel to capital cities?

Ms Nott—No, we have a variety of approaches. Certainly where online can meet a demand, it is there. But I think also people who are responsible for teachers' ongoing learning recognise the fact that we should never underestimate the value of face to face, of people just being able to sit, talk and communicate live. Of course the other thing is that teachers value highly the opportunity to see each other's practice and to be stimulated by that. So I think there is a need for a balance. Obviously it is a lot easier to do that in metropolitan Sydney than it is in more remote parts of New South Wales. That is a challenge for people who are leaders in those areas.

Mr Baker—That is another reason why we are keen—as Paul referred to—for cross-sectoral approaches. If you are working in a Catholic school in a country town it is much easier to work collaboratively with your local government school, Christian school or whatever than to drive 150 kilometres for the privilege of having a meeting. There are some occasions when we obviously want to bring our people together on the basis of their role in Catholic schools per se, but most of these curriculum agendas are cross-sectoral. Particularly in country areas that is the way we like to work, so that teachers can get together in their local country town and work collaboratively on an issue.

Ms BIRD—I would like to explore another area, recognising that you are spokespeople for your organisation. Have you had feedback or surveyed your member dioceses and schools about

what their feelings are about the quality of beginning teachers coming out of universities into your schools?

Mr Baker—We do not have systematic empirical evidence. We did, when putting together our 10 May response, get some input on that and related issues from the various Catholic employers. I would say that on balance the employers are happy with the quality of new graduates. But new graduates are not all the same. In the area we were just talking about, IT, there actually was some concern, a counterintuitive discovery, that new graduates were not necessarily the hot shots on the use and pedagogy of IT. There are some questions amongst our employing authorities about the nature of undergraduate programs and whether undergraduate programs are addressing the needs and equipping new teachers as well as they might. Generally speaking, the response would be yes, Catholic employing authorities are happy with the quality of the new teachers who are coming out. But there do appear to be some gaps in their preparation. As I say, it is a bit counterintuitive that one of the gaps would appear to be the use of ICT, given the generation.

Ms BIRD—It is interesting you say that, because the ICT—and I have probably been a bit remiss in not chasing up the universities; my apologies for that, Chair, I meant to do it—subjects seem to be about ICT rather than how to utilise ICT as a teaching tool.

Mr Baker—That is right. Just to endorse that, yes. Hallelujah! There is too much put on the mechanics and not enough on the pedagogy. We did make some references in our submission to the universities' selection and recognition of faculty members. There are some undercurrents of concern amongst our employing authorities that perhaps teacher education faculties are not quite as focused on the needs of the third-millennium teacher as they might be.

Ms BIRD—I suspect that might be because a lot of those baby boomers in teacher training in the universities themselves are not overly confident at using it.

Mr Baker—Let me come at it in a more positive way. We are certainly strong advocates of creating more synergies between schools and education faculties in universities. I think there is too much of the provider to client relationship; there needs to be much more of a partnership between schools and university education faculties. There are some innovative programs going on. The new Catholic university in Sydney, Notre Dame, is working more closely with Catholic school authorities to get some greater synergies between schools, the providers of teacher education and the Institute of Teachers, who we were just listening to. I think the whole linking of induction to accreditation will drive that as well.

Ms BIRD—It is interesting that the University of Western Sydney witnesses were saying that one of the most energising things for them has been the education support unit at the university. It has taught them and assisted them to create visual CD-ROM and web based type educational tools. Perhaps part of the problem can be those units, which are not actually part of education departments and faculties. They are professional resourcing at universities. I think TAFE colleges are the same—they often have an instructional design unit that does that stuff. It is interesting that you make that observation. That confirms something I had thought about but forgot to ask the universities in that way.

Mr SAWFORD—On the selection of people for teacher education, you mentioned in your submission about the need for personal interviews to assess attributes of young people or even

mature age people, for that matter. Some people have put forward the argument that interviews are too costly, too time consuming and that there is no evidence to suggest they make one iota of difference anyway. Do you have a different experience?

Mr Baker—I will comment and then my colleagues might also. There have been some false starts in this area. I know the Australian Catholic University for a while had an interview process. It has been abandoned for some of the reasons you mentioned, such as cost. I think some legal issues were also raised about the potential for antidiscrimination. I think it was misguided legal advice, myself. Of course, people are aware of models coming out of medical faculties where they, pioneered by the University of Newcastle, increasingly use interviews. My personal view is that, where possible, there should be multiple indicators, not just a UAI. At the end of the day, to be a successful teacher you actually have to like children. That does not always go with a high UAI. I do not know if my colleagues want to comment on that.

Mr SAWFORD—Following on from that, some universities delay the entry into schools until the third year. That is a long time to go into a teaching or education course and suddenly decide you do not like kids or you do not like the feel of being in a school.

Ms BIRD—Or they do not like you.

Mr SAWFORD—Or they do not like you either. That is even worse. Then you have other universities that throw them in the deep end: straight away they have some limited activity with children and schools. Getting the balance is always the key question. What does your commission favour?

Mr Baker—There is not a firm commission view except to say that in the context of other inquiries, such as the Ramsey inquiry, our commission did support the retention of the end on Dip. Ed. But that was partly for pragmatic supply reasons, particularly in maths and science. Otherwise, you are cutting off a source of entry. We do not have a firm position. I am always nervous about the Henry Ford approach: it is black and it all looks the same. My personal view is that there should be a plurality of approaches. The institute process, if it works—and we are confident it will work—will provide a process for when the teacher starts teaching to make an assessment as to whether their training to that point has been successful or not.

So my personal comment, and it is only a personal one, is that the commission has in the past supported the retention of the end-on Dip. Ed, particularly in relation to secondary education as a matter of maintaining a pathway into teaching, not cutting it off. My own personal bias is for a range of modes of teacher preparation, and we have the teaching institute here then to do quality assurance once teachers actually start teaching.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not want to know the names of the universities, but are there any universities that the Catholic Education Commission does not like to get students from? Do you have any reasons why you might do that, or is it just open slather?

Mr Baker—We are not an employer, so I am not being evasive, but I am honestly not aware of concerns about a particular university. But on the other hand, on the issue that we traversed a little while ago, there has been some concern about whether a number of university faculties are

adequately preparing teachers in the pedagogy of IT—not the mechanics; they can all turn on and use a computer. But we do not have a list of universities that we do not want to use.

Mr SAWFORD—You mentioned maths and science, Ian. In the last 20 years, there has been a drop in the number of individuals studying pure mathematics in a university, from 100,000 to less than 14,000, I think it is now. That is a huge drop, a national disgrace in many ways. Does your commission have a view about that limited pool of maths-science teachers? Because the smaller it gets, the less opportunities there are. And many of those graduates, of course, are attracted to other professions that are much more high flying and perhaps high paying—not that pay is necessarily everything. Do you have a view about that, and what sort of impact is that having on your secondary schools in particular?

Mr Baker—Again, I do not have any empirical data, but on all the evidence available to us, yes, for us, like most school authorities, there is an issue with recruiting maths-science teachers. And, as I just said, that was one of the reasons why, in the context of the Ramsey review, the commission supported the retention of the end-on Dip. Ed: so as not to cut off more mature students' pathways into teaching—not just for maths-science, but one of the areas the commission certainly had in mind was maths-science teachers. So it is certainly a pressure point.

Mr Rodney—I think another indicator for us is the need for professional learning by the teachers about the evolving science that you mentioned, and certainly earlier. A little under 10 per cent of the projects that we have engaged in in the AGQTP have been in support of science K-12.

Mr SAWFORD—One last question about technology—tech studies and vocational education in schools. What is the story from the Catholic schools in New South Wales concerning those areas?

Mr Baker—I will make a brief comment and then my colleagues might like to comment. We have been strong supporters of VET; about 30 per cent of the Catholic year 11 and 12 campuses should do at least one VET course in those years. On the last sheet of those sheets we have just tabled there is some data about the number of VET teachers that the commission have helped in respect of the training they require to be accredited. So the short answer is we support vocational education and training initiatives.

Mr Rodney—Tech being in addition to computing, ITC or—

Mr SAWFORD—It can include that as well.

Mr Rodney—Okay. Certainly, in New South Wales, a number of universities are engaging in courses where they are looking at second-career entry for teachers, and a number of those teachers are very successful in the schools. With the VET teachers and their training, most of our VET teachers started their teaching life within a particular key learning area other than VET but were then trained, post their initial degree, to an AQF qualification and outcome around the pedagogies of delivering VET, particularly around the judgments of deeming competence.

Ms BIRD—Say I am retraining to do hospitality VET, am I likely to be an old home science teacher getting the VET level qualification or am I likely to be an English teacher retraining to deliver building and construction VET courses?

Mr Rodney—We think we have a great system in New South Wales. We engage industry employers; the accrediting authorities from industry; the TAFE curriculum centres and TAFE institutes; VETAB, which is our state credentialing body; and the three school sectors and the Board of Studies. They collaborate to determine what the entry benchmark is. It might be that you are home economics trained. The present benchmark for hospitality is that you must have had six semesters—in other words, six subjects for one semester—in cooking, food and beverage or the like before you reach the benchmark to enter training. Then you do subsequent training: you do industry placement, additional training at TAFE so you can be accredited against the AQTF, plus you receive what we call orientation training, which delivers the subtleties around what the industry is doing, the most current career pathway in and what it means to deliver and assess against units of competence. Each of those industry areas listed there has a benchmark for entry. So not all teachers can put their hand up. They have to have a certain level on entry. And, because we are having the process accredited before we deliver it, it actually guarantees our RTO status as well. The level of our QA around our delivery and assessment is guaranteed up front.

Mr Baker—Just to emphasise: those benchmarks are common to all school sectors.

Ms BIRD—Yes. I am a former secondary and TAFE teacher. I remember the huge flurry of TAFE concern about VET being delivered by schools. That is how it has been addressed since I left, obviously—it is an entry benchmark.

Mr Rodney—It is important to note that the teachers themselves carry a teaching degree, certificate IV workplace training and assessing as well as their industry-specific level II or level III qualification against the AQTF.

Mr HENRY—To pick up on the practicum: in your submission you indicate that you believe that there is a need to reinvigorate the practicum experience for all trainee teachers. What needs to be done and how much practicum is needed? What recommendations would you like to see with respect to practicum taken forward by this committee? You also mentioned practicum in terms of attrition. Perhaps you would like to expand on that as well.

Mr Baker—We are very much in our submission reflecting what those Catholic employing authorities were telling us—that the practicum is seen to be the touchstone of the early development of teachers. I must say that content is important, too. It is no good having all the skills if you do not also have the content knowledge necessary to be a teacher. There is a sense out there that the practicum has lost focus and lost priority. There are funding issues, which I know other bodies appearing before you have brought your attention to. There need to be incentives for existing teachers to take on the mentoring role. The new Institute of Teachers might be able to provide a framework for that. There is a sense that the practicum is not quite working at the moment.

As far as the length is concerned, I must say that it strikes me that there is a bit of a paradox. We are constantly encouraged to work in a competency based model of education and training

and yet we get bogged down in length. I can think of some people who could spend their whole life in a practicum and still could not teach. Conversely, other people could have a shortened practicum. The emphasis should be on reaching competencies, and I think that is where the institute is taking us—at least, that is where we would like the institute to go.

Mr HENRY—That means there needs to be an appropriate assessment process?

Mr Baker—Yes, and some flexibility. We believe and hope that that is where the institute model is going, bearing in mind that a teacher can be assessed as competent—there is a maximum period of time of three or four years, as we heard the institute explaining, but that is the maximum. To try and summarise it: the practicum needs to be re-energised. Strategies need to be developed to make it attractive for existing competent teachers to become mentors. My personal view is that debating whether it should be 40 days or 45 days is beside the point. It is about making sure that teachers are signed off against a set of competencies.

Mr HENRY—In relation to attrition, you said there should be practicum earlier in the in-service program.

Mr Baker—We do not have a policy position on that, but, for the sorts of reasons that have already been touched on this afternoon, I think the general view would be 'the earlier the better'. There is nothing more tragic than someone discovering three years into a program that it is really not their thing. Having said that, we would not want to make that a hard and fast rule. That was one of the debates about whether the Dip Ed should be retained, because, by definition, in a Dip Ed you are not going to get anywhere near a classroom until year 4.

Ms BIRD—It is only year 1 after you have made the decision to become a teacher. That is the difference.

Mr Baker—I take your point.

Mr HENRY—From our interests, and certainly my interests, there seem to some differing opinions, across the board, on the issue of practicum, when it is delivered in the program, how it is delivered et cetera, even to the point that some universities do not think it is part of their responsibility.

Mr Baker—We would want to see it as a shared responsibility. One of our mantras is that there have to be more synergies between schools and faculties of education.

Mr HENRY—Does that mean the culture of teachers needs to change a bit towards supporting a mentoring ethic?

Mr Baker—The short answer is yes. The old tried-and-true way is to pay people. There are a couple of problems with that: you have to identify a funding source and—perhaps this is a bit cynical—that suggests that the only reason competent teachers will mentor is if they get paid.

Ms BIRD—Or incompetent teachers.

Mr Baker—That is right. My personal view is that, with the emerging institute structures, as the institute moves to accredit people at the highest levels of accomplishment and leadership, one would imagine that one of the criteria for being accredited at accomplishment or leadership might be that you have demonstrated an interest in mentoring new staff. So I would rather go down the structural route than dangle money in front of people.

Mr HENRY—So that it gets built into a structure so that it is constantly in the process, whereas, at the moment, it seems to be a hit and miss. That is my assessment of it, though I am not close to it.

Mr Baker—I think you are right. I think there is a general sense that the practicum has fallen into a hole. There are various views on how to extricate it from that hole. My personal view is that the institute processes have the capacity to do that.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We really appreciate your contribution. The secretariat will provide you with a proof copy of your evidence and a transcript will be placed on the parliamentary website.

[3.29 pm]

FOSTER, Ms Jude, President, Learning Difficulties Coalition of New South Wales Inc.; and Managing Director, Fostering Partnerships Pty Ltd

GOTTLIEB, Dr Margaret, Member, Management Committee, Learning Difficulties Coalition of New South Wales Inc.

CHAIR—Welcome. I remind you that the public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's website. Do you have any comments on the capacity in which you appear?

Dr Gottlieb—I work in a Wrap Around Kids program in a high school, which Jude set up. As well as that, I work in general practice and have a very strong interest in psychological medicine.

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

Ms Foster—Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the hearing. I am representing two groups today, born from my experience as a parent of a child with complex needs. I will start with a short overview of the relevance of those organisations for the teacher training inquiry. As the committee would be aware, one in five children currently attending Australian schools requires additional support for learning difficulties, physical or intellectual disabilities or medical conditions that impact at school—conditions such as ADHD, autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy or chronic or mental health conditions.

The Learning Difficulties Coalition represents individuals and families with those conditions and advocates for their needs, particularly in the school arena. I have been a member of the Learning Difficulties Coalition for 15 years and president for the last 1½ years. The Learning Difficulties Coalition operates a parent help line from its office at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, where families are provided with information on and support in understanding and advocating for their child. Ev Katahanas, who has been with me for the past two days, is one of the people who answers that help line every day at the children's hospital.

Many of the calls that the parent help line receives relate to school issues. The Learning Difficulties Coalition are able to provide contact information for families on links to other parent support groups. We also contribute to a number of other government committees and consultations. We provide seminars each term at the Children's Hospital at Westmead on topics that are requested by families and these are often school related.

My second role this afternoon is as Managing Director of Fostering Partnerships and developer of the Wrap Around Kids program. My difficulties in advocating for my own son as a health professional were the impetus for me establishing the company in 2000. The Wrap

Around Kids program has been developed to be a sustainable, collaborative process to support students, based on the evidence of best practice.

Systematic teacher education is the foundation on which Wrap Around Kids is built. Over the last six years, I have worked with approximately 5,000 teachers in three states and provided them with information about commonly occurring medical conditions and current best practice, with a special focus on practical strategies to support students in the classroom. I have surveyed these teachers and evaluated every contact with them as part of an ongoing refinement of the Wrap Around Kids program to ensure that the program has been relevant for the teachers. I have found that teachers have been hungry for practical information and professional support.

I have provided intensive, centralised training for two teachers who have been identified within each school, who are trained as Wrap Around coordinators in that school. They have attended that training with other teachers from primary and high schools, Catholic and state schools, who all get together. We have this incredible opportunity—and it is often the first time that that has ever happened for them—to build interschool relationships between these various teachers as they are given the skills and the tools that they require to implement the program. I have brought along the handbook today, which I cannot leave, but I can certainly pass that across. It is one of the tools that I provide for them in their implementation of the program.

The contact between the teachers during these periods of training has really improved the transition processes and development of interschool partnerships. I find it disturbing when I hear—and I have heard it from a number of the witnesses who have presented—that there is a division between primary and high school being reinforced right from the first days of university in some cases, where undergraduates are on different campuses and they have completely different curriculums. Then, at school, they are scratching their heads and wondering why there are problems with transition and why there is an 'us and them' kind of mentality between primary and high schools.

Regular contact each term with health professionals recruited for Wrap Around meetings or case management meetings has established relationships between managing professionals and a sharing of knowledge and expertise across disciplines. The standardised delivery of the program has emphasised the need to clarify the language used by other professionals involved in management to ensure there is a mutual understanding of student needs.

Teachers have reported that the contact with other disciplines has provided them with excellent professional development and assisted them in providing student access to curriculum and understanding why one approach is more successful than another. I call this 'transferring medical principles to an education setting' because teachers begin to look for the cause of presenting difficulties rather than treating symptomatic presentation of behaviours.

Teachers have acknowledged how easy it has been for them to transfer their new skills in management of other students when they have built up skills and increased the strategies they have to apply to students with learning difficulties. Anecdotally, principals reported a reduction in teacher mental health days and in student suspensions. Every teacher on staff has access to our online resource library, and parents authorise access to Wrap Around reports and assessments that are available via the secure web application Wrap Around Kids online. We also plan to showcase teacher excellence in the public part of the site, where we can have case studies and

highlight some of the many innovative strategies that I see in many schools but which are not shared. There is not an avenue for them to be shared in a much more public arena.

The results of the program in New South Wales and in Victoria have been consistent. Many children who are presenting as a concern at school are often misunderstood, and a significant number of undetected conditions, such as language disorders, autistic spectrum disorders and medical conditions, have been identified as underpinning the whole global difficulties for that student. External evaluation is currently being conducted by Professor Phillip Hazel, who is a psychiatrist at the University of Newcastle and Hunter Area Health.

I have to confess that I am surprised that the two biggest issues I consistently hear of from the schools that I work in, in primary and high school settings, were not mentioned until the last one or two witnesses presenting today. I am constantly hearing that teachers are struggling to manage different learning styles, a topic that was raised by the Deputy Chair yesterday afternoon. The other issue is difficulty in managing challenging behaviours, which was mentioned today for the first time. In a recent survey I conducted of 194 teachers in north-eastern Victoria, 70 per cent were not confident in managing challenging behaviours, and more than 35 per cent were not able to translate recommendations from psychological or medical professionals into classroom strategies. If 20 per cent of students require additional support, would it not make more sense to equip all teachers with the ability to develop flexible teaching plans to enable them to modify or extend student curriculum based on need?

Teachers participating in Wrap Around Kids have reported that they are transferring their skills for teaching children with learning difficulties to the remainder of the class as good teaching practice.

Much has been mentioned about the shortage of technology teachers, which raises the issue of technology competence, as we just heard about from the Catholic Education Commission. As I mentioned in my submission, my experience in teacher training has shown me a great variation in the IT competence of teachers at all levels and in different settings. Forty per cent of the same group in north-eastern Victoria rated themselves as having excellent computer skills. This was a much higher level of skills than I would have guessed and than any other teachers that I have surveyed have shown. I have never attended a school where there has been a structured approach to updating IT skills for staff, as one would find in a business or corporation of the same size.

During the time that I have been listening to evidence to the committee, I have been struck by the exclusion of many of the issues for rural schools in some of the presentations that have been given by the universities—in particular, that there has not been an embracing of IT as a way to deliver and provide a connection between small rural schools and major urban centres. Fostering Partnerships have been very fortunate to be supported by Apple computers in the United States. They have provided us with software and hardware to continue the development that they believe is so innovative.

At the end of last year, at Charles Sturt University, I met with the faculty of communication disorders, which housed the speech pathologists, because—as you have seen from my submission—I think language disorders and language processing is a really big issue in a lot of the areas of the classroom that we are talking about. We were discussing the potential for delivering services into classrooms in rural and remote schools using videoconferencing as part

of the Wrap Around Kids program. It would be mutually beneficial, giving the university real case studies to be able to discuss directly in their lecture theatre and allowing them to follow up on students after an intervention. We also talked about the potential for speech pathologists to go out to rural schools in their undergraduate time and have the same sort of exposure as some of the teaching undergraduates that we have heard about. For example, the University of Western Sydney this morning talked about the undergraduates going and working in the schools; this is a similar concept. It is something I see as very practical and mutually beneficial—for the undergraduates as well as for the rural and remote schools.

I understand that yesterday Andrew Mullins raised the issue of the need to develop partnerships with parents. When a child has difficulties, families can become pitted against the school, which can lead to a suspension cycle—which you mentioned yesterday, Mr Sawford. I have learnt from teachers that they want support in communicating with families, and they have found that the involvement of health professionals changes the dynamic of difficult meetings. Only yesterday, I had to briefly leave to participate in a teleconference with a school who are running Wrap Around Kids this term, for the first time on their own. One of the students being discussed was on their second long suspension of 21 days since they started this term in February. There was a lot of hostility and emotion from the family and it was extremely useful to have the general practitioner, speech pathologist and psychologist involved.

If we as a society do not see that the future lies with the children and are not prepared to allocate the necessary resources to pay teachers appropriately, then we will be sabotaging our own future. Excellent teachers need to be paid more. They can change the lives of young people. I am forever optimistic that, eventually, a government inquiry will respond with more than just rhetoric and a report that no-one will act on. I am really hopeful about this inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, because you have repeatedly stated your commitment to effect real change in teacher training and to look at creative solutions.

CHAIR—I will just comment that, whilst a lot of the material that we have heard in the hearings today and yesterday has been very much metropolitan centric, we have had a range of hearings where issues relating to regional, rural and remote schools have been raised. There has been a broad cross-section of evidence given, as well as what you have heard in this very much metropolitan centric couple of days. From the terms of reference point of view, particularly in relation to Wrap Around Kids, and knowing a little about the program, I guess that perhaps you see a priority, as part of teacher training, is to make beginning teachers more aware that the behavioural things they see may be manifestations of wider medical problems, perhaps raising an awareness that there is a broader medical background to a particular condition.

Ms Foster—I would say that teachers need to understand more about some of the physiology and developmental issues that affect children in their growth and development because they are often not aware of that element. Whilst they can identify that a child is out of step with their peers, they are not really sure what to do after that. That is one of the things that they often struggle with. A high number of students have been identified with problems in processing language. They may have been on a downward spiral of punishment and it may have been thought that they were not trying when they have an underlying disorder in how their brain is processing information. There needs to be a greater understanding of the role of that. As I said in the submission, there is a difference between receptive and expressive language. I need to go right back to explaining the differences when I am working with teachers so that they understand

that just because a child can be extremely articulate does not mean that they are then able to get the same ideas down on paper. It is because they have a difficulty in how their brain is processing information.

So teachers need more of that fundamental understanding about physiology and development. I also think they have gained enormous professional support from contact with other disciplines—Margaret might like to comment on that. I do not think teachers feel so alone when they have these ongoing relationships with other people who they can consult with. I know that you have seen the film that we made with a number of schools on this topic. My favourite line in the film is where the principal from John Paul College in Coffs Harbour says that this program has opened up conversations that have never been held in staffrooms before, where people are actually declaring that they are struggling with management of a student. They have adopted a much more professional problem-solving approach, which is a really different way of operating. It has resulted in a really profound shift in the culture of school.

CHAIR—Do you see that this sort of approach is better handled through ongoing professional learning once a teacher has a bit more experience? The problem we are facing as a committee is that we have this incredibly crowded curriculum. The issue we face every time is that we have no problem finding things to put in there but finding the things to leave out to make space for those is a challenge. So do you think it is more beneficial to take a teacher with a year or so of experience—or two or three years—and then add this sort of approach to their level of skills rather than trying to do it as a beginning teacher?

Ms Foster—I think that 20 per cent of the curriculum should be allocated to learning difference and understanding behaviour management based on evidence. That is really where teachers are struggling. They are not coping in that area. That is why in the public inquiry into education in New South Wales it has come out that there are so many teachers who are on stress leave. There are people who are not coping in classes because they are out of ideas.

I suppose that is where having the health professionals coming in through Wrap Around Kids has provided them with lots of other options—lots of other different ways of looking at problems. So I think they actually need it before they start. It is a different way of looking at problems.

I guess that the behaviour is another issue. Often the way behaviour is managed is not practical in a classroom for a teacher. Mr Sawford raised this whole issue about the need for teachers to tailor the curriculum or access to the curriculum for an individual student, and that is absolutely how it should be. I see teachers who do it so well, but I see many others who are struggling to do it—and, more often, that is the more common experience.

Dr Gottlieb—I wear several hats here. I have a daughter who is graduating in a few weeks from nursing and who has ADHD, so I have personal experience with her learning difficulties and her hyperactivity. So from wearing my parent hat, and having interacted with the private and public school systems in her education, it is clear to me that many of the teachers did not actually know about learning difficulties. I have to confess that I did not recognise that she was not learning until when, by year 3, she could not read a word—and she was clearly bright and had bright parents. I found a lot of resistance within the education department, both at her public school in Neutral Bay and at her secondary school, which is a good private school, with the

whole concept of learning difficulties. There was a lot of attribution of her difficult behaviour to just wilfulness and all the usual stories.

So my take on this is that teachers should learn this very early on. I do not think you should hit school as a fully trained-up teacher without having a good awareness of the kinds of cognitive learning problems that kids carry with them and also a fairly reasonable amount of knowledge about behavioural techniques and psychological interventions. I think to go into school as a teacher without being armed with those skills early on really means that you are underskilled. In five years time you will benefit from additional training in that area, but I think that everyone should have that training.

I saw teachers who were unable to interact with parents. I made a few notes. I guess this also pertains to my Wrap Around Kids stuff. I have been doing the Wrap Around Kids program at Mosman high for four years now. We sit around a table like this. There are parents, the principal or deputy principal, a school adviser, a year coordinator, a speech pathologist, me and a school counsellor. It is the most useful thing that most of those parents have done with their children. The children usually come with history. One of the things that has always struck me is that the history does not travel with them. We see kids from years 7 and 8 often. They have come from primary schools, and when the parents come in they say, 'Yes, we've got all this stuff at home,' or they have given it to the counsellor on the first day and it is in the top drawer of the counsellor's office. So the teachers are faced with a child who has a history that no-one knows about. The parents really do not know who to address their comments to, and the child spends one, two or three disrupted years not really gaining very much out of school. When they finally get to Wrap Around Kids and we talk about it in a conversation with all of those people in one room that probably shifts that child's potential more than anything else that we could have done.

So I am incredibly impressed with the process. I do not know these children. I am not their GP. I act as a resource person. But I find that the parents have an enormous amount of information. Nobody talks to each other generally outside of that meeting room. Often these kids have had, in isolation, social problems and learning difficulties. Some of them have intellectual impairment but some do not. Some of the teachers think they are dumb. Some of the teachers think they are naughty or bad. Some of the teachers think the parents are bad. So there is misinformation. It strikes me that a multidisciplinary approach would be wonderful to be taught to teachers before they actually hit schools. The idea would be to coordinate with GPs, counsellors and so on early on in a child's school career or even in primary school. As soon as a child is identified as not performing up to the potential that should be apparent, the teacher is in the best position to know that. I was struck by the fact that teachers do not have protocols about how to interact with parents. Some teachers are naturally good at it. Some teachers are not good at it. If they are not good at it they do not have any way to interact with parents.

There is a lot I could think of to teach teachers. I guess I just add to that pool of information that I think teachers should be taught. But, if I had a choice about what we should be teaching teachers, I would take out some of the factual information. I do not know if they still do Burke and Wills and so on, like we did, but I would rather that teachers—

Mr SAWFORD—They do not do any of that, probably.

Dr Gottlieb—No. I am a baby boomer and showing my age. Teachers should know how to manage children. They should know how to make children literate by the time they are at the age of three. All of the evidence about violence prevention shows that the greatest marker is literacy at grade 3. If you can make kids literate at grade 3 you can actually stop them on that trajectory of violence, conduct disorder and so on. The Wrap Around Kids program that I do is for high school, but my take is: get in early. Get the teachers to identify the kids. Get children literate. Get them able to read and keep pace with their peers. Not only do you help the children, the parents and the school with all of the behaviour issues and stuff but you actually help society, ultimately. So, yes, teach teachers how to do this and teach teachers to make children literate, and the rest is window-dressing.

Mr SAWFORD—I will just limit my questions to, say, primary schools, because basically I am a strong believer that if the child by the age of seven has not got basic literacy and numeracy skills they are at a huge disadvantage for the rest of their life unless they take the initiative to do something about it. No education system will resolve that situation. In primary schools the expectations on the individual teacher are just, in my view, totally unrealistic. They are expected to be a language specialist, a music specialist, a sports specialist, a mathematics specialist and a science specialist. In all of the 25 years I was in education I never, ever saw one teacher in the world who could do what is expected of a primary teacher—not one. We have people adding on more and more, which means that what you already have is further diminished.

The most successful schools I have ever seen around the world are the ones with people who balance generalisation and specialisation. In other words, you have a bit of both. They did what could be done. There was a rule. Rule 1 was that you do what can be achieved, you do it to the very best of your ability and you balance it up. Jude, you have a question here about special education, I think, in your submission on learning difficulties. In an ideal world everyone could have significant skills and an education in special education, but in the real world you cannot do that. So there needs to be some specialisation.

Ms Foster—It could surely be built into the reading, though, couldn't it—to literacy acquisition and so on? It does not have to be separate.

Mr SAWFORD—Some of the things can. Some of the things are universal. I think there are three subjects that you need before literacy and numeracy: confidence 1, confidence 2 and confidence 3. If children have those, they can do anything. If teachers have those, they can do anything. If parents have those, they can do anything. Nevertheless, I think you need a balance. It is a mistake to expect every teacher to have skills in this area—such as Indigenous education. It just goes on and on.

Ms Foster—They can use that in Indigenous education. They can apply it.

Mr SAWFORD—Some of those things are universal, but what happens and what has happened is that the basic skills in language have been diminished, the basic skills in maths and science have been diminished—and that is what our future economy in some ways will deal with—and the arts and crafts have been diminished. There are certain schools that highlight music, but when you analyse it there are a thousand kids in the school and 25 do music to a very high degree and the rest of them do nothing. That is not a music school. Music is when they all participate or they do part of the arts or part of the crafts. I think a more realistic view would be

that, yes, a percentage of the cohort of trained teachers ought to be specialising in aspects of special education so that they have a significant impact in schools. But to expect that of all of them I think is taking us down a track where we know a little bit about a whole range of things and nothing in particular about anything.

That causes great problems, because the kids themselves respond to a quality educational program. The better the quality, the fewer discipline problems. If you go to a school that has a quality education program, there are no kids standing up at the side. It is calm, it is relaxed, the kids are happy and the kids are active because they have good teachers and it is balanced. They do not try and do everything. There are four or five of us teaching in the school. 'You will do this; you will do that.' We will delegate the things out and share it around. It is a collaborative sort of event. I have a problem when people keep arguing, because it is not going to happen. That is the other thing—I think it is not necessarily a good exercise.

Ms Foster—I am not suggesting a specialist model. I am into equipping the classroom teacher with the knowledge and strategies to deal with issues, because many are struggling.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not have a problem with the practicalities of dealing with children who have great learning difficulties. That is a classroom management skill. But sometimes it is the background philosophy and the information, whether it be on health, good knowledge about what happens to children and what pressures they are under. You need a specialist there to help you as a classroom teacher. So you need a bit of both.

Ms Foster—I agree.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not saying that you should have no knowledge whatsoever—of course you should.

Ms Foster—It is knowing the links to those people that is the key.

Mr SAWFORD—That is right. But everyone is pushing their own agenda. I do not agree with adding Indigenous education to everybody's curriculum vitae either. It would be desirable, but there is not enough time to do all of those things, so some of those have to specialise into slotted areas, just as drama, art and craft, physical education, dance and health sciences have. All these things are desirable activities that children should be involved in.

CHAIR—You are still doing that through having a couple of teachers in the school.

Ms Foster—We are, but particularly in the area of literacy. That is the area that has such a multiplier effect over the life of the child and in the social and economic costs for the community. There is a huge investment needed for us to be able to get that right more often, isn't there?

Mr SAWFORD—I think the area is language, and that also includes foreign languages, which we in this country are not very good at. With a lot of children who have learning difficulties, you would be surprised how much they can be encouraged if they control and have success in a foreign language. Many of them can, because they all start off basically at the same level as

everybody else. There is no lack of knowledge. Some kids can do this. Sometimes we underestimate some students.

Ms Foster—Some can; some would do better to have one to one with a speech pathologist, I believe.

Mr SAWFORD—And we could do with a hundred or a thousand more speech pathologists in the country too.

Dr Gottlieb—I do not know the field like Jude does, but my feeling as a parent who has used the system—and I still have a child at school—is that there is clearly an under-resourcing in the specialists. So I would never expect a classroom teacher to take my child with a learning difficulty and create a program, but I would have liked a classroom teacher who did not say to me, 'Your child doesn't pay attention all the time and is naughty,' but who said, 'There's clearly a disparity here between this child's intelligence and capacity and their performance,' and who could at least identify what was going on and direct me to where I should go.

Mr SAWFORD—A good teacher would get to you as a parent very quickly.

Dr Gottlieb—Yes, but I guess I would say I am a middle-class, well-educated parent in a middle-class school and I still was not got to quickly.

Ms Foster—Same with me.

Dr Gottlieb—So I had two school changes—North Sydney Dem and Neutral Bay.

Mr SAWFORD—A good teacher would be in contact with you because they need you.

Ms Foster—Not if they do not understand what the basis is. That is the whole issue.

Dr Gottlieb—I guess the issue here is that I do not think the teachers have been trained to recognise and identify, let alone remediate.

Mr SAWFORD—Was this happening in primary school?

Dr Gottlieb—This was happening in primary school.

Ms Foster—It is a common story from many schools. It is not that the will is not there. The teachers, as I say, are hungry for information. But the information that they have been given is not allowing them to identify these kids early and refer them so that they can receive intervention in line with best practice. That is what the issue is. I think it is really affecting many more children than are being identified.

Mr SAWFORD—That is why I subscribe to a figure in a primary school of four or five teachers who ought to have contact. I have a great problem with just 30 kids and one teacher, because a whole year can go by and there can be examples like yours. With five teachers, that is not likely to happen. Someone would say, 'This is not right.'

Ms Foster—That is right—someone will see it differently.

Mr SAWFORD—Sometimes the approach can be structural, in terms of how the school is organised, as well as through trying to get your message across. Sometimes teachers and schools are much more receptive to a multilayered set of solutions, and I think in many ways they work more effectively. So you are not just pushing special education; you are also pushing that you want your child to have exposure to a range of teachers. It is less likely to happen in that circumstance.

Ms Foster—That is really an administrative issue, isn't it?

Mr SAWFORD—I think it is an education issue. I do not think a teacher can cope with the curriculum for 30 kids. I think that is something from 200 years ago and something we ought to get rid of. I think that is part of the reason why we have a problem. The skills that are demanded in a modern society are so complex, and in many ways so difficult and so important, but cover such a wide spread that no single individual can actually respond effectively to those needs. To just put the block up, as often I think a lot of people in education do, is simply not appropriate.

Dr Gottlieb—That is a survival strategy, I suspect.

Ms Foster—That is why I am acknowledging teachers who are doing it. I see teachers who are doing a fabulous job.

Mr SAWFORD—But what I am suggesting to you is that there are many ways to skin a cat. You might find that looking at a couple of other layers is the way to get what you want but also to do a big favour to the school itself and to other kids in that particular school. It is the multilayered approaches that will work. If you come in with a single-minded focus, you will either win people or lose people. Sorry for the lecture.

CHAIR—Thanks, Jude and Margaret, for appearing before the committee today. We will certainly be contacting you if we need further information. A transcript of your evidence will be placed on the website.

Dr Gottlieb—Thank you.

Ms Foster—Thanks.

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

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

Committee adjourned at 4.08 pm