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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING

**Reference: Teacher education**

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CANBERRA

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING**  
**Thursday, 30 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, Ms Corcoran, Mr Fawcett, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Hartsuyker, Mrs Markus 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**

**GAFFNEY, Dr Michael, Head of Education Services, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of  
Canberra and Goulburn..... 1**

**WILSON, Ms Deborah Anne, Principal Human Resources Officer, Professional Development  
and Support, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn ..... 1**



**Committee met at 9.51 am**

**GAFFNEY, Dr Michael, Head of Education Services, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn**

**WILSON, Ms Deborah Anne, Principal Human Resources Officer, Professional Development and Support, Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn**

**CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)**—I declare open this public meeting 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 impact on how well we are preparing our teachers for their complex, demanding and critical role in educating our children. It has generated considerable interest across Australia. To date, we have received in order of 165 submissions. We are now nearing the end of our schedule of public hearings having visited Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. We have also held several hearings in the ACT and New South Wales. I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's web site.

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

**Dr Gaffney**—We welcome the opportunity to provide input to the inquiry in our capacity as leaders in the Catholic education system—at least the local one. Our role in relation to teacher education is one of both client and partner. We have a direct interest in this inquiry and, particularly, that it is not just another inquiry into teacher education and/or teaching. The outcome that we would be looking for from the Australian government would be a more direct and targeted role in teacher education in relation to both preservice and ongoing professional learning and development.

Firstly, with regard to preservice, we would see the opportunities for enhanced investment in scholarships, in the practicum, in the development and employment of specialist staff to mediate and broker, evaluate and develop and also support pilot programs. In relation to the ongoing professional learning and development of teachers, we look forward to the findings of the report and the possibilities for the government to enhance its investment in programs that lead to professional competency, professional accomplishment and professional leadership—those terms coming from successful completion or evaluation against standards—so that we see that there is an opportunity in the outcomes of this inquiry for teachers who are already in the game, so to speak, to have their professional career paths certified and valued in a way that has not been possible to this point. That would be done through the right combination of faculty, school and system professional association and government partnerships.

Before I hand across to Debbie for a few further words, I would say that we have an opportunity now in terms of the policy levers that are currently before us in relation to the work

that has taken place on standards. There are opportunities for those to work their way through the profession from graduate competence leading right through to professional leadership competence that we have not had before. That can be a boost to the likelihood that the recommendations can be implemented.

**Ms Wilson**—To give you a bit of my background, my role particularly at the office is working with early career teachers. I have that experience of mentoring them and working with them through the mentoring program that we have, which runs for two years. Being in Canberra and Goulburn, we work under the New South Wales Institute of Teachers for our New South Wales schools. One of the things that we are seeing as a real positive under that institute is the philosophy that teacher education does not stop at university. That is part of our belief that, as a profession, we have a responsibility to continue the education of our teachers once university stops, because we all know that the real learning happens once you are in a classroom. The theoretical side of it is great, and that is important and we need to have very strong foundations there. But to actually put that into practice is where we need to see a continuation of teacher training happening for the first three years of a teacher's career path.

As Mike said, the institute standards moving from graduate competence to professional competence really show that transition and the ongoing need for development of teachers. We have very strong links with the Australian Catholic University here in Canberra, including at their preservice level. Many of the CEO staff and teachers in our schools are involved in preservice courses, running units, as sessional lecturers or providing one-off workshops. So we have developed those close links, and we also have close links with their postgraduate courses. We co-sponsor and co-design masters programs for teachers who are already working within our system. We would like to see those sorts of links being encouraged and supported with the other universities that we draw on and we would like other systems to have the same opportunity to have that interaction, because both academia and schools can learn from each other and the knowledge that is there needs to be shared. They are some of the things that we would like to see coming out of this inquiry, too—the opportunity for that real support to be driven by the professionals and not just driven by external influences.

As Mike said, we value this inquiry because we value the importance of education of our children, because they are our future. If we are going to provide them with quality education, we have to have quality teachers. We would like to see the induction program as a focus of that, along with the support that is needed to enable mentoring and inductions processes to happen.

**CHAIR**—In your submission you raised the issue of interviews, which is one that has come up time and time again. You also talked about a number of issues such as the reduction in contact hours during the course in terms of beginning teachers receiving face-to-face tuition. One of the things that the universities say to us is that, in an ideal world, a more rigorous selection process would be marvellous but that, given the large number of applications, TER scores are a necessity and that TER scores provide a pretty good indicator of how effective a beginning teacher may be. I am interested in your thoughts: given that you note the reduction in contact hours for teaching of the course itself, how do you see that balance of resources that universities are having to juggle? Do you think that the interview is warranted on a resource basis, given that those resources were maybe better directed in face-to-face teaching?



**Ms Wilson**—I think we would argue that TER scores are not the be-all and end-all. They provide us with one side of a personality. The ability to relate to people is fundamental to teaching. We would argue that, really, the interview is going to be critical in selecting people who are going to make it through the four years. I think what we are seeing is that there are people who manage to get through the first and second years of training. They are told, ‘You just need more experience in a classroom.’ They get to third year and schools say, ‘These people really don’t have the skills,’ and the universities say, ‘They’re three years into a four-year degree,’ so we are ending up with people coming out who are unemployable.

That is not good for the profession. It is not good for the person, because they have invested four years of their time into something where, at the end of the day, because of their personality and other factors such as the ability to communicate effectively in English or whatever, they are not going to be employable in a real market. If you are talking about it in terms of cost effectiveness on a larger scale, it is more cost effective to have someone interviewed out or counselled out very early in the process, either pre starting and not becoming part of the cohort or very early in their years of study, because the resources taken to carry them through the four years of training and the first few years of teaching are enormous, and the cost to the children is beyond what we can measure.

**CHAIR**—What about people who do a teacher training course but then go and use those qualifications elsewhere? Maybe someone is just not suited to a classroom situation but may be suited to executive training or something like that, and so the course is not wasted. The resources are not wasted. What are your thoughts on that?

**Ms Wilson**—If we are looking at it as coming down to limited places and the purpose of it is for classroom teachers, then we are losing someone from the profession before they actually get into it. I think it comes back to your definition of teaching. We probably need to look more broadly at what we mean by a teacher. In preparing for this, we discussed the limitations of the New South Wales teachers institute and their definition of teacher, because we have people who have been experienced at TAFE level as teachers who are not seen as qualified teachers under the New South Wales regulations. I think we need to be honest about we believe is a teacher. If they are taking those skills and using them in training programs, are training programs the equivalent of teaching?

**Dr Gaffney**—If it were the case that they were employed in some other way, perhaps they did the wrong course. They may well have been better placed to do a workplace training course rather than something that will qualify them for school teaching. I agree with Debbie about earlier identification through a personal interview, either prior to or just after, when they have got a sense of what the course is about.

**Ms Wilson**—It could possibly be post interviews, as Mike is talking about, once they start to see what a classroom is really about, what the demands on them are going to be and what is expected of them.

**Dr Gaffney**—There may even be some value in the concept of provisional entry—until they really do get a valid impression or an experience of what classroom or school life is like from the teaching side. We have all had it from the student side, but this is from the teaching side.

**CHAIR**—In your submission, you say that beginning teachers seem to be performing very well in literacy and numeracy, but in other areas, such as classroom management, there is a gap. I would be interested in your expanding on those two factors. We are scoring well in some elements and could do better in the other.

**Dr Gaffney**—I think the strategies in terms of literacy and numeracy that are available and transmitted through the teacher education course are done effectively. I believe the classroom management, student welfare, engagement and behaviour and pastoral care areas are not handled so well. It is probably best to have modest expectations in relation to graduates in those areas. They are the types of skills that are developed over a period of induction, which might last up to three years. If there is an area of need, as Debbie has highlighted in her introductory comments, it is to support early career teachers through that in a collaborative way, rather than what we have largely tended to do, which is to hand over the baton from teacher education to system authorities and say, ‘You take care of it now.’ There is no handover period. There is potential for specialist staff to broker, mentor and work with a foot in both camps and to work with their early career teachers on the subtleties and the complexities of classroom life and all that goes with that—relationships with parents and negotiations with other members of staff and community agencies. I think, by the time people finish their preservice course, you can only have modest expectations about all of the broader non-classroom based work that they will handle. But, over the course of another 12 months to three years, to get that professional competence, I think there is that need and that opportunity.

**CHAIR**—You say in your submission that you have observed a noticeable decrease in the ability of graduates to manage the classroom. Is that perhaps a function of a crowded curriculum and a greater focus on literacy and numeracy taking time away from those other areas? Or is it the fact that the classroom is changing and providing more challenges and a more challenging environment? Is that what the issue is?

**Ms Wilson**—We only have to look at the varied issues facing children today to know that teachers are coping with much more than they coped with 20 years ago. Virtually every time you turn on the radio or pick up a paper you are hearing about ADHD children, but that is only one tiny snippet of what is happening in the classroom. We have children who are facing all sorts of social, emotional and physical problems, and they are being compounded by so many other external factors.

The only way you learn those skills is by being in there and relating to them. You can learn the philosophy of how to manage children’s needs. You can learn the hierarchy of needs and all those sorts of things and understand in your head what children need and how you can best support them. But, actually, when you have a child with a set of issues in front of you, they are going to be very different from the next child you get. To develop strategies about how you can relate to and build trust with someone that has never trusted before—all those sorts of issues—cannot be taught at uni. It can only really happen through that direct experience.

We would encourage universities to take on a greater level of practicum so that students are in classes for greater periods of time, in which they can observe good practitioners. And then, as we have said before, they need that continuation in an induction program where they can, again, get out and see people and also have people come in and observe them in real situations where they are not in the classroom for only a four-week or ten-week period of time and then it is not their

problem. They need to be thinking, 'These children are my children for a year and I owe them everything that I can give them.' It changes the relationship when you have total responsibility for those children.

I think, as schools and as systems we are getting much better at working in liaison with outside agencies with children with special needs. That is not something that a beginning teacher is going to need to do in isolation. Obviously, that is done very much as a team effort with the school. But involved in that is a whole series of skills that are not always taught at university either. That whole idea, as Mike said, about mediation negotiation and how much can you disclose to outside agencies—all those sorts of issues—

**Dr Gaffney**—The legal agenda alone is becoming a minefield for teachers.

**Ms Wilson**—Let alone how you deal with a parent who is still going through the grief and loss that their child is not perfect or who has not come to the understanding that their child is not. You are dealing with those factors as well, which are beyond just coping with the child.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Thank you for your submission and your preparedness to appear before the inquiry. I want to go to criterion 3, which is about attrition rates. You make reference, as many other people do, to there being a significant attrition rate in the first five years teaching. In your view, what does that happen? What do we need to do to address that?

**Dr Gaffney**—There are several reasons. I believe that attrition can be positive where people realise themselves that they are not cut out to be teachers. It is not enough just to say, 'I would like to work with kids.' So, due to something in their make up, they find that they would not be suited. Or they get a better offer. Where there is attrition on the basis of a disillusionment—that it is not what they thought it was going to be—we are missing out on people that could really contribute over a lifetime. I think we have to ask real questions in relation to the type of work environment that we are inviting them in to and the support that we give them over those first five years.

We have—as has every other system, I would imagine—a set of priorities. The capacity of a system or a school to support teachers through those first couple of years, whether it be in terms of providing a mentor or some fractional time release, is really thrown in with other types of priority. So, from a system or school point of view, you are weighing those up and there is only so much to go around. So, in part, what I am saying is that, if we are losing good people, it can be that there are other priorities that schools and systems put ahead of support for young teachers.

**Ms BIRD**—Can I clarify something. Do you do exit surveys? Is this more a reflection of experience, or have you actually surveyed people as they left?

**Dr Gaffney**—We do not do a formal survey, no. It is really picked up by word of mouth through the principals of the schools as to why these people left. But it is a question that I think we need to address, not just as our system but nationally. What would be the reasonable entitlement of a beginning teacher to support across the system? If it is in a sense left up to the individual school or the system, it gets thrown in with the other priorities and then you are weighing up very difficult questions in terms of resources being put into that compared with

reduced class sizes or additional hours for students with special needs. It becomes a complex question.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Sharon gave notice of a further question to put. You mentioned in your answer to Luke that there ought to be a balance between interview and TER scores. It seems to me that a lot of people get into teaching and they have no idea why. They cannot articulate a philosophy or a purpose. I would have thought that would be a danger sign for anyone going into teaching. There is a second danger sign: the one that you mentioned, Debbie, in terms of relating to people. There is probably a third indicator, which simply says, ‘What do you hope to get out of teaching?’ If people cannot articulate that before they go in—

**Ms Wilson**—‘The holidays are great’!

**Mr SAWFORD**—That is fine—people like to work hard for a break. At least it is a reason. It might not be coherent, but it is a reason.

**Ms Wilson**—That is one of the disillusionments that they have.

**CHAIR**—It is a good selling point.

**Ms Wilson**—But it is a real disillusion. I have talked to the early career teachers. They realise that they actually work through their holidays and that what society sees as teacher holidays and teacher hours is not the reality.

**Mr SAWFORD**—But if you do not measure before, using the question that Sharon asked, measuring afterwards does not take you anywhere because you have no comparison. You have to have a comparative study in order to make some links. You made the point about the interview. Where do you do it? Does the university do it or is it done in the later two years of secondary school? Is that realistic? They are all questions that we will have to come to.

On another thing about attrition, I think part of the problem comes into the next question. You make the point about the decrease in parity between teaching staff in primary and secondary schools and universities. That is right. We hear that all the time. I do not think that should be right. That does not make sense. Universities allow this to happen. We had a couple of examples where universities do have parity, but that has an impact and they have fewer people involved but probably a greater quality of people involved. Universities, like everybody else, have choices. Have universities made the wrong choice? You cannot—it is just a nonsense—attract people from the schools system. They need people from the schools system, but they are not going to get them under the current situation. So what happens? Are the universities failing, or do they need more funding? They are not serious when they do that, are they, about teacher education? That is the view I get. If you are serious, you put the money there or you cut your cloth according to your means. I do not see any evidence of that, except Central Queensland.

**Dr Gaffney**—I am not an expert on university politics, but I think there is possibly a range of faculties—those that still exist—in Australian universities, compared with the number that were there in the mid- to late-1980s, that do not get the best deal through university budget processes. There is a whole-of-university issue there in terms of the status of education compared with other disciplines that a university has. You see that—although I have not got the figures—in the

discrepancy in funding given to practicum in other areas, such as lab work, compared with what goes into the practicum in teacher education. There is an issue of priority that is probably better addressed to the vice-chancellors of the universities around the country than to consumers—

**Mr SAWFORD**—We had the vice-chancellors come here this week, and they have probably been lobbying backbenchers on both sides of parliament. I made the point to them that they do not look after their own constituency; and they were a bit surprised when I said it to them. They do not know who their constituency is. I would have thought that the most important part of their constituency was the primary school. They seemed quite surprised. That is where their students all come from. That is where all their links ought to come from. They are under pressure. They decide to reduce teacher education; they make that decision. But they do not seem to be able to win the debate in the political arena, and I think part of the reason is that they do not use their own constituents. If we do not use our constituency, our mainstream, we lose our seats. It is a pretty basic sort of measure every three years—a very good measure, probably. Maybe universities need to have a bit more accountability in terms of that as well. What is your view?

**Dr Gaffney**—The capacity of the deans of education, or the heads of schools of teacher education, varies across the country. Some of them have been able to argue and maintain a vibrant education faculty, and others less so. As I understand it, the way in which the staffing profile has evolved over the last 15 to 20 years in teacher education is that those who were employed are gradually retiring, and the salary parity is such that it is not attracting quality people out of education departments or authorities, or quality practitioners, because they are coming in at associate lecturer level—or something resembling a glorified teacher assistant.

There are two things working: you have got older staff who are dying out and younger staff coming in, and you have got a promotional structure that is based around esoteric publication that has, to a large extent, very little impact on classroom practice or, in fact, on education policy. So they have a crisis of credibility, and that is why one of the key outcomes of this inquiry would be to look at injecting a means of getting specialist staff in to broker, to mentor, to develop, and to mediate and evaluate in a way that we have not had the capacity to do previously.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Just one last question: you mentioned, in item 4 of your submission, the lack of esteem and value in the community in terms of tertiary faculty members. Do you think we might be better off by having fewer universities having teacher education and give them a little bit more funding, and they might take it a little bit more seriously as well? Should every university have an education faculty?

**Ms Wilson**—Taking it from an ACT level, here we have got two major universities that provide education: UC and ACU Signadou. So the choices for students in Canberra and the local area come down to two. I think you do need to provide people with choice. There are other universities that do not provide education faculties.

I would hate to see it narrowed so tightly that people had very limited options at universities that had a particular philosophy and we ended up almost sausageing students coming out with one set of ideas rather than giving opportunities across different arenas. Perhaps we could look at a lot more links across the universities rather than narrowing it and look at opportunities to broaden and link so that there is a lot more liaison between the different universities. That opens

up a whole new can of worms—I realise that—but I think there are probably other ways of benefiting from the expertise that is there rather than narrowing—

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are suggesting that the change ought to be gentle rather than dramatic—but sometimes it is dramatic change that gets results.

**Ms Wilson**—Trying to get cross-collaboration between universities that are in competition with each other in effect is quite a large challenge.

**Dr Gaffney**—It would depend on the carrot. I think you have hit on a major strategic issue here: where you have a critical mass of staff, if you are the only person in a regional university responsible for literacy teaching in primary, you are missing out because you are the only person in that faculty with that knowledge; whereas if there was some coming together around centres of excellence—or whatever you call them—then you would, obviously, have that advantage of critical mass. Which institutions would then take that on? I suppose in some ways it would depend on the state and territory profile, the regional need and the track record of representation. It has got possibilities but only to the extent that when you do it, it creates a critical mass of people with a specialisation who can work well with each other and with the schools and the school systems they serve.

**Ms BIRD**—I have a question which might pick up on a number of the issues, so please feel free to answer it as broadly as you like. As we have gone through this, it appears to me that what we are coming down to is the view that students going into teacher education are not necessarily any better or worse than they have ever been and those coming out of it are not any better or worse than they have ever been, but that the environment has changed significantly—I think that is what you were talking about, Debbie. The challenge for us in reaching some conclusions is coming down to two models—a model that says, ‘Do we play around with the graduate course at the university level?’ We are very conscious of the ad hoc bandaid solution so far has been to add another subject in, add a bit more practicum in and all of those sort of things. From some of the good things you have described, you are saying that the postgraduate model is perhaps a better model but it is not well supported currently by policy or funding programs. I am interested to hear: if you had to go a priority way, what would it be?

**Ms Wilson**—I think we would like to see the extension of teacher education into the real world of classrooms. If you look at what happens in most professions, there is entry into the profession where you are seriously mentored, be it an internship or a very intense mentoring program. Classrooms can be lonely places: yes, you are in there with 30 children but you are there by yourself, and those 30 children have 60 parents and sometimes multiples of however many others. You can feel isolated but if you have someone guiding you as a wiser, more experienced person in the profession then you have got a support base that you can draw on, but to enable that to happen there needs to be real support for schools to do it.

At the moment, we are structuring it so the mentor is released from their class for short periods of time but they are only seeing snapshots. In the busy life of schools, time to sit down and have real discussions does not happen. Real learning happens when you can get somebody to critically reflect on their skills, their strategies, what they are doing, the issues and the challenges of setting goals—in effect that coaching role. I think our priority would be to see—

**Ms BIRD**—One of the internship models that we heard about was a reduced teaching load in the first 12 months supported by an ongoing return to a sort of tutorial structure at the university for reflection and so forth.

**Dr Gaffney**—I think that has real possibilities. The advantage of bringing people who are not school leavers in, who would have a first degree and then decide to go into teaching, is that there is a maturity element there which would work in favour of the teaching profession. A quick twelve-month turn around on a Dip. Ed is not sufficient, particularly if we just pass the baton over and away they go. Support for a program or graduate program that incorporates some intensive university based work upfront, and which then has some continuing induction and mentorship over the course of perhaps two or three years through an internship, would be a step in the right direction.

**Ms BIRD**—Are you suggesting that for just postgraduate qualifications or for all beginning teachers?

**Dr Gaffney**—For both. I think USQ, for example, has just introduced a graduate diploma of teaching for people who already have a BA or a BSC—it is that type of thing.

**Ms BIRD**—I should tell you I am a Dip. Ed graduate.

**Dr Gaffney**—I am too. Taking the earlier point, the whole classroom dynamic has changed since we started teaching.

**Ms BIRD**—Exactly.

**Dr Gaffney**—A continued need for supporting guided learning is there now, which perhaps was not there to the same extent. I suppose it was always there in the less formal way, but there is certainly a much more serious need now.

**Ms BIRD**—It is much more critical.

**Ms Wilson**—Those sorts of programs also allow for a contextualisation of the learning. Looking at some of the early career teachers we have at the moment, we have one student who is at Lake Cargelligo. With the learning that she is going through in her school she is one of a few or a handful of teachers and she is responsible for everything. Within three weeks of starting at the school she ran the school athletics carnival, compared to someone who is, say, at MacKillop, as one of a—

**Dr Gaffney**—A large suburban school with 1,300 kids.

**Ms Wilson**—It has a faculty of colleagues to support early career teachers, but there are very different issues that the students within that school are facing. That is where we would see the benefit of one of those mentoring programs or an ongoing link with the university. That gives a chance for the teacher to understand their learning and growth in their context and to apply what they have learnt to that—the real world for them at that time. And then the challenge is to look at how we can take that learning to other contexts.

**Ms CORCORAN**—Firstly, I am interested in how big the Canberra-Goulbourn archdiocese is. How many schools are we talking about?

**Dr Gaffney**—We have 55 schools in the system. Twenty-seven of those are in the ACT; the remainder are in surrounding New South Wales. It extends from far western New South Wales, where Lake Cargelligo is, which has 40 per cent Indigenous kids, down to the border to Eden, north across through Goulbourn to Batemans Bay and through Gundagai, Cootamundra and places like that. So it is a very diverse diocese. There are roughly 2,000 teaching staff and 25,000 students.

**Ms Wilson**—The schools go from about 30 students through to 1,600. We have K to 6 schools, central schools that are K to 10 and high schools that are 7 to 12.

**Dr Gaffney**—And we are the only system in the country that crosses the state-territory jurisdiction; so we have two sets of lots of things. It is very frustrating.

**CHAIR**—Ah, the federal system!

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes, what a wonderful thing it is. We see considerable potential in certain things becoming a bit more uniform across New South Wales, the ACT and other places.

**Ms CORCORAN**—So you are a good case in that sense because you have the diversity.

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes.

**Ms CORCORAN**—Did I hear you correctly in your introductory remarks talking about a number of enhancements, including scholarships, for practicums?

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes.

**Ms CORCORAN**—Do you want to talk about that?

**Dr Gaffney**—They are actually separate items. The issue of scholarships is, I think, worthy of consideration for attracting people with talent in areas of shortage, perhaps through some form of financial support, whether it be a studentship such as I went through and which was partly what attracted me into teaching or some type of HECS scholarship. I think there are areas where we could look, particularly in areas of maths/science and early childhood specialisation. We could identify those areas of need and shortage that would help in attracting and retaining people. The practicum issue is, in a way, related to the funding issue and the way that universities and deans of education within universities can argue for their slice of the university funding and get a reasonable outcome. I think there is opportunity for the inquiry to consider some tied funding arrangements that would be protected to allow a reasonable increase in the school classroom contact hours that students in teacher training could have during the year.

**Ms CORCORAN**—On page 6 of your submission, when you were talking about practicums, you said:



The needs and commitments of the lecturer are often given priority over those of the school. As a result, schools and staff are less inclined to seek involvement in the preparation of trainee teachers.

Can you give me an example?

**Ms Wilson**—What we are talking about there is some things like the timing of practicums. I know every school is different and runs on their own time tables and they have their own calendars of events that are happening, but what we are seeing is that the timing of practicums is related to university cycles and often, as I said, linked to the lecturer's priorities. So, if someone is off on a conference, it is planned around their needs and their knowledge of what is happening without any liaison about what is happening at a school level. We found that things like the ACTAP testing was right smack bang in the middle of the practicum, and teachers just said: 'No, that is at a stage where my class needs me. They need consistency. They need a lead-in to it, and I am not prepared to risk my children at that time on someone I do not know the quality of coming in and teaching them.' The flipside of it is that, if a teacher takes on a prac student at that time, they are not getting a chance to observe quality teaching, because the children are being tested for extended periods of time. To meet the requirements of how many lessons the prac teacher teaches, they have to fit in all the lessons amongst the testing requirements so, as I said, they are not observing good-quality teaching. So there is not that liaison—'This eight weeks is really not going to be a suitable time for us; can we negotiate a movement in that?'—because that movement does not suit the universities. That is what we were saying there.

**Ms CORCORAN**—You are currently involved in a new model for teaching training with secondary schools. Do you want to expand that a little bit?

**Dr Gaffney**—It was largely initiated from our side where, because of the diversity of the education system and the need to have teachers in specialist areas like maths, science and religious education in secondary, we have supported, through scholarships and through some fractional staffing, staff to be involved in the development and implementation of a graduate diploma of education for secondary teachers. We have worked very closely with our Canberra campus of the ACU in getting that program up. It involves practising maths, science, religious education and arts teachers working with small groups of students. The cohort in total is somewhere around 30 or 35 students. So, to cover that range of specialisations, it is not economic for the universities to employ separate lecturers. So the students actually go to the schools and, in small groups of three, four, five or seven—depending—spend that time with a subject specialist who becomes their mentor for that 12-month period. They basically have their teaching method component in school, in small groups with practising specialist teachers who are supported in part by relief time—

**Ms Wilson**—And who have been identified as quality teachers.

**Ms BIRD**—I did that 25 years ago. It was a good model.

**Dr Gaffney**—It is nothing new under the sun, but it is a good model.

**Ms CORCORAN**—That is quite separate from a practicum, isn't it?

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes. They then go and do their practicum at some other school, or they may do it at the school where their mentor is, but their mentor would not be their supervising teacher.

**Ms CORCORAN**—My last question goes back to where we started about how we select students to go into teaching in the first place. You have made the point that the NTER score is not the be-all and end-all and that interview is not a bad way of going. The universities we have spoken to throw their hands up in horror because, while they might agree in principle, they just cannot see their way through how you physically do it. For students coming out of schools, are their secondary school teachers a resource that we could be using, formally or informally, to somehow judge whether or not students might be suited to teaching?

**Ms Wilson**—It can change the teacher-student relationship. In effect, you are providing a reference for them. It could be prejudiced if there has been a clash with the personality. In some ways, you do need to have an independent person. It could form part of the jigsaw puzzle that is that person, and you are trying to gather a whole series of pieces of information about them. What is their academic ability? Are they going to be able to cope with the academic requirements? What is their personality? How are you seeing them as part of a community? How do they interact with other people? We really need to look at the picture of the whole person rather than just—

**Mr SAWFORD**—There is a range of secondary teachers; it is not just one. It is understandable for a student to have a clash with one teacher, but to have a clash with 12—I do not think so! I think that would be a very good example of who not to have.

**Ms BIRD**—I do not know; they might be the best future teachers!

**Mr SAWFORD**—Or they could be the best.

**Dr Gaffney**—The opportunity for teachers to be referees in support of an application is there, but I would not want to take it any further than that. I think the universities have to put their hands up and ask students whether or not they are interested in teaching, and they can then be supported on that basis.

**Ms Wilson**—Maybe another way around it is to have teachers from the area that the person is looking at going into, whether it is subject specific at high school or primary school, come in and be part of an interview panel with a university lecturer.

**Mr SAWFORD**—It is very expensive, though, to do that.

**Ms Wilson**—It comes back to supporting the teachers coming in and giving them a reason to do this: ‘As a teacher, why should I put my hand up for this additional job? Is there some form of recognition I am going to get?’

**Dr Gaffney**—If you are looking at, say, the higher academic achievers and potential scholarship or studentship support, I think there is an avenue there where an interview would perhaps be even more appropriate. From my experience at the University of Canberra, evolving from Canberra CAE through the late-eighties and into the nineties, the UAI question was one of real concern because we had students who were getting entry to primary teaching who were

barely literate or numerate, and those teachers are in the classrooms now. Something like 30 per cent of them were failing year 10 maths. That was because of a fall in the UAI nationally. Thankfully that is beginning to increase again, and so we are getting students into teaching who are more literate and numerate than the ones who got in during that period. But those teachers are still with us, and that is a real issue.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I am very interested in what you say about term of reference (7), examining the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates. You go through each of those points. I come from a social work background. I had a lot to do with families that were struggling. We use the term ‘dysfunctional’, but dysfunction can be very broad. It is quite a challenge for anybody, particularly new graduates, to step into the classroom with all these areas covered, yet often that seems to be the case.

One of the things I notice on the ground, in talking to a lot of principals and teachers, is that in some of the probably most disadvantaged areas of my electorate a change in principal and teaching staff and in their approaches and understanding can help. That could mean, for example, being already equipped to manage classrooms, being able to deal with the children with special needs or disabilities or using creative approaches to drawing the attraction of children that have ADHD and other challenging behaviour—providing them with a whole lot of animals to look after, for example; one school does snakes.

You have made some points about this, but it seems that just a couple of years ago some schools—and one of the schools I am talking about I will not mention by name—were not coping with those behaviours and had a lot of disruption in many classes. But older teachers moved on, they got a new principal and there was a change to some teaching staff and the whole atmosphere of the school and the outcomes for the students have changed. How do you address that in the long term? Some of what you mentioned covers that.

**Dr Gaffney**—From the point of view of teacher education?

**Mrs MARKUS**—Yes.

**Dr Gaffney**—That is of fundamental importance. Where a person has their first teaching experience can determine their future career outlook, educational platform prospects, attrition and so forth. Where you have that type of school, the research and writings say that just being on the staff at that particular school will make you a better teacher because of the way that school operates. Just by being there you will be a better teacher.

**Ms Wilson**—And it is because of the professional discussions that happen.

**Dr Gaffney**—And it is because of the nature of the professional community and so forth.

**Ms BIRD**—And vice versa.

**Dr Gaffney**—That is right—the dysfunction. And it is because of the agreed practice that teachers have as a cohesive unit. That raises the possibility that, just as we have specialists and we have specialist faculties of education developing, we may have specialist sites for practicum or extended practicum as well. That is what we are arguing for.

**Mr SAWFORD**—You are arguing for dem schools, aren't you?

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes—that approach.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I actually quite like that idea.

**CHAIR**—A concept very dear to the heart of our deputy chair.

**Mr SAWFORD**—The basic thing, and what I feel very sad about, is that a lot of teachers go out and even after the first five years—they may be in one or two schools or they may be in several—they might see good principals and they might see very ordinary ones. But they never see outstanding principals. And sometimes they are never on a staff where there are outstanding teachers. So there is no measure—

**Ms Wilson**—A really high benchmark.

**Mr SAWFORD**—of how they are going. Sometimes demonstration schools can also be false, in the sense that they put unreal expectations on teachers who are just run-of-the-mill teachers. But, nevertheless, if you do not see what is the best, you will never know.

**Dr Gaffney**—You do not know what you do not know.

**Mr SAWFORD**—And you need to know how a good principal operates. The old masters or mistresses of method were intrinsically linked to the education program in the schools. They ran those programs. That is why they were appointed to those schools. Those teachers were involved in that. There may have been some negatives to it but there were far more positives, and we have thrown that away. That is really what Louise, I think, was getting to.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I have a couple of other questions too.

**Dr Gaffney**—Coming back to your question, I think that the possibility for a demonstration school model is certainly worth investigating. But it has to also be linked with an early employment policy that is taken up by systems so that schools and systems need to rotate their early career teachers through those sorts of schools so that they do get an experience of what it is like to work in those schools. What happens currently in many places—but not so much, I think, in our system—is that it is the problem schools where the young teachers go. It becomes a staffing policy issue rather than a teacher education issue. But they are linked.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I think it is also about leadership.

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes.

**Mrs MARKUS**—The really strong principals lead and draw out the best of their teachers and the school environment. Is there specific training for principals? What are we doing in that area to prepare and train those coming through to set up a school well?

**Ms Wilson**—That is another area that we do work on. We have an induction program for our principals and we are trying as best we can to have a leadership program for those that identify

themselves as potential leaders. We do not have anything where we take the responsibility for identifying people or tapping them on the shoulder. Our newly appointed principals have a two-year program where they are supported by an identified member from the office and a colleague principal too. So it is an area that we have recognised as being of need. This year in particular we have had an enormous number of new principals. In fact, 17 of our schools have new principals. So it is an ongoing issue that we will need to keep busy with.

**Dr Gaffney**—Nationally though some start has been made by Teaching Australia, with its programs on developing programs for school principals. But, in a sense, that is a drop in the ocean in terms of what needs to be done.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I understand that.

**Ms Wilson**—I think the other aspect of that is APAPDC. As a body owned by the four peak principals associations it is able to disseminate a lot of information about leadership, and I know they are developing leadership programs.

**Ms CORCORAN**—What was that body?

**Ms Wilson**—APAPDC, which is the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council. It is owned by the four key principals associations: the Australian primary principals, the secondary principals, the heads of independent schools and the Catholic principals. They act as a body for those four principals associations. They liaise a lot with government but can also bypass the bureaucracy of the systems and get the information out to schools pretty quickly. They are running some very effective programs, particularly in the ACT, because it works across the jurisdictions; being small, we have a lot of things happening at this level. I think it is a bit harder in the bigger states and territories to bring everyone together. Those sorts of organisations can go beyond the system or set jurisdictions, so there is a lot of benefit there.

**Mrs MARKUS**—It seems to me that teachers often get a bit of a bad bagging. Often it is year 8 and year 9 students who are starting to look at what they are going to be doing in future years. Are you targeting them? Is there anything that you see would be helpful in terms of targeting and inspiring them and demonstrating to them that teaching is a great profession to enter? I know you have made comments about the pay structure, but would you see that as something that could be useful?

**Ms Wilson**—It is something that we have not actually considered.

**Dr Gaffney**—However, the work that is starting to take place in career transition programs across the country—it is being supported by the Australian government—is a real step in the right direction. But that is a more general career advice and support structure that is coming in for students around year 9 or year 10. Possibly, there is space for promotion of teaching as a profession within the context of a broader approach to career advice and counselling for young people before they move into senior years. But year 8 and year 9 have their particular challenges as well. Whether it is the time to convince someone to be a teacher or not, I am not sure.

**Mrs MARKUS**—I think we need to be getting in early.

**Dr Gaffney**—Yes; anything, really. Just to be with them is the important thing.

**Mr SAWFORD**—I have one last question, which is probably unfair in one way. I would think that in your system you have a pretty close relationship with both the Catholic University and also the school. I get the impression in this inquiry that that is not true of the state system—that the university and the schools have a relatively close relationship but I do not see the system being involved too much. It seems to me that you need those three things operating together.

**Dr Gaffney**—You do.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How do you do that? What are some of the strengths, weaknesses and difficulties of working with universities and schools as far as the system is concerned?

**Ms Wilson**—At a postgraduate level, we sponsor the program that I mentioned earlier, which is a masters program that targets leadership, and we have designed it so it goes across four different schools within ACU.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So that is initiated by your system?

**Ms Wilson**—It is initiated by us and heavily funded by us. The staff that we have at our schools are teaching staff or staff in positions of leadership. There are very heavy subsidies going into that.

**Mr SAWFORD**—What about undergraduate?

**Ms Wilson**—That sort of a course gives us a link and a relationship that is already formed with the lecturers and the faculty members at ACU, and that then makes it easier to get into the undergraduates because we are already a known quantity as office people and because it is the staff of our schools who are there studying.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How important was the fact that your system funds that?

**Ms Wilson**—From a teacher's point of view? Huge.

**Mr SAWFORD**—From the university's or the school's point of view?

**Dr Gaffney**—Unless we were providing that type of support—

**Mr SAWFORD**—It would not be done, would it?

**Dr Gaffney**—it would not be done.

**Ms Wilson**—I do not think a lot of our teachers would take it on.

**Mr SAWFORD**—How widespread is that in your system?

**Ms Wilson**—This year we have 18 people who joined the cohort, and it is normally a two- to three-year program, depending on how quickly they move through the eight units.

**Mr SAWFORD**—So there could be 18 schools out of the 55?

**Ms Wilson**—No, 18 teachers. The program has run for five years and, without the stats on it, I would say that all of our principals and most of our assistant principals have been through that program and that a lot of our coordinators and RECs, which are the next two levels of leadership positions, are engaged in it to some extent—either they have done it or they are indicating that they are interested in it.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Are those programs conducted in the schools?

**Ms Wilson**—At ACU.

**Mr SAWFORD**—At the university?

**Dr Gaffney**—On the university campus, yes.

**Ms Wilson**—It is designed very much around school terms. There are intensive week lectures or weekend sessions.

**Mr SAWFORD**—Do you fund their replacements in the school?

**Ms Wilson**—No, because it is holidays or weekends. And it needs to be weekends or holidays. There was talk about having evening sessions, but because we have people who travel in from our more distant areas we need to look at those issues.

**Dr Gaffney**—We offer HECS scholarships from the system. But it is a multidimensional relationship with us, and we have just completed a memorandum of understanding on the cross-employment of my staff and other staff within the central office of the CEO and the schools to work on the campus with ACU. It is multidimensional in the sense that it has scholarship components. It has some of our staff teaching in the programs. It has the graduate diploma (secondary) type model. They have a vested interest in our support, and we also have a vested interest in their courses, because we need to be able to staff our schools appropriately. I think that our relationship locally is similar to a number of other diocesan systems in Catholic ed, but it is not uniform. We all get on very well by any stretch of the imagination, but I think it does have something to do with the regional nature and the size of the system.

It is a very different challenge when you are looking at a bureaucracy, say, the size of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training and looking to get some type of cohesive partnership with the university sector there. That is as much a problem in terms of their governance structures and their regionalisation in New South Wales—or Queensland or Victoria for that matter—as it is in terms of a willingness or not to cooperate. There are some excellent examples of cooperation in Queensland with the University of Southern Queensland and Education Queensland on some projects, but it is a bit sporadic when you look at it nationally, as you would have picked up.

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

**Dr Gaffney**—Thank you for the opportunity.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 10.55 am**