COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

(Subcommittee)

Reference: Teacher education

TUESDAY, 16 MAY 2006

CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday, 16 May 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 and Mr Hartsuyker

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

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

Specifically, the inquiry should:

Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.

Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.

Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.

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.

Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.

Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

teach literacy and numeracy;

teach vocational education courses;

effectively manage classrooms;

successfully use information technology;

deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;

deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;

achieve accreditation; and

deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.

Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.

Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.

Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

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

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Subcommittee met at 9.33 am

GOODRUM, Prof. Denis, Head of School, School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra

HAWKINS, Mr Wayne John, Senior Lecturer, Mathematics Education, School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra

MANN, Ms Kathy, Associate Lecturer, School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra

RICKWOOD, Ms Janet Isabel, Sessional Tutor and Contract Lecturer, University of Canberra

SMITH, Dr Janet, Head of Discipline, Curriculum Studies; and Senior Lecturer in Education, University of Canberra

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training inquiry into teacher education. The inquiry has examined a broad range of issues which impact on how well we are preparing our teachers for the complex, demanding and critical role of educating our children. It has generated considerable interest across the country. To date we have received over 160 submissions, and we continue to receive more. We have almost completed our schedule of public hearings, having basically visited all states of Australia. We have also had several hearings in the ACT.

I welcome the representatives from the University of Canberra. I remind you that these proceedings are recorded in *Hansard* and the record 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. Goodrum—From our perspective, this inquiry is very much about the preparation of quality teachers for our own country, Australia. One of the most important aspects of that is the resourcing of teacher education, and we focus very much on that in our submission. What we tried to outline is that, over the last 15 years, the amount of resources available for teacher education has effectively been reduced and that has had an impact on what we have been able to do. One of those impacts has been very much on staffing itself. Obviously, if you decrease funds then you are going to have an impact on staffing. The data we tried to present indicates that, in particular, the number of full-time staff and the amount of teacher education during the last decade or so have decreased. One of the other consequences has been an increase in the number of part-time staff available to teach our programs.

Those of us present wanted to make sure that some of the people within our group actually represented the part-time staff. My understanding is that you have not actually had the opportunity to speak to some of these people before and, from our perspective, it was important

that you have that opportunity because they will give you a better perspective than those of us with careers in teacher education. I will very quickly introduce each member of our team and give them the opportunity to say a few words.

On my immediate left is Janet Smith. Janet is Head of Discipline in Curriculum Studies. Her background is social science education. She has a rich experience in the Graduate Diploma in Education and in secondary education. Since that Graduate Diploma in Education is probably the main vehicle by which we prepare secondary teachers, she has a wealth of things to say about that.

Further to my left is Janet Rickwood, who is a part-time staff member. Janet is actually a retired secondary principal in the ACT and has a wealth of experience and a tremendous reputation in the ACT school sector, and I am sure she will give you some interesting insights from her perspective.

On my immediate right is Kathy Mann. Kathy's background is health and outdoor education. She has been with us as a part-time staff member for a number of years, but for this year she has a one-year contract with us as a result of one of our staff going back to schools for a year and taking leave without pay. So it is for that reason that she is working full-time with us at the moment. Again, she has rich experience to bring to the sessional perspective.

Finally, on my extreme right is Wayne Hawkins. Wayne is a maths educator with a primary education orientation. Wayne has great experience in teacher education, not just in Canberra but also in other areas of the country. He is very well thought of by students. In fact, all the people present have come from a very practical dimension of teacher education, and that is one of the reasons we formed the team that we have—to give you that perspective on what we consider to be important in what we do. Kathy, would you like to start and say a few words?

Ms Mann—My main focus in this inquiry relates to the effects of the casualisation of the teaching workforce at the university level in teacher education. It has been my personal experience that very tight budget constraints have negated the offering of permanent or part-time contract positions for lecturers and tutors. Apart from the obvious career hurdles this presents in my own case as a professional educator choosing to move into teacher education, the casualisation of lecturers and tutors also promotes a more transient teaching workforce and contributes to a lack of continuity in course delivery and a lack of development of new and innovative units of study. Therefore, the compounded effects of a casualised workforce in teacher education, in my experience, damage the long-term success of quality teacher education.

Mr Hawkins—I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to come and talk to this committee. I will keep my comments brief at this stage because I am sure you would like to spend the majority of the time asking questions. I have been involved in teacher education for over 20 years and am keenly interested in quality and high-quality graduates. While an inquiry of this nature is obviously important and serves a timely role, it would be dangerous to take it out of the context of looking at education in general. While teacher education produces graduates of whatever quality, I have seen some of our very best graduates over the years go into schools where they cease being part of university culture where they are surrounded by people of like theory, enthusiasm and commitment. They go into schools where they become part of a school culture. I am not here to comment on whether schools' cultures are positive, negative or

whatever, but they have a very strong impact on the young graduate teacher. They are without their support network of the university. Irrespective of the quality of a program in teacher education, it is only one snapshot, it is only one part of the process of educating children, and I presume we are interested in teacher education because we are interested in the education of our children. As part of that first step, yes, we want to produce good teachers; yes, we want to make sure that teacher education programs are of high quality.

Leading on from what Denis has indicated about our concerns with budget and so forth, budgetary constraints often cause problems but they need not be the reason for problems. Even with low budgets, we can sometimes manage quality by looking at how we do things. I have got a lot of concerns in a lot of areas in teacher education as well as in schools that I think we need to look at but, at the same time, it is important to say that we strive to produce quality programs and quality students.

Dr Smith—I would like to address issues to do with secondary teacher education at the University of Canberra. I will break my brief comments into two parts: firstly, to give you a bit of background and context about secondary education and, secondly, to talk about a specific issue, which is the nature and composition of our graduate secondary students. Each year at the University of Canberra we enrol about two hundred new students into secondary teacher education. The intake is generally a very even mixture of male and female. We always have many more applicants than we can take, so each year we turn away many suitable and desirable applicants. Of those 200 new students that we take in each year, approximately 50 or 60 of them are undergraduate four-year degree people and about 150 of them are graduate entry students.

PE is the only one of the eight discipline areas that we take in primarily as undergraduates. The composition and characteristics of our PE cohort has not changed markedly over the last decade or so. The PE students tend to be straight from school and are fairly young, many of whom live at home et cetera. But the other seven discipline areas that we have in secondary education—and I am sure you are familiar with the breakdown of those: English, SOSE, LOTE science, maths, the arts and technology—we primarily take into our graduate courses, and that is a fairly common pattern Australia wide now.

The rest of my comments are about the graduate intake. Of those 150 graduate secondary students that we take in a year, the vast majority go into the one-year Grad Dip. Ed., which, as you would know, is the most common qualification for secondary teaching in Australia. I want to draw to your attention to the fact that the composition and the characteristics of that student body have changed dramatically over the past decade. The majority of the students that we now get coming into that course are mature age and they are entering teaching as a second or a third career. The students are extremely talented. We get many students with higher qualifications—many with PhDs et cetera—coming in, but their needs are complex and they are juggling family, mortgages, part-time and, in many cases, full-time work while they study full time with us for that one year. It is a significant change both in our work but also in the work and life of those students as they train.

They bring an enormous wealth of diversity and experience into teaching: most of them are parents, a lot run businesses and a lot work for not-for-profit organisations and they come from an incredible variety of professions. In my class this year, I have got accountants and lawyers. We get vets and physios, so that brings an incredible amount into teaching. But, as I referred to,

not only are the students finding it increasingly difficult to juggle all of these things but we, as academics, are constantly needing to change our practice to meet their needs and to accommodate the complexity and diversity.

Ms Rickwood—I am a member of the sessional tutors group. Unlike Kathy, I belong to a group of people who have pretty well finished their professional lives. We are retired principals and assistant principals. We provide a fairly valuable resource for the education department because we do not rely on it for our livelihood. We also have a wealth of experience. Most of us have had 30 or 40 years in classrooms, so we are teachers rather than academics. We have a passion for education; otherwise, we would not still be there. We also value the opportunity to continue in education, which has been our professional life.

I agree that the casualisation of areas of the universities is a problem, but we as a group are probably needed, whereas people such as Kathy who are trying to make careers need to be put on as permanents much more quickly. There will be the need for a fairly big bulk of people who can have four hours this semester, six next semester and none the semester afterwards and still be able to eat.

The thing I wanted to concentrate on, and I guess it is because I am very school focused, is the practicum or the professional experience. Coming in on Wayne's comments, this is a joint venture between the universities and the schools. We cannot provide professional experience if we do not have teachers in the schools who are prepared to take our students. It puts a fairly heavy stress on schools, as you probably realise, if you have students in your class for five weeks and then it breaks up. I think the major things are that the departments of education need to put more value on education for the teachers who are providing this professional experience and the universities need more support in the guarantee that the teachers we are sending our students out to are highly expert teachers.

CHAIR—When you say 'more value', are you saying we need to value that role more?

Ms Rickwood—Yes, we need to value the role of the teachers more. Yes, they are paid, but not a great deal. I think it should be harder for them to offer their services to the university. They should have to go through some evaluation. They have to be good teachers. I think they have to value theory as well as practice. I have noticed quite a bit of writing in the paper saying, 'Let's do away with theory.' We do not want trained monkeys teaching our schoolchildren. We want people who are able to cope with theory and value theory as part of their practice. Also I think the departments have to recognise the work that the teachers in the schools do in this area so that it is more valuable, it is worth while for the teachers to put it on their curriculum vitae and things like that.

I do a lot of liaison work in professional experience. That is what we are used a lot for. Again supporting what Wayne said, we have all had the experience of turning out excellent potential teachers—they are potential; they have only been at uni for a year—who then go into uncomfortable school areas. In all of our systems the first year for a beginning teacher is probation, and I think on many occasions they are not supported enough. They are not linked with sympathetic mentors. Quite often the people that Janet has just described—and I have taught them; they are wonderful people—do not get the opportunity to survive their first year of teaching. I would like to finish by saying that I started teaching 50 years ago, and, although

teaching has always been a difficult job, it is far more complex and far more demanding these days, so the support to our good teachers needs to be greater.

CHAIR—In your submission you focus very much on the funding issue. You provide some interesting data for us. We have heard from a range of witnesses how good our beginning teachers are. Overwhelmingly the evidence is that most principals and so on are generally happy with the cohort of young teachers they get. We have received evidence that young teachers today are not as good as they were 20 years ago. We have heard that line. But we have seen a dramatic reduction in funding and a relatively dramatic reduction in staffing. Yet it seems we are still turning out good teachers despite that. How are we doing that? Specifically, if we were wanting to allocate more resources, where would you allocate them? I assume practicum would be one area. If we started with a blank sheet, what would we do?

Prof. Goodrum—To answer the first question, the reason we are coping well is the experience of the group of teacher educators who are in the system and the support that we have been able to get from our sessional staff to assist us. The reality is that at this point in time our teacher education group is ageing. I am not an economist; my background is science. But I understand the law of diminishing returns. I think in the next decade we will be in for a tough time unless we do something about it now. My father-in-law was a sea captain, and he used to tell me that it takes 20 miles to turn a ship around effectively. Teacher education is a bit like that. It is a huge organisation. You do not see changes quickly; they take place over time. That is both good and bad. I think we have been resting on our laurels a little bit in terms of what has been going on.

The data in terms of students' achievement—I know you have the TIMSS study and the PISA study—indicates that the general trend is that we are beginning to plateau. Other nations are beginning to catch up. If we take the view of Robin Batterham, our previous Chief Scientist, if we want to move into the next economic phase in terms of creativity and innovation then we have to make the next step in terms of education. This is why at this point in time this is a critical crossroad that we face. We have to make a decision. Do we really value education? Do we look at countries like China and others where they do value education and put their money where their mouth is in terms of resources? We have to make that decision. If we do make that decision, we have to provide the necessary resources by which we can meet the challenges in front of us. That is the first part of the question.

The second part of the question was about what we would do if we had more resources. From an administrative perspective like mine, I need quality staff. At the end of last year we employed six staff in our school. Two of those staff had to drop salaries to join us. They did so.

Ms BIRD—From the teaching profession?

Prof. Goodrum—From the teaching profession. One member of staff dropped $15,000 and the other member of staff about $10,000 because of their commitment to this profession. The salaries of the other four members of staff were unchanged. They made a commitment to join us but with the expectation that their salaries would go down accordingly. I am not aware of too many other professions where that would occur, but people are willing to take a commitment with you. In actual fact, that commitment means that in some cases they are going to have to devote extra time to improve their qualifications, because the minimum expectation is PhDs. Of

those six people, some of them did have PhDs, but the others were at a career stage where they had to get those. I guess they are the practical issues. Staffing, without question, is the important dimension.

The other thing that I would then also put funding into is the partner relationship with schools. The Victorian inquiry pushed that very strongly, but what I think they failed to do in their document was indicate the financial base by which that would occur.

Ms BIRD—My understanding is that in the talent funding model there is no capacity to directly target funding to specific things like the partnership. You have fundamentally got to pull it out of the classroom to create those sorts of positions. Is that correct?

Prof. Goodrum—One has discretion to use one's funds in all capacities, but my first priority is to make sure that I have a reasonably qualified person in front of our students. We try and make sure that each of our core units—that is, units which have 200-plus students in them—is coordinated by a full-time staff member. I actually have a unit next semester where that is not the case, because I just have not got the resources to employ another person to do that. So it is a question of priorities.

Ms BIRD—Who supervises the practicums?

Prof. Goodrum—By and large, the majority of our sessional staff undertake that. We have a full-time director of the professional experience program. The other staff in that area are essentially retired. I have a retired principal who helps coordinate that, and then we have admin staff.

CHAIR—When you raise the issue of the drop in funding for staff being a problem, is it any more of a problem in teaching than in, perhaps, accounting? I would imagine that an accountant out in practice would earn substantially more than an accountant in an academic setting. Is it something that is shared right across the university sector? I would imagine that it probably is.

Prof. Goodrum—I guess the difference is—and I cannot talk well about the accounting profession, but my observations of accounting academics is—that there are opportunities for those people to supplement their incomes in terms of consultancy work and suchlike. One can avail oneself of that in teacher education, but obviously not to the same degree. In fact, the majority of people, in terms of their involvement with schools, would always do it on an honorary basis and things like that. It is a different type of mindset. My accounting colleagues tell me that that consultancy dimension causes problems in their profession, in terms of commitments. I think, by comparison, in our profession we do have commitment and a genuine goodwill to do things. I do not know how long—if I could put it in a global sense—that goodwill will continue, as we become a more materialistic society. I would hope that there would always be people who have that sort of predisposition.

CHAIR—We have talked about staffing. Are there other areas within the course itself that could do with more financial resources, such as computer support?

Prof. Goodrum—I will give you one example. I actually mentioned it the last time I appeared before you but I would reinforce it again. In days gone by we used to have a concept called 'the

demonstration school'. It was a great concept but is unrealistic in our society these days. The demonstration school was essentially a school which was staffed by quality teachers. Student teachers would observe the best practice that went on. We can use technology to recapture that. Our university recently received some funding from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. Schools within the university can bid for a share of that money and our school has made a bid for some. What we want to do is to try and build a database of video clips of best practice.

Ms BIRD—It strikes me as really interesting in that we met a professor at one of the Western Australian universities who has done that.

CHAIR—'Teacher-cam'.

Ms BIRD—Yes. They did complete role-plays of all sorts of classroom behaviours, and they use it. I asked, 'Do you share that?' The sector does not foster or even facilitate that sort of sharing. I have a son who is doing science teaching at Wollongong and I thought, 'It would be great for him to get that and have a look at it.' I am a Dip. Ed. graduate, and my view is that the practicum is an unrealistic experience anyway. In many ways, it is far worse than what you face as a teacher, because they know you are just coming in, and they want to try you out and all that sort of stuff. That model seems so sensible in a modern way.

Prof. Goodrum—But it costs money.

Ms BIRD—Yes.

Prof. Goodrum—The university you are talking about was my previous university, and that is a developing area that they are putting money into. In my time I would have developed 30 videos, but my last video would have been made in the latter part of the eighties; I have never had the funding to do it since then.

Ms BIRD—Is there no capacity or mechanism by which that stuff can be held and shared? Or is there pressure on the universities to sell that stuff to each other?

Prof. Goodrum—There is now. In those days there was not. We use the programs I produced throughout the country in various ways. We take stuff from overseas. We can buy that reasonably cheaply. But, again, in terms of context, that has little meaning. There is a need to do that, but we do not have the funding to do that. I am conscious that I am talking too much at the moment and that my colleagues need to also make comments.

Ms BIRD—So what you are saying is that there is a need for some additional targeted funding for those innovative opportunities so they can be developed and used.

CHAIR—We have received a fair bit of evidence that the funding is inadequate but we have not received specific initiatives that, if we were to allocate funds, we could allocate them to. It is easy to say, 'We need more funding for teaching,' but we have to make a series of recommendations. So the sorts of initiatives that are needed would arm us as a committee with the ability to target some areas where we can do things better—so now is your chance.

Ms Mann—From my perspective, having been a casual or sessional tutor then lecturer and now being on contract, dropping in and out of university teaching life, being a research student and moving from doing my masters degree while I was doing the sessional work, one of my main passions was seeing lots of opportunities and innovations I could be part of. I really wanted to be involved. I learnt I wanted to be a teacher-educator, not necessarily always in the secondary school classrooms from where I came, but I really saw I could do things. I was a bit frustrated—I still am—that I am not able to get the financial support from my school to do some of those innovative programs, to help design them or maybe do some of the full-time teaching of my colleagues so that they could be released to do the development. This goes back to my initial comments about university staff probably being constrained in their ability to create innovative programs, try new things or develop new things—because they are very busy teaching and researching, which is what their job is and what they are paid to do.

Ms BIRD—We have certainly heard that available funding is heavily skewed towards traditional research type projects, that it is very difficult to get any research grants in the more practical side of researching, good practice and so forth.

Ms Mann—That sort of video thing needs to be kept up to date with new technologies in schools. Classroom situations and behaviour management scenarios change almost year to year now with faster technologies and all sorts of things. For us to keep up with that, we need to have a bit of time to do that. We also need the money to help to develop things. Again, I am sure it just comes back to money, but with that you can give people time, you can help think tanks and people with a lot of experience and then the new ones, such as me, who have fresh ideas and who come from the classroom but come fresh into the university teacher ed programs to help develop some new things.

Ms BIRD—Wayne, I want to follow up on what you were saying about the school culture issue. Certainly we have heard that on a number of occasions, in particular from students. Generally their comment is that they feel fairly welcomed and supported in schools, which is good, but they say, for example, that they spend a lot of time in the classroom talking about new technology then they get to a school and there is not sight nor sound of new technology. A lot of their comment is that they are learning the new pedagogy and are excited by it. Is that the sort of thing you were talking about beyond the classic, 'The classroom is much more difficult than anticipated from being a student in the classroom'?

Mr Hawkins—I think it is a little more complex even than that. Certainly I think what you have just described would be consistent with where I am coming from. At many schools our students when they graduate are welcomed, but there is also an element of negativity associated with school cultures where teachers who are experienced and who have been in classrooms for a long time often feel threatened by young graduates with innovative and new ideas. I will give you an anecdotal example of a graduate of ours I was talking to just recently. The teacher was told by a school principal to go home and cook dinner for the family because they were working too hard. That is straight from the teacher's mouth. I can give other anecdotes and another situations I have had with graduates where similar sorts of things have happened. That may not be widespread, but it is concerning that there is a culture in some schools which is saying, 'Don't rock the boat, don't show us up, and don't work too hard because it's not going to be good for us.'

CHAIR—Is that perhaps a function of a degree of mismanagement by the government department in not encouraging into the role of principal people with drive and get-up-and-go? Are they picking the wrong people for that role?

Mr Hawkins—I think you can look at any institution or organisation and say that some people are in positions that they should not be in. But I think it would be dangerous for me to sit here and say that principals are not being selected appropriately and according to—

Ms BIRD—And I have to say the principal could have been quite legitimately worried about the survivability rate of someone. I remember the hours I put in when I first started, and it would not have been unreasonable for someone to say to me, 'Pace yourself and be realistic as to your expectations.'

Mr Hawkins—That is correct, although that was not the perception of this particular person—

CHAIR—So it is about positive feedback rather than that approach that was made—

Mr Hawkins—Another anecdotal record is of a student who graduated, was appointed to a school—and I have heard of similar situations countless times—and was given a bundle of curriculum documents and told, 'Look, this is what you've got to probationary teach,' and that was the first and last time he had contact with that senior member of staff in that school for a year. So there is in many instances that element of people who have graduated being expected to struggle by themselves and survive.

Ms BIRD—Yes, it is: 'That's how we did it. Why should your situation be any different?'

Mr Hawkins—Yes, that is exactly right; it is: 'And we survived, didn't we?'

Ms BIRD—Although many left.

Ms Mann—Janet Rickwood was my very first principal in the government system here. As a probationary teacher in the ACT system at that time—which was probably 12 years ago—

Ms Rickwood—Easily so.

Ms Mann—I was allowed a line allowance so I actually did not have to teach a full load. I understand that has now gone by the wayside. That gave me the time to prepare and not burn the candle at both ends. With Janet's permission, I was seconded to a senior college to do some areas in outdoor education, which was an area of expertise—and ACT schools still lack people with qualifications and experience in that area. I was allowed to have a bit of flexibility with that time allowance and received a lot of support in my school, given that I was a probationary teacher.

Ms BIRD—We have heard of some models of reduced loads combined with ongoing study at university. They are almost internship models where you do a bit of both, which seems quite attractive in terms of not only receiving the support with reduced demand but being able to go back to university and reflect a bit more than we currently do. We have certainly heard from a lot of students—and I suppose this comes to your point, Janet—that there is a nervousness about

having more practicum, largely because their lives are so busy. They say that organising the practicum as it is is already an enormous problem. If they have not got family, they are probably working, so they have to have an employer who is willing to say, 'Okay, you can have those two weeks' or whatever the period of the practicum bloc is. They could have both, a family and work, which is increasingly a challenge.

Prof. Goodrum—Could I follow that up. I actually think it is not about the amount of practicum but the quality of it. It is actually about the step before that. In the eighties we were very much into microteaching and things like that. That has dissipated a little although we still do it to some degree. It is actually expensive in terms of time. If we had the necessary resources, we could have the appropriate staff-student ratios by which we could do that better and we could bring in technology. In other words, we would microteach in small groups and, with video replay, we could develop their skills in a relatively straightforward way so that when they then hit the schools they were viewed not as real novices but as novices with a bit of expertise that they could bring to bear. One of the first things that student teachers have to learn—and it sounds corny—is to actually be able to communicate with adolescents or students. You do that in a small way, first of all, rather than with a whole class. So there are mechanisms by which we can improve their whole professional experience at the university level before they get to the school system.

Ms BIRD—So you are saying, 'Let us be a bit innovative and not just add more practicum.'

Prof. Goodrum—Yes.

Ms BIRD—We need to ask what we are looking to get out of practicum and what are potential ways to achieve that and then perhaps fund some models to look at that.

Prof. Goodrum—I know that we have continually pushed the funding aspect, but it is fundamental to us. If you look at the biological concept of any organism, you see energy goes into maintenance and adaptation. We have been in the maintenance-survival mode for a period of time and we need to bed that down before we can become truly innovative in what we do. The degree of innovation within teacher education in spite those problems still amazes me.

Ms BIRD—The reality will be the massive number at retirement age in the teaching profession. We will have a real pressure to just have warm bodies. You can stop talking about quality. It will be about how we get enough students through the courses to fill our classrooms. If we are not a bit pre-emptive in getting some good innovations in place before that then I think you are absolutely right: it will become a bit of a sausage factory just being able to have a body in a classroom.

Ms Rickwood—With the demands in our classrooms, sausages cannot survive there. We really do have to—

Ms BIRD—I have seen before that a few have survived.

Ms Rickwood—Yes, but it is getting increasingly harder to survive. I think that has to be taken into account. At least in the eyes of the government and people who know better, education needs to be viewed in this way: stop making schools and teacher education the

scapegoats for society's changes and for the difficulties that are there and give recognition. Teachers are heroes, even the ones who are not very good. As a matter of fact, as a principal I always thought that the ones who were not very good were bigger heroes than the rest of us—

Ms BIRD—Because they kept going back in that room?

Ms Rickwood—I used to look and think: how do they get themselves to school every day and face what they have to go through? So we do need a little more—and I do not know what that is. As Denis said, it is a big attitude change. For many years, it has been very easy. Somebody who knows very little, but obviously went to school, can get headlines about what we are not teaching—for example, that we do not teach enough Shakespeare. I am a secondary school English teacher—

Ms BIRD—I am an English teacher too. I entirely sympathise with what you are saying about that debate.

Ms Rickwood—You go into some classrooms and, if you can, you turn them on. Good teachers can turn them on; I am not saying that it is impossible, even though there is a group of children that probably needs to be dealt with differently in our schools. But to have somebody sit back and say, 'You're not teaching enough Shakespeare, so therefore you're rubbish,' is not what our student teachers or our teachers in the classrooms need.

CHAIR—You raised the issue of the scapegoat. Society seems to believe that a teacher, in six hours a day, can reverse all the problems and provide what the child does not receive at home. It is a myth and it probably leads to one of the big problems that we as a committee are facing: with curriculum, it is a matter of 'Let's just add that on.' No-one is volunteering suggestions about what we will take out, but there are plenty of people with suggestions about what to put in.

Ms BIRD—The end result of that is that people, including some universities, are now saying to us: 'Drop the Dip. Ed. One year is insufficient.' I think that is an inherently dangerous way to go, given the cohort is actually a mature age one. In many ways, they are the most invaluable people that we want. They are inspiring when they come into our classrooms. I know that at 18 you think you know the world and you go off to be a teacher, but—

Prof. Goodrum—There is no question that an active year is an intensive year. From an economic perspective, it would be unrealistic to drop that program. We saw what happened in Queensland. They tried to go down that route, but the market forces just would not allow them to. I would like to make a point in terms of your comment about the expectation from the money perspective in making a recommendation. My hope is that, when the recommendations come down, there is a simple recommendation concerning cluster profiling and the relativity in terms of university funding. I would hope that education is lifted in terms of that relativity. That would have a huge impact on our operation, from my perspective.

Ms BIRD—That has been a pretty consistent message.

CHAIR—Yes, it has.

Prof. Goodrum—The submission from the Council of Deans of Education showed you simply the relativity in the other disciplines and the expectations on that. I look with hope, I must admit.

CHAIR—I would like to go back to a point that Janet made. You talked about a typical cohort coming in and being largely of mature age, with family responsibilities and so on. How are you finding that those people cope with some of the difficulties of perhaps full-time study and full-time maintenance of a family? Is it having a huge impact on the teacher that you are creating at the end of the day? How are they dealing with that?

Dr Smith—That is a complex question and it is a complex answer again. I still think that at the end of the day, at the end of the Dip. Ed., we are producing a really high quality teacher—in part because of what they bring to bear at the beginning, the product that they are, and in part because of the intense pressure cooker year. We have adapted and reacted to these sorts of needs. One really classic example is our university intranet, WebCT. While our students are out on pracs, as they are at the moment, I have a look at the discussion site every night. They are using it as a forum to debrief, connect and share ideas. There was nothing like it when I did my Dip. Ed. many years ago. I can see that there are innovations, be they technological or otherwise, that are sustaining them. It is a whole new genre of communication and other things. To answer your question though, to go back to what their experience is like and what bearing that has, I think we are having a much higher incidence of mental health problems during the training. The pressure is really intense and it is not uncommon for us to have students drop their bundle in the course of training because their bundle is simply too heavy. It is no reflection on the students.

Something that I am very interested in is that, although I have not read any research on this, I think schools have been threatened—I suppose that is the obvious word—and slow to warm up to the idea of the mature age, feisty students that are coming through now. Schools were very used to the 22-year-old package who was quite—

Ms BIRD—Amenable to being part of the culture.

Dr Smith—Exactly. They were acculturated. But now they are getting somebody—be it from the University of Canberra, which has a huge cohort each year, or from the Public Service—who has already been acculturated, has very strong cultural and political views and so is not as amenable. They will sometimes want to negotiate the situation and they will want to resist certain cultures. We find that more and more we are having to go in as intermediaries to facilitate the conversation between these clashing cultures. That is really complex. Is it okay if I use this to follow through on your funding question?

CHAIR—Yes.

Dr Smith—I do not know if I have entirely answered your question. I would fight to the end to keep the one-year Dip. Ed. It is long enough for them to have that intense pressure cooker. What I have heard from other universities is that by extending it to 18 months you are only extending the period of pressure. I do not see that as a solution. Students will then go out into schools and learn those skills fairly quickly anyway that they would have packed in with us. On your funding question, I will just reiterate a few things that my other colleagues have said. I would isolate four things on funding. One would be the number of full-time academic staff that

we have. As you know from Denis's submission, the current figures are that we have approximately 50 full-time academic staff but 100 sessional staff working with us. That sort of proportion is unsustainable. Our sessional staff, such as Janet and Kathy, are absolutely spectacular and superb, so it is not a matter of quality for those 100 people—it is just sustaining the links and the communication that are necessary to make it function. In fact, I think no more than the number of academic staff that we have full-time is much more realistic. Fifty and 100 is not realistic, and it has been very hard and quite a strain on those of us who are full-time to maintain those conversations, whether they are virtual or real.

The second thing is the staff salaries. To pick up on Luke's question about education academics compared to the rest of the university, there is very much an expectation that academics will do a portion of community service. For people outside education, it is possible to do community service and also consultancy work that almost merge with what they are doing and to get paid for it. We all do huge portions of community service. The vast majority of us are on school boards and committees, and we run PD in schools. We do that gladly and willingly because it enriches our teaching and it is absolutely necessary—schools do not have the money to pay for that sort of thing—but it uses up an enormous portion of our time. Either there is no time for additional consultancy work or there are not the sort of people around to pay us money for consultancy work. So there just is not any money. I was one of those people who dropped $10,000 or $15,000 to come from teaching into academia.

The third thing I would like to suggest is greater funding of research in education. I know the report by the council of deans talked of exactly that—how the majority of education research is funded within the university as opposed to ARC and other grants. There is much fine research that education academics would like to do and must do and is needed, but the funding just is not there. The fourth area, which is one of my own personal passions, is our links with our alumni. Not a week goes by that I do not get many emails from former students. I have noted that just this week three have requested an appointment to come in and talk. So the need is there to continue that relationship and make links between us and our ex-students. This week I am tossing up whether I should do it—several of them have quite an intense need to come and talk, but I am presently looking after our current crop of students, who are in schools on prac at the moment. It is really quite difficult to find the time, but I think it is one of the most important and powerful things that we could be doing.

Ms BIRD—Are they recent graduates?

Dr Smith—Most of them graduated within the last five years. A couple of them—the ones with the most intense need—are on probation and in their first year out. They want to come and make sense of their experience.

Ms BIRD—So you would support a model that funded an internship. For instance, if you did a Dip. Ed., your one-year internship in a school would be partly funded by the school to provide a salary—so you would have to be paid for doing it—and partly funded by the university. Is that the sort of thing you mean?

Dr Smith—Absolutely. I think it would just change the face of it, but, most importantly, we could retain a lot of those teachers. In an email from one of the students, she signalled that she is about to resign, and she is a fantastic, talented person. But, again, she was a mature age person

who was coping with a lot. To go into a school and not receive the support that you need is very difficult—and, by the way, I am not blaming the school. They are busy and just do not have the capacity to provide that support either. It is much more expensive to train extra people than it is to just keep the people who have done the training. I do not know if I actually answered your initial question.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee; we found your evidence very interesting. We may contact you if we require further information.

Dr Smith—Thank you.

[10.25 am]

CRIMMINS, Mr Peter Aloysius, Director, Policy and Research, Christian Schools Australia

CHAIR—Good morning. I now call the representative from Christian Schools Australia, Mr Crimmins. I remind you that these proceedings are recorded by Hansard and a copy of the *Hansard* 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 the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and, as such, warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Crimmins—Thank you. By way of introduction, I would like to outline some of the issues that we face in our sector regarding the supply of teachers and the demand for teachers, and issues that are contingent on that supply and demand. We are in a sector that is fortunately still growing; when I say 'fortunately' I mean in terms of the opportunity of choice from our point of view. The sector grows at approximately six per cent per annum. Over the last dozen years or so it has grown by anywhere between four and 12 per cent in any one year, depending on the circumstances. At that rate of growth, we need in excess of 200 additional teachers each year. We have a pupil-teacher ratio that is nearly exactly the same as the government school sector ratio, about a teacher for every 15 students. With the number of teachers that are retiring, resigning or taking leave, we are looking for in excess of 300 additional teachers each year.

Ms Bird—Is that nationwide?

Mr Crimmins—Yes. Just so that you have an understanding of the sector and have it for your records, I have a copy of a little brief we have on each of the areas that I am talking about. The supply of teachers in our own area is from three colleges: Christian Heritage College in Queensland, Tabor College in South Australia and Southland College in New South Wales. Heritage College in Queensland and Tabor College in South Australia have been recent beneficiaries of FEE-HELP, introduced by the federal government. As such, their enrolments of undergraduate teachers for both primary and secondary teaching have grown enormously and we welcome that change and the government's initiative in that regard. However, even with the maximum enrolments they could supply at the moment, we would probably only get something like half of our needs met.

The teachers graduating from Heritage and Tabor do not all go into our sector, and we welcome that because we feel that there is a good argument for crosspollination—for people moving between sectors et cetera. Some of them go to the government sector, and they are eagerly recruited by the departments of education in Queensland and South Australia. Some of them go into other schools in the non-government sector and some go into ours. So, increasingly, we are looking to recruit teachers from government schools and other non-government schools, as well as teachers emerging from universities around the country with teacher education faculties.

There are several issues that relate to that. Firstly, the teaching profession has varied success in attracting young people. Their perceptions of teaching as a career have changed, I think, considerably over the last dozen to 20 years. It does not have the same attractions and apparent esteem that was attached to it when I entered the profession many years ago. Therefore, young people are looking to professions that they perceive as less stressful, because they have been through it. The school system is the biggest socialising agent in the country, so they have a fairly good understanding of what teachers have to put up with and what teachers achieve. They also look at the alternative incomes and lifestyles that might be available to them in other professions or in other areas of employment and many of them feel more attracted towards those. As an education community, I think correcting that is largely a professional question. I do not think that just a government response is needed; the profession itself has to do something about that.

Secondly, there is an increasing decline, even in our sector, in the number of males being attracted to teaching—both in primary and in secondary, but predominantly in primary. That is a matter of concern to us, because we feel that young people should be exposed to teachers of both sexes, not just for role model purposes but also for the betterment of their own experiences. Both boys and girls need to be able to relate to male and female teachers. Many children, particularly in primary school, would spend far more time with their teachers than they would with their parents, particularly nowadays with both parents working, and that is the same in our sector. They would have far more interaction with teachers than they would with their parents. It might be structured or it might be unstructured, but the interaction is quite considerable. Therefore, we feel the balance needs to be at least partially restored.

Thirdly, it is an ageing profession. We have concerns associated with that, because we find that young people, particularly young people who look as though they are going to be leaders in the profession, at a certain point in their career leave the profession, unless they can see a clear pathway. And the pathways are not clear. You might say that in the independent sector, which we are part of, those pathways are clear. They can aspire to positions, apply for them et cetera, but those positions are still largely held—and that is going to change, of course—by people who are a little more ancient, like me, and young people do not see the opportunity to get to where they feel they are competent to operate as quickly as they would like to, but they do see that opportunity in other sectors.

The last thing I would like to say by way of introduction is that one of our colleges—Southland College in New South Wales—is looking very seriously at a graduate model. We feel that perhaps the emphasis now needs to be on attracting mature age teachers. I was interested in the comments of the previous group on mature age teachers and the cultural problems that might emerge as a result of that. However, we feel that by and large the pathway of students from school to university teacher education and back to school is unfulfilling. It lacks experience, it lacks an understanding of the wider world of work and it probably lacks understanding of the variable impacts that society has on young people today. School is just one of the areas where young people pick up their values and their information.

So we would like to introduce a graduate diploma. It is like a Dip. Ed. but it is modelled largely on the way in which nurses are educated: essentially, the time is spent in the schools with mentor teachers and they have block withdrawals for those parts requiring the academic pursuit or the understanding of the profession, the psychology or the various strands that are needed. There is a real need for these young people, particularly the graduates, to understand how

schools work, how the culture of schools work, how good teachers operate and how they achieve the outcomes that young people who want to be teachers aspire to achieve. Unless they are working closely and over an extended period—not in practicums where they are in one school for two weeks and then in another school for another two weeks; some might say, 'They are getting a variety of experiences,' and they might do that—by and large, they do not have any sustained development.

Our son recently finished his teacher education with the university here and during his practicums he encountered teachers in a couple of government schools in the ACT who were exemplary. He would have loved to have spent more time with them and learnt a lot more from those very valuable mentor teachers who are actually doing it, but it is 'Time's up, you've got to move on.' I spent some time in teachers college. Sometimes, not always, people in teachers colleges are a bit withdrawn from the rigours of the classroom and the school. The closer they get to practising teachers during their practicum for sustained periods, the better it is for them.

CHAIR—Going back to the model that you mentioned, Peter, with the diploma and the exposure of beginner teachers to good teachers, how would you propose to find those good teachers and accredit them and ensure that that experience is first rate? We already have schools and teachers are very busy. How would you encourage them to be part of that program?

Mr Crimmins—We think the people who are best equipped to know who the good teachers are are the students. Students will tell you in a flash who are the good teachers. They will not always be the teachers who are necessarily the popular teachers.

Ms BIRD—But they can tell the difference?

Mr Crimmins—They can tell the difference. They know good teachers. More often than not they will communicate that information to parents. Parents in turn communicate it back to school authorities. School authorities sometimes resist that communication for a whole range of reasons—for parity and all sorts of things that they want to maintain in their school communities—but we think that school communities are fully aware of which teachers in their school communities are excellent teachers. Most schools, regardless of their size, have excellent teachers. They are teaching at a level at which they are highly competent, very effective and extremely supportive and engage with the young people they are working with. They are the ones who should be identified by the school communities, not by an external authority.

CHAIR—Would you see that there is a need to accredit these teachers in some way and reward them through professional status or with more money? How would you see that side working?

Mr Crimmins—Those are the pathways. If you become a successful teacher, the chances are that you will get promoted and then you become, essentially, an educational administrator. Then if you are really successful at that, you then become a principal or you might move into a position with an education authority and you are lost to the classroom. We need to change that trend. Education administrators do not necessarily need to have previously been teachers. They are administrators; they are administrating. Schools are multimillion dollar businesses. We need to retain in the school community, in contact with the students, the good teachers and those good

teachers need to be identified and rewarded and to know that there are pathways for them that are both satisfying and rewarding.

CHAIR—You mentioned in your submission the Southland College and a proposed mentoring model. Attrition and mentoring are of interest to the committee. Could you expand on the mentoring model and how it would be likely to occur?

Mr Crimmins—The model being proposed is that teachers would work for a full term in a school and then withdraw for a month or so. They would go back to the college, away from the school community, so that they could get perspective and discuss what they are doing with their colleagues and peers who are going through the same experience in other schools. They could also pursue the academic areas that they need to pursue in educational psychology or whatever it might be.

Ms BIRD—Peter, you so easily said that they would work for a term. Would you recruit them and have them go straight into the classroom? Would there be a program running in the school? I am interested in that part of it.

Mr Crimmins—That part of it means you have identified the mentor teachers, who are appropriately rewarded for what they are doing. They are assigned a teacher. There is a process whereby they are matched up. Regardless of how good the mentors are, not everyone can work effectively with everyone else. There has to be a pairing process so that the mentors are working with people with whom there can be good outcomes for both parties.

CHAIR—At what stage does that preservice teacher join this program?

Ms BIRD—Is this their first step into teaching?

Mr Crimmins—No. They might be an arts graduate or a science graduate. They might have worked in some other field. They might be a public servant here in Canberra, for example, and have decided they would like to try teaching. They would spend time in their tertiary institution—probably the first six weeks—during which there would be an orientation process and visits to schools. There would be day-long visits and they would become familiar with the school community. There would be a pairing process that would have to be identified and worked through et cetera. In the first term there would be a gradual increase from nothing to a fairly lengthy contact with the school community that they would eventually find themselves in. There would also be a program of academic work that would be outlined to them over that time. In the next term, they would be in the school and on the job. This would be a school that they had already visited on many occasions and had spent at least a week in. They would know who their mentor teacher would be and they would spend time in the school in the next term. That would mean they would be a member of staff in the school.

Ms BIRD—Would they be paid?

Mr Crimmins—If you are going to attract graduates—mature-age people—and ask them to work, you have to pay them.

Ms BIRD—We have heard that, even for a two-week prac, people who are trying to hold down a job and sustain a family need to be paid.

Mr Crimmins—Exactly.

Ms BIRD—So you think they should be paid for that period?

Mr Crimmins—Yes. Our son, who is now with the department here in Canberra, told us that his first weekend off in four years without working over the weekend to sustain himself and have money was the first weekend he was in teaching this year. They have a social life. He is a PE teacher and he wanted to play sport on weekends. But he could not; he had to work. They need to be rewarded for what they are doing. You will attract them far more if you do that, and you will retain them. Otherwise, they can be viewed, even by their peers, as cheap labour. They will say: 'Would you take my class? So-and-so is away for the day.'

Ms BIRD—'Can you fill in?'

Mr Crimmins—Yes—and they do. That happens now. That happens in our schools. I am sure it happens in the government school sector and I am sure it happens in other non-government schools as well. That is an unfair position for them to be in.

CHAIR—So, in term 2, the beginning teacher comes in. What proportion of the day does he spend out the front of the class? Is the mentoring teacher always sitting in the back of the room? How does that work? Is there a gradual progression to a full day?

Mr Crimmins—Yes. There is a gradual progression. The beginning teacher—because that is what they are in terms of teaching—would start off with a very small load, probably in clearly defined areas of the day, and spend a lot of their time observing the other teacher. They would assist with the students et cetera, so there is interaction going on and the students get to know the teacher. By the end of the term, they would be spending a considerable amount of the day working with the students. In a primary school, and maybe even in a middle school, that could be with the same group of students over a sustained period of time. In the secondary area, where there are largely faculty driven commitments, they would operate across a range of classes, which is what secondary teachers do. If they are teaching science, they are teaching science to each years 8, 9 and 10. So they have a variety of classes in a variety of areas. By the end of the term, they would nearly be on a full load. But their remuneration should start from the day they hit the school, because if they are success stories—and there are teachers who are just gifted—and their mentor teacher is away ill, you can bet your bottom dollar that the school will say to that successful teacher, 'Look, can you take the classes today?' If they are being rewarded for doing it and they know they can do it, that will not be an issue.

CHAIR—Where there is a wage component, how do you see that being funded? Do you see it as being partly funded by the employing authority? How do you see that working?

Mr Crimmins—That is so contentious. If the tertiary institution has to fund it, the tertiary institution is looking for the money. It becomes an issue.

CHAIR—I would suggest, in taking this theory, through that the employer school is getting some real value from having this person there as well as imparting knowledge to this person.

Mr Crimmins—The employer should fund the teacher training. It becomes a simple analysis, because, when the student teacher is back doing their other work or, for example, in the first term when they are not actually on site and part of staff, it has to be real for them. If they are on staff, they are paid by the employer. If they are off staff, they are not. That should be the analysis.

Ms BIRD—Would you see that as a funding model that is, say, a team teacher level type of funding?

Mr Crimmins—Yes.

Ms BIRD—It would seem that it would change the whole status of the person as well, to be able to participate in that way.

Mr Crimmins—Exactly. They would feel themselves part of that team and contributors to the team. There are wonderful teachers out there. The ones that I can think of, which our submission reflected on, in the government sector are excellent role models and excellent teachers who are hungry to find out about the new things that the new ones know. They are happy to learn from them and happy for them to contribute. The new ones feel so professionally enriched when they feel they have something to offer, not just something to learn. Those mentoring teachers are the greatest asset the profession has, and we do not want them out of the classroom.

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

Mr Crimmins—Thank you.

Ms BIRD—I will be very interested to know how it goes once it is up and running.

[10.50 am]

McLEAN, Mr Garry, Vice-President, Australian Curriculum Studies Association

NAYLER, Dr Jenny, Executive Member; Editor, *Primary and Middle Years Educator*, Australian Curriculum Studies Association

CHAIR—Welcome. 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 McLean—I will begin with the introductory remarks and my colleague will add to those as necessary. By way of background, ACSA is a national professional association with just on 2,000 members. It is interesting that the majority of those members are institutional. For example, if a school is an institutional member then all the members of that school, university or organisation are actually able to take advantage of the services that we provide to our members. That institutional membership means that we are represented in 10 per cent of Australian schools.

We have been involved in facilitating a number of conversations recently between education CEOs and practitioners around the country. Most recently, that has involved a forum on quality teachers and quality teaching. We will pass that information over for your interest. Also, in February this year a forum looked at national approaches to curriculum. Again, that involved both the practitioners—those involved directly with schools et cetera—and the various department heads from around the country. ACSA has had a policy on teacher education for a large part of its 25 years of existence. The other publication we have here details some of that—a little bit of light reading for much later.

We put forward a submission and we would just like to highlight the main points of that submission. We commented on, largely, the nature and the processes of teacher education, including the practicum. It is fair to say that ACSA is committed to intellectual quality and rigour and has absolute commitment to the highest standards of academic and social outcomes. ACSA believes that a fully qualified graduate teacher must be a high-level professional educator with a solid knowledge base in several content areas, with an understanding particularly of the literacy and numeracy demands of those content areas and a high level of understanding in the areas of pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment and reporting. ACSA also acknowledges that teachers need to be able to teach a diversity of students in differing contexts. They need cross-cultural understanding of an increasingly multicultural society. There is also a need for a very broad understanding of the differing social backgrounds and circumstances that impact on students' lives and, for that matter, the lives of teachers at this particular time.

Given the complexity of the profession today and the processes necessary for teacher education courses, we consider that it is essential that universities are the providers of such courses. In 2006, I am sure I do not have to remind you that the community and student

population is more diverse than at perhaps any other time. That is a critical factor in the area of teacher education. It is also important that pre-service teachers work together with teachers in the school setting on educational issues and problems. Obviously that is an issue that has been expressed by others who have presented evidence here today.

We presented our submission under a number of headings that we thought were important. One of those related to Indigenous pre-service studies. ACSA operates from a firm social justice platform. We believe that educators, at this point in time, have a responsibility for the development of the cultural, civic and citizenship knowledge and values of our society. In particular, in ACSA's experience, it is the curriculum workers—those who are working in schools with our students—who provide the impetus towards reconciliation, through an authentic inclusion of Indigenous content and perspectives, in the curriculum and across the curriculum, which challenge the practices that have perhaps in the past restricted the learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

On the partnership between universities and schools, ACSA has acknowledged that, given the nature of current-day educators and graduate students, the teacher education process needs to draw heavily on the capacity of universities and schools to produce quality outcomes, and that means working together in partnership. We also picked up on the primary-secondary divide. It is ACSA's belief that the boundaries between primary and secondary education should be blurred, and that education faculties must reflect the need for fluidity between early, middle and secondary phases of education.

Regarding recruitment and retention, ACSA considers that marketing strategies need to be developed to attract a range of people to the profession of teaching and that these marketing tools should attract a diversity of students who reflect our multicultural population. On the subject of teaching out of their field, ACSA is concerned that it is common, in many secondary schools, for teachers without specialist preparation in curriculum areas of shortage, such as maths, English and science, to be assigned to teach the younger grades where schools may be unable to cover those subject areas from the limited pool of specialist teachers in those areas. Where such instances occur, these teachers need ongoing support to develop their expertise in these out-of-field areas.

Finally, ACSA is very much committed to ongoing professional learning. It has highlighted induction and the professional learning and structured models that need to be developed to ensure that professional learning takes place throughout that induction period and well into the career of teaching. That is the gist of our submission.

CHAIR—Thank you. It is a very informed submission that you have put in to the committee. We are really getting to the business end of our inquiry now and drawing to the conclusion of our hearings. One of the things that we are faced with all the time as a committee is endless advice as to what should be included in the teaching curriculum. With regard to the curriculum for pre-service teachers, we would be delighted if you could throw any light on what things may be able to be left out of a curriculum. We have reams of material on what should go in, but courses are of a finite length and we have had far less guidance on what could perhaps be removed to make way for—

Ms BIRD—Other than from the students, who usually do not have much trouble with the topic!

CHAIR—this veritable tidal wave of information on what needs to be put into a curriculum. I am interested in any thoughts you might have on that.

Dr Nayler—It is not unusual that, in current contexts in a variety fields, life is becoming more intensified. What we need to know, and what we need to do with what we know, is rapidly increasing, and, as you say, there is finite time but the time needed is increasing as we try to prepare ourselves and prepare others to go into complex professional fields. I think ACSA would argue that we want mature, critical, discerning thinkers who can make decisions about the amount of material they need to engage with.

It is extremely difficult to start thinking about carving away particular areas that we would argue have a place because, as I am sure everyone who has sat in front of you has said, teaching is a complex, social practice. I think one of the key aspects that we need to include—and this might allow us to exclude some others—is that people are aware of who they are as teachers, how they are positioned to be teachers and how they might work, particularly with the diverse range of students in their cohorts. As a result, we could clear away some of the baggage of all of the content. I am not advocating that we do away with content, but I think the focus in teacher education programs should be on creative, critical, careful thinkers who can make decisions, and I guess we need to make those decisions as teacher educators as well.

CHAIR—One of the things that come out of the evidence when you talk to students—and teachers of many years experience say this too—is: 'I now realise, five or seven years down the track, that what I thought wasn't relevant back when I was first doing it is really worth knowing,' so it was not until later that the value of the items of a course were really recognised. We can see that coming through in the training, with some students currently doing a course but not considering the more philosophical elements of it to be relevant.

Dr Nayler—Five to seven years is a long time in contemporary society in terms of knowledge—isn't it?—as things could be well and truly outdated by then. Your point really reinforces the need for teacher education to occur within broad learning communities which have connections between universities, teacher educators, schools, students and pre-service student teachers. The learning should not be just about people receiving knowledge and skills in teacher education programs in universities. The learning that is going on should continue afterwards. I think a learning community is the right scenario and it is the way that we have to look at it. So there would be learning for everyone in it—every single person including the teacher educators, who constantly need to learn as well.

CHAIR—We have been hearing a lot of evidence as to the value of strong partnerships between universities and schools. You have said in your submission that you oppose the apprenticeship model. I would be interested in your expanding upon the issue of the apprenticeship model versus strong partnerships with schools and that interface.

Mr McLean—I think the discussion that led to that particular comment was looking particularly at the apprenticeship model that was almost like handing over the responsibility for teaching practice totally to schools. A lot of schools talk about the fact that in some instances—

and there is a wide range of circumstances around the country—student teachers move into schools and work with those teachers and sometimes there is not that connection with universities that the schools would like to have, so there is a view out there that perhaps schools should take total responsibility for the preparation of students from that particular viewpoint. ACSA has suggested, as Jenny has suggested, we need partnerships and connections, rather than handing over responsibility to the schools as such.

Dr Nayler—It is the nexus between theory and practice that is so important. I think I am safe in saying that our organisation stands very clearly for practice in school that is informed by rigorous, theoretical frameworks. I think that it is all about exploring theoretical lenses, engaging in practice and then coming back to a safe, challenging environment where that practice can be explored again with reference to theory. I say to my students, 'Of course you are drawing on the research and looking at the literature; you are at university. Why would you be at university if you were not doing that?'

Ms BIRD—I am sorry to be a wet blanket, but I have a son doing teacher training and I have talked to his friends. They say they get chucked into a school, nobody ever visits them and they come back to uni. They never really get a chance, even on a two-week prac, to engage in some meaningful analysis of what it was that they did and so forth. I think that is where the student frustration is with the model. We have partly discussed some ways around the funding challenges for universities in supporting that. But, having heard your insight into how critically important that connection is between the practicum and the analysis and the understanding of it—which I think is profoundly critical to the profession—I would be interested to know what things you might have seen that do work with that, because what we are hearing is that the current system is problematic from that perspective.

Dr Nayler—I do think there have to be rich tasks at the centre. There have to be tasks and activities that are meaningful to the pre-service teachers, the teacher educators and the students and teachers in schools. For example, at my own university, the University of the Sunshine Coast, where we started teacher education last year, our first course was called 'Becoming a teacher'. There were two main tasks. Basically, it was a sociological view of teaching, with practical experience embedded in the program—not a block but practice where the pre-service teachers were required to do two main tasks: first, to gather artefacts, such as system level and school level policies, and to talk to the teacher mentors about them. I can see that you are second-guessing that the learning for the teachers—

Ms BIRD—I would say they would dig deep in trying to find some of those—a treasure hunt.

Dr Nayler—Yes. The conversations are along the lines of: what policies do you have, what does this mean for you, how does this change things in classrooms and how would you like to see this policy change? There were meaningful conversations and professional dialogue that we scaffolded as teacher educators. The second main task, which threw some of the teacher mentors into a momentary conniption, was the need for them to engage in a semi-structured interview with the pre-service teachers to talk about what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century: what are the concerns, what does it mean to be a student, what does it mean to be a knowledge worker and where does the knowledge come from?

That is significant learning for the teacher mentor, as well as for the pre-service teacher. Just in the same way that progressive educators advocate rich tasks for schools, we need rich tasks for pre-service teachers—tasks where people have a vested interest, where the teacher educator is interested, the pre-service teacher is interested and the students are interested, because it is all about maximising student learning outcomes. If it is not about maximising student learning outcomes, it should not be on the agenda. In short, I think central to the task are rich tasks and rich activities that are meaningful to the diverse stakeholders—without trying to sound like a textbook when I say that!

Mr McLean—I would agree with that. My experience is as a system administrator but also as a school principal. Where the practicum was most successful was where the school, the principal and the staff had a connection with the university staff who, in turn, were working with the students in the school setting. So, on a very practical level, it was quite common in that particular time for the university staff member to be invited to be part of, say, a school review or a principal appraisal or to be involved with a research project that kept them very connected with the school. That had all of the advantages that Jenny has referred to when the university staff members were working with the graduate teachers or student teachers. Again, it is making those connections.

Ms BIRD—I asked about that because we hear some tremendous examples of programs described in terms of how they intend to operate, and something is obviously consistently falling out between the aims and the actual student experience. One of the most consistent things some of the students have said is that so much of the supervision is by sessional university staff, who may not be there when you need to ring them and so forth. We have to put some practical funding ideas down on paper, and I think it is important that we get it right and that we discover where the problem is. If the problem is not with the university in developing innovative stuff—because we have heard lots of innovative stuff—let's target where the problem actually is. I am sorry to be so pragmatic, but we really want to nail it properly.

Dr Nayler—Pragmatism is important. We need that. I think it is a resourcing issue. I am sure everyone who sits in front of you says that as well. But I think I have recalled correctly that the submission that the Australian Council of Deans of Education put forward drew attention to the steady numbers of pre-service teachers in universities but the rapid decline in numbers of academics in university. That just cannot work. The business of teaching becomes increasingly complex. The demands to engage with ICTs and having pedagogy driving ICTs and not the other way around is just one example of the increased complexity. There is much richness and diversity that comes into universities as a result of sessional staff, but there are tremendous challenges, and you have referred to those. They are lack of access, lack of consistency in programs, and inviting people into the culture of a university while challenging it and moving on. A major factor certainly is the resourcing so that the funds are there to educate young people and mature age students in the complex business of teaching.

Mr McLean—I have a number of friends who I would consider to be very creative, very talented teachers who for a range of reasons may not be in the classroom at the moment. They may have young children. They may have decided to step out for a while. They include some people who have been principals. They do go in as sessional staff and work with the students in the schools. They add a real richness to it. But they tell me that the frustration is that they have a connection with the student that is not followed through, sometimes, back at the university,

largely because the resourcing is not available for them to be able to sit down and take the time to do that.

Ms BIRD—So some funding targeted at that model of partnerships would be useful.

Dr Nayler—Yes.

Mr McLean—Yes.

CHAIR—You referred in your submission to marketing of the teaching profession. One of the things this committee finds fairly amusing is that the teaching profession look to us to solve the problem that there is a perception that they are not valued as they should be. We find it quite amusing that parliamentarians are at the lowest rung of esteem in the community and the teaching profession is consulting us as to how to raise their own level of esteem.

We have received evidence that many young people at school and beginning teachers are lectured by an existing teacher: 'Don't become a teacher. It's not a good profession.' I was at a memorial service for a teacher who tragically drowned a couple of weeks ago. To hear the testimonials from the students as to the worth of this teacher was very moving. Had some of these disillusioned teachers heard what these children were saying—and they were only kindergarten to year 6—maybe that would reaffirm their view of their own worth and the worth of the profession.

My question is: who should be doing the marketing? Should we be looking to the teaching profession to reassess their own personal views of their self-worth? I believe there are large sections of the community that hold teaching in very high esteem as opposed to the perception that some teachers themselves may have. Who should be doing the marketing? How should we do it?

Mr McLean—In this day and age it has to be a partnership between all of those involved. I agree with what you have said. If you look at some of the newspaper and magazine articles where people are asked to talk about someone who has had a real influence on their life, eight or nine times out of 10 they refer back to a teacher, whether it is a primary, infants or secondary teacher. My experience in Singapore, now a number of years ago, was that they go to quite substantial lengths to have very glossy television advertisements. You wonder where they are leading. They are about a partnership or a relationship between a young person and an adult. Of course eventually you find out that person happens to be a teacher. We are probably in a time at the moment with the various institutes of teaching, such as Teaching Australia, and with the various departments and sector authorities where it could be a joint initiative that works to market teaching and what it means to the young people of this country to have really good, strong professional teachers in front of them working with them in classrooms and other situations.

Dr Nayler—It is a really difficult question; I guess you are here to ask some difficult questions. I think teaching is an extraordinary profession. I could not imagine doing anything else. Despite the complex demands on my time at university, I regard myself as a teacher. I try not to use the 'l' word—the word 'lecturer'—because it is so damaging in what it might mean. In terms of pedagogy, it means that you are talking at someone.

But the reality is that teaching has experienced a downturn with regard to pay. I read in another submission to this inquiry that within five years teachers' pay increases by 55 per cent, whereas for a law graduate it is 178 per cent. And I read with relish, because my son is studying to be one, that a civil engineer's pay increases by 121 per cent; I was particularly interested in that statistic.

The fact of the matter is that it is a highly feminised profession. The downturn in male teacher numbers, as I think is often the case, means that people think the pay is not at the standard that it should be for the physical, emotional and intellectual demands of being a really good teacher at the absolute top of one's game. So that issue of pay for teachers really needs to be flagged. Whilst one can say it is a fantastic profession to be in, the grocery bill has to be paid. I think that is a real problem. And we see numbers move away from ICT—people in science, for example—and those areas in teaching to industries drawing on a similar disciplinary knowledge but where the pay is much higher.

Mr McLean—And, as in all professions, we need our really good, experienced teachers as much as we do our engineers or architects and others.

Ms BIRD—It certainly used to balance off. The parity has worsened, but I do not think teaching was ever particularly high paying or seen as a prestigious-pay job. It was balanced by the lifestyle options. People valued the holiday periods and saw that as the trade-off that they were willing to make. With the increasing demands in schools, teachers are losing that time factor, which was an advantage. The interplay of that with the pay issue has had a real effect. The other thing we consistently hear is how exhausting and time-consuming it is, and how the tasks for staff constantly expand.

Mr McLean—And there is a level in teaching when you reach the top of the scale where, unless you move into the administration or the other side of teaching, it is—

Ms BIRD—The pay plateaus.

Mr McLean—Yes.

Ms BIRD—And, sadly, performance plateaus as well.

Mr McLean—Yes.

Ms BIRD—In the area that I come from, in Illawarra, it is impossible to get in as a graduate teacher. There is a high transfer demand. You can see the impact of that in schools where there is—and it is human nature—a performance plateau.

The other issue I want to ask about is the primary-secondary divide. You break that down into four categories: early childhood, primary, primary-middle, middle-secondary and secondary-post compulsory. Are you talking about how people are trained, educated or employed? What are you looking at? Is it curriculum development?

Dr Nayler—I think we are talking about both of those areas. We are reflecting the focus in jurisdictions to look at education in phases: early phase, middle phase and senior phase. Whilst

we critique the primary and secondary divide, it is bizarre in some ways that we can go into a primary school and recognise it as a primary school for particular cultures, whereas going into secondary school that transition can be very sharp. It can be an absolute divide and some students cannot seem to make that up. They lose their ground and never really recover it.

So we are advocating some more nuanced and context responsive approaches to education, whilst trying not to create another divide from early to middle and then middle to senior. We are making reference to the fact that this is a focus in jurisdictions. The literature talks about the need to be responsive in the middle phase and to cater for those students who may feel alienated and whose results tend to drop off at that stage. In turn, we see that as a responsibility for teacher education too.

Increasingly, universities with teacher education faculties are picking up that focus on getting people prepared for teaching—I hesitate to say trained because I prefer to use other words to describe that—and for their future work with an emphasis on a phase rather than these very strict divides that make life difficult for many students.

Ms BIRD—Certainly in secondary school, from my recollection, you had no idea what had happened the year before the students turned up in year 7. That is the sort of issue. I do not think it is pragmatic to ask people to say, 'I want to teach in this, this or this phase,' but you are saying that the preparation of that person needs to encompass an understanding of those wider phases as well. Indeed, the big drop-off is year 9 and 10 disengagement, so that whole question becomes very critical for the longer term.

Dr Nayler—I have a bit of a theory, too, that engagement is an issue in the middle phase, but it is not always the students' engagement. Maybe it is our engagement as educators. Maybe we are not as engaged as we should be in students' lives, in their aspirations and in their needs. So, yes, I think engagement is a big issue, but we as educators need to look at it as well.

Mr McLean—Probably for close on a decade now ACSA, you will see if you do the bedtime reading, has been heavily involved in research related to the middle years, and I am not telling you anything new in saying to you that one of the major outcomes of that is the fact that primary teachers can learn from what happens in the early years of secondary education. But, equally, secondary teachers can learn a great deal from what happens in the later years of primary education. Of course, the big winners in that are the students themselves. The downgrading of that divide takes place and there is a more holistic approach to the way in which we are educating our young adolescents now, perhaps more so than ever before.

Dr Nayler—Indeed, three years ago we transformed our non-referee journal from the *Primary Educator* to the *Primary and Middle Years Educator* to acknowledge that focus and that need for curriculum and pedagogies responsive to those middle-year students.

Ms BIRD—It is interesting to me because I have had a bit of a subinterest throughout this in the fact that our secondary schools were designed for an industrial environment. Our primary schools have had the capacity to adapt and to reflect a more modern, interactive world, and then the students hit these industrial factories with bells, rooms and things. Certainly my sons would say, 'This school's nothing like my real life,' and that is a very common reflection you hear, that it is not an experience anymore. Carrying a bag full of books—who does that anymore?

Dr Nayler—And it is a lack of integration in secondary, isn't it? The bell goes and it is a case of: 'Forget geography now. Think about English.'

Ms BIRD—Yes. It is a production line type thing.

Dr Nayler—As opposed to the idea of a rich task, where young people might be supported and challenged to solve a problem and then asked, 'What kind of knowledge do we need to draw in?' This requires extraordinary resourcing to reculture and to build infrastructures that can accommodate that flexibility. There are a whole lot of obstacles, cultural and organisational, that get in the way of that, I think.

Ms BIRD—Yes, and certainly some of the debate in the *Australian* would advocate a reversal back to a less constructive model.

CHAIR—You say in your submission:

The 'privatisation' and 'commercialisation' of teacher education, especially mid-career professional development, seriously threatens the coherence and quality of provision.

Would you like to expand on that point?

Mr McLean—I think we were saying there that professional learning for teachers beyond the teacher education phase has to be looked at in a very consistent manner to ensure that it is not fragmented and therefore impinging on the outcomes for the students. That is as much a responsibility of the individual schools, and probably a matter of the resourcing that is available for teacher professional learning, to ensure that it is consistent and that it is meeting the needs of the students in that particular community setting et cetera.

CHAIR—I am interested in the commercialisation/privatisation part.

Mr McLean—In particular I think the fact is that a lot of teacher professional learning has been taken up by commercial companies, in many ways. From my own experience as a school principal, the opportunities to utilise university staff and people who perhaps have previously worked in our schools have not been as readily available in more recent times. I am not working in the university area but my understanding is that much of their time is taken up with having to provide income for their own faculties and the university, which means that their professional learning courses would be at a cost level that schools just cannot afford. It is forcing schools to go to commercial groups that have been set up to provide some of the professional learning they believe is necessary.

CHAIR—For those commercial courses offering professional learning, by way of example, what type of module would you like offered on a commercial basis?

Mr McLean—I suppose you really touched on it when you spoke about it often being one-off opportunities that are not ideally connected to the overall needs of the school. It may be a particular program, such as creative teaching of science in your school. Basically it would involve perhaps one or two teachers, although it would be good if it was a whole staff approach. It may be trying to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to improve the teaching of,

say, science in their school situation. Often it is a one-off. It is paid for commercially and there is not the opportunity for them to readily be able to go back and to utilise that product more widely in the school setting. So it really is that very point you made: it is one-off professional learning, generally for one or two individuals. It does not have the impact on the total school community, which is often what is needed.

CHAIR—So is what is happening that a range of commercial providers with a scattergun approach are marketing a disparate array of ICT for beginners and so on, so there is no strategy—just a scattergun approach with a range of packages?

Dr Nayler—There is a market strategy, I guess: make lots of money.

CHAIR—That is the commercial world.

Dr Nayler—Yes. I think it comes back to what we discussed earlier about the notion of partnerships. The best kind of learning occurs within a learning community or organisation that does long-term work together exploring problems and taking a problem-solving approach. At ACSA, we definitely subscribe to the notion that education is about public good. It is about working to maximise outcomes for kids in schools with a diverse range of outcomes. Therefore, if I do not sound too naive, I think the motivation needs to come from people who care about enhancing student-learning outcomes. Whilst we cannot remove the profit motive from the society in which we exist, I think the emphasis needs to be on collaborative and democratic work together as opposed to people making some fast money.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. We may contact you if we require further information. I see we have got hours of interesting reading there.

Proceedings suspended from 11.28 am to 11.44 am

AULICH, Mr Terry, Executive Officer, Australian Council of State School Organisations

CHAIR—Welcome. As you would be aware, the processes of this committee are proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as the proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Having said that, I invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Mr Aulich—My first remark is about the nature of our organisation because the extent of it in terms of its networks and the sort of work we do is not always entirely understood in either the political or the bureaucratic sphere. We represent the parent-school community in the 7,000-plus public schools in this country. Our reach is pretty significant and probably greater than most political parties on the basis of the number of people who turn up to two meetings a year or more. Our active membership around the country through our affiliates would exceed all the political parties combined if I can work out the maths and all the political parties are telling the truth about their membership, which is an enormous network.

We also raise considerable money to enable state schools to have more than they currently have. I think the last estimate we did in one state on the amount of money raised by parents in either direct levies, voluntary levies or fundraising was $34 million—that was one state per year—which means that in financial terms we are significant contributors to the improvement of the state system.

In some of our states, parents are represented on what I call significant governance bodies in that they help to make key decisions about staffing, policy and issues that go beyond, for example, the tuckshop. There is a joke in our organisation whenever we start to get heavy about particular issues—that is, we want to go into detail. 'What about the pies in the tuckshop? Aren't they getting cold and shouldn't you be there?' Our organisation covers everything from the parents clubs who do a lot of the fundraising on the ground through to organisations that represent school councils and therefore are concerned primarily with governance issues. Somewhere in the middle, we sit representing all of them.

We have a very active executive, all of whom have vice-president status—that is, they are elected to our national council. Our key issue is not about lobbying per se; it is about research. I will not say how much we turn over, but it is a considerable amount. It is not about servicing organisations around us; it is primarily about research. We look at issues we think ought to be examined in more detail and which many organisations that are specific interest groups cannot. Whether you are a teachers union, a bureaucracy in a state education system, a health department or a university, we cover all of those. When you look at who our members are, they can be anything from teachers, accountants, miners, wharf labourers to whatever. You get a real mix.

I also want to say that our networks are not necessarily composed of people who have a high level of education; they vary. A lot of those people in blue-collar jobs are very active in our P&Cs around the country. In many cases they show as much or more commonsense and understanding of education than people who are professionals, many of whom are very busy and do not always find the time to attend, for example, the P&C meetings—not that we judge our

activities by the number of meetings you go to. It is fairly important, but we believe that school-parent partnerships are about more than who turns up to a meeting.

A lot of skilling goes on throughout the country. For example, I was near Ipswich on the weekend and at Dubbo the weekend before that to meet with parent groups. We were looking at the issue of how we spend the $700 million from the Investing in Our Schools program. That is a significant example of a government waking up to the fact that parents have to be involved. We do not want to be dumb recipients of money handed out by government; we want to be there in the decision-making process, from the school level, where the project is chosen by the school community and the parent body, through to the approval, short of the minister's signature, of the projects in that competitive program that get funded.

That was something that we negotiated with the government prior to the last election. We will be taking it to both political parties prior to the coming election and saying: 'We like this framework. Are you going to support it, and what is the quantity?' That is where the lobbying comes in. A lot of our work was spent getting that program together so that it involved—Sharon would understand this—the Whitlamesque view that sometimes federal governments ought to go directly to the people on the ground to get their views and involvement.

If you asked, 'What are we about?' we would say that essentially it is ensuring that our massive network, which covers all sorts of skills and backgrounds, is used for the benefit of the state education system. Notwithstanding the fact that we have some very good relationships with and do a lot of joint projects with, for example, the Australian Parents Council, which represents primarily the Catholic private sector, if you asked us where we sit—and I think it is very important for you to know where we are coming from—we would say straight out, 'We want the state education system, the public education system, to be so good that nobody would want to send their kids to a private school,' full stop. We are in the marketplace—we recognise that. And we know we have a lot of things to do to achieve that goal.

To go right into this issue, teacher training is very significant. There is no doubt that there are a couple of key factors which make or break schools and, particularly, state education systems. One is how good the leadership is in the school. The second one is the quality of the teachers, particularly the training that they are being given. I do not avoid the word 'training'. Let us not get into flash terms—this is training; it is a skill. You may have an aptitude for it, but a lot of training is needed to help you through what is a really difficult but inspiring job.

The third one is how you relate to parents. Kids should go to school and go home within a magic circle of concern and protection given to them by both parents and the school. The notion of what the French call 'outside the gate' as an educational tenet is not acceptable to us. In many French schools the kids are let out through the gate and the parents wait outside the gate, as you have said, on the street for them to come out. That is about as far from what we think ought to be happening in the schools as it could be.

We do not intend to run the schools. That is not our aim. It is to make sure that what all parents have to contribute is used in a significant way. One of the first things we would demand with teacher training—and this is going to be one of our major drives over the next few years—is that, both pre and during service, it ought to be based on how you build those effective parent-school partnerships. Without them you are underutilising the networks, the access, that you can

get to new ideas and the good relationships that essentially underpin effective education. If you said, 'Where do you come from in terms of what you want out of teacher training?' that would be the first. The second would be to put teachers in a position where they can realise their ambitions, they are excited by their job and they feel as if the community respects them, so that people who are talented and have what it takes to be a teacher are prepared to come into the education system and say: 'I am a teacher. I'm proud of it. I get good remuneration and reasonable holidays.'

A lot of people say that teachers do have good holidays and that makes up for a lot of things, and in a way it does. If you had to buy those holidays on the open market you would be dropping your salary by $10,000 to $15,000. Not withstanding that, the salaries have to be competitive. We take up what previous speakers said: the notion that you have to reward hard performance and training. If people are prepared to give up time, for example, in their holidays to be trained and if they are prepared to continuously become better teachers through training, seminars and awareness-raising and morale-building programs, they ought to be rewarded. I see absolutely no problem, and nor does our organisation, with rewarding senior teachers who may not want to go into an administrative role with increased salaries as master teachers. Until you have that top plateau of teachers who say, 'We are deliverers of an education service, and we are master teachers with a role of training and mentoring other people both in and outside the school,' you are just playing at the edges of teacher training. You can train people, but for what? You do not train test pilots to drive a car to the airport and back every day. After a while they say, 'I'm trained for more than this.' So that is the first thing: there have to be career options there.

We think the training itself is in many ways handicapped by the fact that all training for teachers tends to be restricted by the global view, the prejudices and the mode of discourse of the people who design, run and fund the courses. We have looked in universities for clear indicators of whether or not that training and research is up to scratch. One of the things we note is the excessive use of elliptical language which excises other people—including the parents—from the process of discussing what education is about. Why would you want to read some of the stuff that is, for example, put up in the guise of curriculum statements around the country? I do not agree with quite a few things said by conservative commentators, but they are quite right when they say, 'This language is impenetrable.' If a teacher, student or parent went to a training course or the website to find out what it was about, they would be none the wiser without an explanatory note or an in-person explanation. We think it is not just a mechanical problem; it is a problem in terms of attitude. Somehow or other, education training is being squeezed into a narrower and narrower academic environment which is not necessarily leading to knock-on effects in the education community or in schools as a whole.

For example, we cannot find any evidence whatsoever of a unit—not a major part of a course, just a unit—that deals with the building of parent-school partnerships, yet that is going to be the major driver of education, particularly state education, in the next decade. Where are the education faculties? I know on the whole that they tend to get dudded—and they say so themselves when they are prepared to be honest about it—by their own universities, who say, 'Let's put the money somewhere else, because education is not as prestigious or remunerative as law, economics or possibly engineering.' We also look for the research that could drive education. Where is the research on family-school partnerships? Where is the research on reading aloud to children? We believe there is a massive educational benefit that comes from reading aloud to kids: the holding of a child, from a very early age, with a book; the questioning;

the personal relationship you develop with a child as an appropriate part of their upbringing; and the attention you give them as opposed to the attention television gives them.

When we actually went to find out what longitudinal studies had been done in our education faculties around Australia, the answer was pretty well zilch. One person described himself as 'the expert in Australia', but had not done it because 'it is very expensive research'. What has happened? Kids get to school at the age of five in most states—it is pretty variable, of course—and they can use the five or so major parts of speech. They are a pretty well-developed little person by the time they get to school, so much has happened before they get there in terms of socialisation and intellectual and emotional development. Yet there has not been a teacher in sight at that point. Reading aloud to kids is part of that process, we believe, but we are looking for the research. We are looking for the applied research for that type of thing in our university education faculties. We just do not see them.

In short, our view is that there are deficiencies in teacher training and they are not just about funding; they are about whether or not the people in those faculties have got their eyes and ears open to the world out there, because it is a marketplace. Somehow or other they cannot sell the value of what they are doing. Maybe it is the language they use or the fact that they are contained by university restrictions in some way. It may well be that they need some new blood in there from the practising area of teaching and from parents and from other people. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that the teachers themselves should not really be expected to spend 30 to 40 years in the teaching force. There ought to be a lot more movement, and the training ought to reflect that. For example, that question of the primary school and secondary school divide—and even the preschool divide from the rest of them—is, in plain terms, nuts. Why can you call yourself a teacher because you are in a secondary school and you are a specialist in a particular subject when you know nothing about how kids learn, especially at an earlier stage in a child's development? That would seem to us to be a basic tool in the teaching kit—that you know how kids learn, how they develop and how they learn to be literate.

On the next point, the question of literacy and numeracy, again we think that governments are going in the opposite direction from what we think ought to be the solutions. Governments are saying, 'Let us impose reporting and assessment processes,' because they love it. You can measure it; you can get points out of saying: 'We will make sure that every kid in this country reaches a certain level by this particular age. And we will measure them against each other and then we will pick out the schools that are failing. The schools that are succeeding can have signs up saying "Last year we turned out 89.5 per cent literate kids."' Whatever that means. That in itself creates a wholly different environment from that which you really should be aiming for in educational terms.

When you talk about the crowded curriculum, we would be saying to the training institutions, 'Sure, you need to talk about assessment and reporting. Maybe you ought to be teaching that 'reporting to parents' means just that—reporting or communicating with parents about their kids at appropriate times, not at one nationally measurable point in time when it may be too late for many kids.'

If you look at (a) what is in the curriculum in teacher training, we say it is very deficient in many ways—it does not reflect the real world; and (b) the on-the-job training that is going on for teachers in the schools is still corralling them into areas of expertise and of experience and interest which they ought to be dragged of out from time to time to see what goes on. I was a senior master of English before I went into politics in the last century. One of the best things we ever did as a school was to send our high school English and social science teachers into the local feeder primary schools to sit there and teach with them—to watch what the primary school teachers did, learn the skills and learn how you build relationships with kids, because high school teachers can often forget it. And vice versa: allow the primary school teachers to see what actually happens to their kids when they get to the high school so they have an understanding of the continuum.

We would say, let us also move it into preschool work. I do not mean preschool in that formal kindergarten type structural notion; I mean before school: before kids get to school. You have got to know how they mix. Early child care is a big issue, but it is all about 'how do we let women get to work?' Maybe they do not always want to get to work. Maybe they want to get to work for a little while, so they can be with their kids. There are all sorts of variations in people's lifestyles and personal views, but where is the teaching profession being trained to understand where kids start in their learning?

To sum up what ought to be at the core of all teacher training, no matter what the level: it is really about understanding how kids learn and what kids need for their mental and physical protection when they go to school. We think there are many deficiencies in the current system that need to be changed, but they are only going to be changed when you start having a debate about it. The debate ought not to be about whether Australia's PISA results are 0.5 per cent behind someone else's in Korea. If kids are jumping off buildings in Korea, or Japanese kids are committing suicide because of the pressures that are on them, do we need to follow them? So we look at that and say, 'Hang on, let's go back to where we ought to be starting in terms of education, which is raising awareness about the key issues and how kids learn.' We are not convinced that teacher training actually covers that core issue: how kids learn and how you teach teachers about that process.

That is around the world for threepence, but I think it summarises the view of our executive. We have discussed this frequently. Our research is geared towards looking at those issues, and hopefully in two or three years time we will come back to you and say we have seen some changes. A lot of our time is spent dealing with state ministers for education, saying: 'You're not just administrators; you've got something more than that and you're also not just running organisations that respond to what the federal government says you ought to do—based, in some cases, on already failed models from overseas, or on models that are irrelevant to the Australian context.' We have a culture that we want to maintain at its best; let us do that. Teachers are a very important part of that process. I could not give a bigger tick to any profession than the teaching profession, but I think we have got to bring them back to square one.

The last thing I would say concerns administrative capacity. Many teachers are being forced to be miniadministrators, wasting time on so-called accountability and reporting arrangements. That happens even in states with decentralisation, where a devolution of authority has been given to the schools. Bureaucracies and reporting arrangements have been created by both the feds and the state government which have added to the workload of teachers who are supposed

to be running the show themselves. Then someone, who in many cases is not really a teacher, is saying, 'Give me the report on this, this and this', and teachers end up spending their lives writing reports not only about kids—which is obviously one of their key things—but about many other issues which really have very little to do with education. As we know, the key thing for any successful organisation is the ability to push back and say: 'Stop swamping me with centurion plodding; we don't need to do it. We need to look out the window for five per cent of our time just thinking about where we're going, what we're doing and building relationships within our school between teachers and teachers, teachers and administration, teachers and parents, and teachers and kids.' That is where your training comes in, because if you are training people in a plodding, irrelevant system then they will behave like that in a world which is very dynamic and which requires a dynamic response.

Thank you for the opportunity to give you our full view. I think it is helpful to people to have that on record. You would have noticed that I did not mention one word about the relative funding between the private and public sectors. Quite frankly, as I said to the chairman before the meeting, that in a way is already a done political settlement and—unless you bring in a voucher scheme, in which case we would probably rise up in rebellion—we accept that 70-30 funding is what the Australian community is accepting. We recognise that there is a marketplace out there and that the state system in particular, not the private sector, has to be a model for improvement. It has got to be the state sector that says, 'We're so good that people want to come to us.'

CHAIR—Thank you, Terry, for that informative contribution. You talked about the curriculum being deficient in many ways. We are really at the business end now and we are wanting to formulate some key recommendations which will be implemented. We get reams of advice on what to include but far less advice on what to leave out. We are faced with a fixed training time frame, at least in the beginning teaching phase, and obviously there is ongoing career development too. Given that training time at a preservice level is a scarce resource, I would be interested in your thoughts on the key deficiencies and the key things which should be specifically included—and you have mentioned there is no module on the partnership between parents and the school—and advice, from your organisation's point of view, on what might be able to be left out of any curriculum. The latter is probably the hardest part of the question to answer.

Mr Aulich—I think it is not so much what you leave out as much as what you substitute. We would say, for example, that you need to fund appropriate research into this question of learning how to learn, into reading aloud to children, into parent-school partnerships and into the teaching and practice of values in schools—so those sorts of issues—to see what really pans out in the Australian context in terms of decent research, short term and longitudinal as well. That ought to be the material which is fed into the training process, at both preservice and continuing service levels, partly because if it is not fresh evidence—although it has to build on what has already been done before—if it is not relevant to the Australian context and if it is not something which has meaning to the trainees then it is just going to be taken on board and they will simply quote Dudunk, Heemskerk or Nether—I am just making names up—and, as you know, there is an endless parade of Gothic victors in the academic battle. We do not necessarily need to concentrate on them anymore but I think to some extent we do concentrate on academics and academic writings which are not relevant to the Australian context but are known intimately by the lecturers and staff of universities.

Ms BIRD—And by the research-funding bodies.

Mr Aulich—Yes, and by the research-funding bodies. As you know, the number of citations you get in academic research determines in many ways your career. So we say if universities and research operate in that way then you cannot leave teacher training in the hands of those people, because (a) they will get it wrong on the whole about what ought to be in the curriculum and (b) they will get it wrong about what research ought to be feeding into the curriculum. Research ought to be live and part of your training ought to be asking preservice students to do miniresearch of their own so they understand what research is about, they understand, when they read research as they go on in life—hopefully as a teacher for many years—what to look for and they are not going to be pushed around by people with the latest fad views or views which are imposed on the system but are not really relevant. In other words, it is to get some genuine debate going on; it is to provide some knowledge and some learning skills for the teachers themselves. We do not think you need to cram the curriculum. It is about teaching teachers to learn in many ways, which is going to be very important. You would think they would have already done that at university but I would not say that necessarily happens, because you have got to learn in a different way. So, secondly, I would ask for the most relevant research to be included, as to the material for your courses but also as to the techniques that need to be taught and how to do research so that you can start doing it yourself.

The third element would be admin: you have to give teachers some idea of how to manage things. Someone took me aside as a new teacher and said, 'You're going to get on'—I did not think I was going to get on, because I thought I was going overseas—'but the thing you need to know is how to build a timetable.' If you recall, that basic skill was not actually held by too many people. It was like some sort of magical, mythical thing that you knew, like pulling Excalibur out of the stone: suddenly you were the deputy principal and you could actually do a timetable. Timetables were still being done two to three weeks into the first term of the year, with the usual sort of dislocation and lack of focus and morale that accompanied it. This person taught me how to do a timetable that, by October, allowed you to lock it in place, get the teachers you wanted, apply to the education department and say, 'We want two French teachers, five maths teachers, this, this and this, and this timetable will be ready from day one.'

These were simple administrative techniques that somehow or other I did not pick up at all during my training, yet someone mentored me and said, 'This is what you ought to do.' But unfortunately that sort of person was rare, because most schools were still in a state of chaos in the first two to three weeks of the year, losing that real impetus that schools need to get everyone, both teachers and kids, off to a good start. But one person knew. So I say the third thing has to be the techniques of administration. You have to ask yourself: could current university lecturers in teacher education do that? Are they skilled enough? Do they have the background to do it? Is it even part of the curriculum and in their courses?

So we are still talking inclusion, but I think you could spend a lot less time on historical research of Dewey and the rest. They are useful, but a simple summary and a simple reading of their most popular writings would be sufficient. Instead, we are getting people writing mini-theses on Dewey et al and you wonder what the point of that is, particularly given that Dewey changed his mind on many things and a lot of his writings are irrelevant to the modern context. He was writing, in many cases, about kids brought up in the mid-west of the United States and what they needed. So you come back to the relevance thing—judging everything from the point

of view of its relevance. I do not mean functionality or boring mechanistic approaches; I mean asking, 'Is it relevant to the Australian context and will it drive the imagination and skills of our teachers?' I do not think that audit has been done in our universities. We have had many reports, but we have never had simple audits done of what it is all about.

I got into the lift at Sydney university once with the vice-chancellor. I thought a tea trolley was coming behind me, but it was two trolleys with files on them. I said, 'Does that accompany you everywhere?' He said, 'Only to this meeting; that's our university profile,' as demanded by the then minister Joe Dawkins. That is what that university would have spent a lot of time on. I think schools are often mini-examples of that sort of so-called reporting and accountability process, and it has not allowed people to stand back and think the clear thoughts that are necessary.

Simple audits can be done. We do them on values with our executive and other people. We say: 'Okay, you want to talk about values; you want to have views about the government's approach to values? Let's do one ourselves. Here are 15 questions. Answer these. How are we going?' When we said, 'These are my values; these are your values over there,' we suddenly realised that determining values was not quite as easy as giving people the nine commandments. So (a) audits can be very useful in assessing ourselves and (b) I would like to see a committee like this, for example, run the ruler over some education faculties and ask, 'How are we going?' I would like them to then do the same thing to the state education authorities and ask: 'How are you supporting teachers? And, by the way, how are you promoting state schools?' I think New South Wales has a little unit somewhere that promotes state schools. I have not found it yet, but we will find it. It gives you an example of where the skills may well be lacking.

The other thing—and this is the final point I will make—is that in today's marketplace you have to teach public school teachers how to promote and how to connect with your potential market. Currently, a mate of mine does polling and focus groups, which is what I used to do as a business for 12 years before I took this job. He is being hired by private schools to use the most modern and, I would say, privacy invasive techniques to find out where the market for private schools is. The questions are: 'What is the profile of your parent? What is their demographic? What are their attitudinal views?' You find those people in various places around the city and that is where you build your next private school or, alternatively, where you advertise with your glossy brochures saying, 'This is the sort of thing we're offering you.' Of course you are hitting the nail on the head every time with marketing. I am not saying that public schools should necessarily do that, but they do have to understand marketing.

Ms BIRD—They have to stop putting themselves down.

Mr Aulich—Exactly. That would be my biggest criticism of the teachers federations. Every time they talk about how badly off they or their schools are, another kid goes to a private school.

Ms BIRD—We have had students say to us, particularly the mature age ones who come to teaching training after another career, that the teachers at school said, 'Don't be a teacher.' It was a very unfortunate self-fulfilling prophecy going on.

Mr Aulich—Exactly.

CHAIR—What input is your organisation having into the development of teacher courses at the moment? Not enough by the sound of it.

Mr Aulich—No, we are not.

CHAIR—Are you on various boards?

Mr Aulich—Yes. We sit on an advisory body with Teaching Australia. It is a greenfield approach. We are saying, 'It's not what is at the moment but what could be.' Our conferences now are not about people jumping up and moving motions. We have a public conference where we invite people of all persuasions and all backgrounds. The one in October in Melbourne will be about the schools we need and how we get there, and it will cover everything—curriculum, teacher training, relationships with parents, public relations, how you build schools and fund them, whether you have private-public partnerships et cetera. There is a whole serious of modules that will be hanging off that major conference. At the end of it, hopefully, we will have one or maybe more of what we think are the best models so that we can go to Lynne Kosky, Carmel Tebbutt or whoever, and to the federal government as well, and say, 'These are the models that we think will work.' There will be questions like: 'Are there certain kids who will only work best, and maybe only for a time, in small schools? What is the appropriate school size?' Again, training is not taking those questions into account.

The other thing is that you need to train people to be able to move up and down and within the education system and to come in from outside. We would love to see a lot more people who are not necessarily going to be teachers from 21 or so until retirement. We would like to see people coming in from other occupations who say, 'Now I want to give something.'

Ms BIRD—The sadness is that it is easy to go out of the system; it is not easy to come back into it.

Mr Aulich—Absolutely.

Ms BIRD—We have had some comments on that too.

Mr Aulich—I have seen some really good teachers-in-waiting coming from other professions who, in many ways, just give up. That is where you have to very carefully tailor your training to make sure that you are not making them go back to square one, because they bring to the training environment something which may be an advance on the people training them, and so a lot of the training is about sharing experiences and then finding some methodologies to share that and to build on it.

To come back to the question of what ought to be taken out: we say not to get obsessed with content. It is learning to learn that is part of it and giving people the capacity to keep training and to look for those areas where they need skills. Even as old as I am, I am doing an assessment—a job interview—every six months for my job. I am on a long-term contract, but every six months I do what I ask my staff to do, which is to sit down and ask: 'What are our goals? Have I achieved them? Where am I going et cetera?' It is that type of assessment that all teachers should be able to do and then, if you decide that you need certain skills or you need to top up in certain areas, it is available to you.

I guess that is where the marketplace comes in. For example, are universities or other training institutions and organisations providing what you need? Is it being recognised as an extra skill? Are you being rewarded in terms of career and extra remuneration? That is a lot of discussion that has to go on with the teacher unions, of course.

CHAIR—Earlier you mentioned our preoccupation with testing at different points in time. If we do not test and have a really good look at where we are now, how our system is going and how it is serving our kids, how do we implement changes in teacher training or other areas? Given where we are with the knowledge explosion, I am interested in your thoughts about the preoccupation with testing. I would have thought that, whilst it creates some challenges, it is a necessary evil insofar as positioning some corrective action in a range of spheres in education is concerned.

Mr Aulich—I agree with you. I think testing is vital, but the testing is really about checking to see how a student is progressing and then being able to report on that in a way that is timely, is in plain English, has meaning for both the student and the parent, and does not destroy morale on both sides. If testing is about finding some so-called arbitrary level of achievement that you have to reach and if it is giving in to or creating parents who are totally uptight about their children's results—you only have to be in New South Wales when the HSC results come out to see the obsessive nature of that in the New South Wales system; every paper has 'The results' on the front page—

CHAIR—'The judgment on you'.

Mr Aulich—Exactly. I am not sure whether that is the best way to improve the education system, but testing gives you a benchmark and that is important. It gives you an opportunity to then say, 'Yes, I have missed in terms of the training of that particular child. This is what parents need to know about that child.' But you have to go beyond the As, Bs, Cs, Ds, Es and so on, and the pass/fail stuff. It is about: where are the weaknesses, where are the strengths and how do you act on what you find? That is the other thing. There is no point in testing kids for some benchmark and then not being able to follow it up. We saw that with the voucher scheme for literacy. We knew that there were kids with problems, but we then gave them vouchers, the vouchers were underspent and we will have to look at different ways of doing it. To the government's credit, they will now probably be open to looking at the schools providing some of that remedial work. That remains to be seen, but it is an example.

What next, after you deduce that a kid has problems or a kid has great advantages, is doing very well and maybe ought to go on to a higher level and be stimulated more? With those sorts of things, you must have plans in place to deal with them. You cannot just say, 'That's it, you've failed, kid'—that is about the worst possible thing you can do—'There's nothing I can do for you. You've failed.' By the way, the school could have enough failures to justify being called 'a failed school', and then the inspectors turn up, as they do in England, and you fight to actually keep the school open. You can see where we are going. We do not have any problems with testing, but it has to have a function and there have to be plans to follow it up. It is all part of the communication between parents, teachers and kids.

Ms BIRD—I have listened to what you were just saying. From the perspective of a parent, it is almost a double-edged sword when I hear people say that you have to involve parents more,

because one would say, 'My life is so busy and my work is so demanding'—and this has been the case not just in my parliamentary career, as short as that is, but also through my whole working life. It seems that part of it is that schools have never, since they first started communicating with parents, tackled how they do that. When I think about my experience, it was either at a parent-teacher evening—which was, generally speaking, at a time before I could get home from work to attend it anyway—or through a printed, double-sided yellow or green newsletter that went into what I called 'the black hole', which was the school bag.

Mr Aulich—Yes, with lunch crumbs on it.

Ms BIRD—Yes—and when they get to high school it is just as likely to disappear before you even see it in their bag. We have heard from the students that what they get from their training—and probably from their own enthusiasm and commitment to the teachers as well—are some really innovative and great ideas, and then they hit what tend to be the dinosaurs of our schools. I was talking last night to a young lady who is doing maths teaching and, sadly, is looking at pulling out. She said, 'I'd be happy to get on the internet with the parents and pop some feedback through to them.' But schools do not seem to have made that adjustment either. Can you think of any examples in which that has been encouraged so that, even if we train them really well to engage on the parent side of the relationship, the kids do not hit a system that does not support it?

Mr Aulich—Some interesting work is being done on that. You are absolutely right that it is a bit like Labor Party branches: if you were sane, why would you go to some of them? For some of the P&C peak councils—not at the top of the nation, but in some states and territories—the average parent, if they were sensible, would have no interest in going to some of the meetings. Here in the ACT, some meetings would go until 1.30 in the morning. So you think, 'Why would anyone do that?' So we do not rely on people going to parent-teacher nights. It has to be a multilevel way of communicating.

That is where the training comes in about how you get to the parents, especially now that so many parents are time poor. As I said, it is not necessarily the blue-collar workers who are not interested; they may have more time. In fact some of them have deliberately made the decision to be with their kids in all sorts of arrangements. The more focus groups we do, the more blue-collar workers turn up saying, 'I'm a self-employed plumber'—the archetypal self-employed plumber—'and I like it because I can be with my kids.' They often go to sport or shopping or whatever the deal is. Other parents at a professional level are still sitting at their PCs at 7 o'clock trying to finish off a report. They cannot come home and read to their kids because some of the kids are probably in bed, and they have child-care issues and so on. These are some of the examples we are finding.

The federal government funded an interesting program called the Family-School Partnerships Framework, in which we were involved. We offered funding to 61 schools around the country to do a pilot on how you build partnerships. That did not mean, 'How do you get parents at P&C meetings?' In fact, that may not even have been the goal of some of them. It was left to the schools, the parents and others to build some sort of model. Some of them had already started or were well advanced, and others were just thinking about it. Of the 61 schools funded, two-thirds were in the public system and one-third in the private system. I understand that report is with the

minister now—and it will probably go further. If someone said, 'What needs funding?' we would say that is the area where the greatest funding is needed.

Ms BIRD—Is there a research component attached to that?

Mr Aulich—Yes.

Ms BIRD—Who is doing the research?

Mr Aulich—The report is written by Saulwick Muller. They measured the results, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the schools. I have seen the results, but I am not allowed to comment on them at this stage. It will be a very interesting report which will probably end up with MCEETYA and be funded either by the federal government on its own or in cooperation with the states. But, once that hits the deck, I think you will find that you have a platform for that type of thing.

Ms BIRD—Are you confident that that will be incorporated into the university training? Is that where your lack of confidence in this stuff happens?

Mr Aulich—Yes. Once that report comes out we would want to see Teaching Australia and the deans of the faculties of education and say to them, 'Okay, how are you going to respond to this?' We have got to go to them with specific research to say: 'You didn't do it. It's been done. Now what are you going to do about it?' They cannot say, 'We haven't got enough funding,' because we do not necessarily accept that. Again you will notice I have not talked much about funding today. It is about wherewithal rather than funding. If they are prepared to take up the challenge, we will work with them all the way down the line. We have already put out feelers saying, 'This is where we want to be.' But, again, you are changing psyches. Their psyche is, 'And parents too.' There was a famous American vice-president who kept being forgotten. Most vice-presidents were. People always used to say, 'And him too.'

Ms BIRD—The Tasmanian dilemma.

Mr Aulich—Exactly. They left it off the map. It is a bit difficult to get the parents to understand that we are researchers as well as lobbying people. But we are going there. Some of them say, 'What do you people do?' We say, 'Go to our website.' Our website gets 100,000 hits a month on average. Twelve thousand people have signed up to receive our electronic newsletters. We put out two million pamphlets on literacy, on request, in 11 languages. We have people just sitting there packing them, putting them in boxes. We talk about research but we do not know how we did it.

Ms BIRD—It obviously shows there was a gap.

Mr Aulich—There was a gap. People ring up from kindergartens, high schools, playgroups and so on to say, 'Can I have 30 of these brochures about literacy, in Vietnamese?' Again, the federal government, to its credit, has funded us to do that. Again, we do not just send them out. They have to ring us or write to us and say, 'Yes, we want them.' Our aim is awareness and to get into that debate so that people have to actually take it seriously. In that sense the faculties of education are slowly starting to think: 'These guys are players in the game. They are key

stakeholders. They want to be in the debate and they are not going to take no for an answer.' When we looked at, for example, the report on the teaching of literacy, we had a few things to say privately but we also said, 'We're also going to do it positively with you so we can look down the track in five years time and say Australia is going to lead the way.' I think the family-school partnerships model will be leading the world if we take up the recommendations that are in the report, about which I cannot speak.

Ms BIRD—We look forward to it.

Mr Aulich—It is a lighthouse, we think.

CHAIR—Thanks for your contribution. It has been fascinating.

Mr Aulich—Thank you for your time and for the fact that you have gone out of your way to be here when you should be back in your electorates garnering votes and so on. It is a way, as I said, of putting everything on record so that you know where we come from and you know who we are, and that is very important. You have gone around and heard different viewpoints. Your reports are going to be from people who bridge that gap between academics and punters, and that is a very important process.

Ms BIRD—We hope so.

[12.41 pm]

EVANS, Dr David, National Vice-President, National Committee, Australian Association of Special Education

CHAIR—I welcome our next witness. 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, as such, warrant the same respect is 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 Evans—Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with the committee. The Australian Association of Special Education is a non-categorical and cross-sectional organisation representing teachers, parents, community members, academics and a wide range of people. We currently have a national membership of around 900, and our main interest is in the education of students with special education needs—specifically, students with identified disabilities and students who experience difficulties in learning within a range of educational contexts.

There are three or four terms of reference to this inquiry that we are particularly interested in. One of them is around the quality of university faculty of education members. In special education, we are finding at the moment that getting qualified special educators to work in universities is becoming increasingly difficult. That is not specific just to Australia; it is also specific to countries like the US, where there is a dramatic shortage of people working in the area. One of the issues we are finding through our members is that, if you advertise for a position in a university and mention that it provides special education, people who respond either do not have the qualifications, because these days universities demand that applicants have a PhD, or, if they do have a PhD, they tend to be more senior members of staff within schools and therefore the income offered would be in no way commensurate with what they are currently on—there can be quite significant differences. That creates an issue. With regard to special education, we believe that all faculties of education should have at least one member of staff who has training in special education, has a PhD in the area and is also active in research in the area.

With regard to the educational philosophy, we perceive that faculties of education should be promoting rigorous academic debate. One of the issues that we have is that rigorous educational debate is often exclusive in the sense that evidence based approaches, for example, are often ignored and discounted because they do not fit the current belief system. To give you one example, one of the educational practices evidence based approaches have identified is explicit and systematic instruction of basic skills, particularly for students with difficulties learning and those students with significant disabilities. Current approaches around constructivism, for example, in some universities, are very hostile towards those sorts of approaches, yet the theory of constructivism does actually have an element that promotes the explicit teaching of skills. So we see equipping preservice teachers and teachers in schools with a range of strategies, including strategies that promote the explicit teaching of skills to students, as vitally important. The literacy inquiry was one inquiry that highlighted that concern as well.

We are also of the belief that teacher education courses should be of four years duration. There seems to be a movement towards end-on degrees. To give you an example of what happens to special education in those situations, we have examples where in preservice teacher education you might get 24 hours in a subject face-to-face. In an end-on degree that can be reduced to 12 hours of contact and less. That is the amount of time that a preservice teacher or educator will spend specifically talking about the education of students with disabilities and learning difficulties—those students with the challenging behaviours in classrooms. It is a very limited opportunity to be engaged in those areas.

In terms of preparing teaching graduates, we are firmly committed to the position that all teacher education programs must have a subject that addresses special education. There is anecdotal evidence that some faculties have attempted to integrate a special education subject across different areas. It tends to get left to a non special educator to teach—somebody who does not have the passion, the desire and even the knowledge necessary to address the issues. New South Wales, for example, requires all preservice teacher educators to have a subject on their transcript that is specific to special education. That is not something that our association sees in all states and territories within Australia. We are also of the belief that those strategies, attitudes and beliefs need to be integrated through other subjects—curriculum subjects. For example, how do you manage a student who may have difficulties in learning to read?

That brings us to the point that, in preparing teacher graduates, quality programs are not only about teaching and preparing students for school and beyond but should also have an element of preventing difficulties from emerging in the first place. Therefore, programs need to be canvassing a range of methodologies and philosophies. In the area of numeracy, for example, there has been that continuous debate around whether or not you teach phonics—the phonics versus whole language debate—yet the literature is very clear about the explicit teaching of those skills. Phonics, the alphabetic principle, reading fluency, vocabulary and those sorts of things are very important to a significant number of students within our classrooms. Preventing those difficulties from occurring at an early stage is cost effective compared to trying to deal with them afterwards. The research shows us that there is an 88 per cent probability that those students who are weak in year 1 will still be weak in year 3; and there is something like a 70 per cent chance that they will still be weak in year 7 and year 10. Trying to remediate those effects is a very time intensive and expensive operation and yet we know from the research that we can prevent a lot of those difficulties.

We believe that preservice teacher educators should have a working knowledge of whole-of-school partnerships. I was interested in the previous witness's comments in regard to that. To give you an example, the area of challenging behaviours is one that schools are grappling with on a regular basis at the moment. There is a body of research under the term 'positive behaviour intervention supports' which looks at whole-of-school approaches to addressing pro-social skills, preventing difficulties before they occur and addressing social behaviour within the school context and within the community. The involvement of the whole school—staff, students, administrators and the school community—in those sorts of set-ups has been shown to be effective. Those programs also have to have quality curriculum to go with them.

The other element around whole-of-school partnerships, particularly for the students who have significant disabilities, is that we do not expect preservice teacher educators to leave a program and know everything about a student with cerebral palsy, spina bifida or an intellectual disability.

But we would hope that they would leave preservice teacher education with some strategies on board about how to work within a school community to access this knowledge, such as how to access an advisor, health support and those sorts of things to promote their professional development to work with the student. It is not something that they always need on board.

Ms BIRD—Sadly, it might be such a grim picture that you do not want to tell them!

Dr Evans—Possibly! But I think the research around collaboration and problem-solving sorts of strategies have been shown to be quite beneficial, not only for student outcomes, which is critical, but also in terms of professional knowledge and professional learning for teachers, because they are at the coalface working with this knowledge, implementing it and reflecting on it.

In regard to developing professional knowledge of those sorts things for teachers, AASE has, particularly in New South Wales, a strategy at the moment of working with its members who can actually nominate specific professional development courses that they want to run. They can nominate who they wish to run it or we will help them identify somebody who could run it. They have to identify the research base that they want. We will fund it and work with them at the training level, not just as a one-off but as a sustained series of professional development courses. That has been something that we have run a couple of times. It may be a little early to tell whether we have been wonderfully successful, but certainly the feedback has been very positive.

Ms BIRD—Does that cover the broad spectrum of special education or are they specific to, for example—

Dr Evans—They are quite specific to their individual needs. In Wagga, for example, there was a school which had a number of students with autism. They specifically wanted to know strategies to work around the sensory issues, the social skills development and those sorts of things to accommodate those students. That school worked with the association. They got an expert in who worked with the school, but they also invited schools from around them to come and share that expertise. That was a relatively inexpensive and particularly successful strategy that we developed.

The last point I want to make is in regard to professional development at post student level, once teachers are actually in schools. The Association of Special Education has a belief that all schools should be staffed with a special educator. I am not necessarily talking about somebody on staff whose job it is to work separately with students who may have a particular special need, but it may somebody on staff who is in a regular classroom and who has the training, the knowledge and the background and can work with the school community to address particular needs as they arise.

We believe from some of the research, especially that out of the US, that having that working knowledge on campus would be a particularly strong feature of schools. It could be made a career opportunity. It could be that you have a deputy, you have an executive teacher and you have somebody in special education who has the specialist instruction or design knowledge, the curriculum design knowledge, the knowledge of how to access resources outside in the community and who can work with parents and communities. They would know how you work with community services, the health department and those sorts of things.

That sort of strategy is within the association. While we are promoting that, we have a long way to go. We also are trying to promote research opportunities to our members. We are trying to get them to take the research to their classrooms and start to focus on things they might be particularly interested in. We have yet to get any university faculties on board, but one of the ways that we have been trying to do that is through offering an award—I suppose you could put it like that; it is a $500 award—to a postgraduate teacher for a publication around research that they have actually conducted and written up in a formal paper. So not only do they get the financial reward but they also get the paper that they have written published in one of our journals, and that is shared with the broader community. Again, it is the issue of taking that to the coalface. We would like to make closer links with some of the universities with regard to that, because we can dovetail into their concern about getting postgraduate students in. Hopefully we can support that. Again, the association thanks you very much for allowing us to present today and to address the committee. I am happy to field any questions or queries you might have.

CHAIR—Thanks, David, because I had a range of questions and you have comprehensively answered them as you have gone. We have all these people volunteering a wide range of things which should be included in a crowded curriculum, whereas the approach you have recommended is to give the beginning teacher the tools and the ability to know who to call on if more information is needed. One of the thoughts that I had in my mind coming in here was to question whether you thought that the professional development arena is where we really should be meeting the more specific needs in special education. You have answered that pretty comprehensively.

Dr Evans—I suppose I do not see it specifically as being professional development. I suppose we have a need. Take the American example: if you have a special education need in America, you have to have an IEP, and it is not something that is automatic here in Australia. An IEP is an individualised education program. It is a legal document that basically says that you will do these sorts of things to help meet the needs of this particular student. A lot of schools in Australia do develop them, but they do not have that legal—

Ms BIRD—Contract?

Dr Evans—Yes. But, as part of that, we are trying to meet the needs of the students, so we are asking: 'Do we need a physiotherapist? Do we need access to a speech therapist? What sort of instructional design do we need? How are the outcomes going to be accommodated by the syllabus?' But we can also ask: 'What do we need for the teacher to be able to do this in the classroom?' So that becomes a professional development exercise, so the school can say, 'We will allocate it.' There was an example last Friday of a principal sitting in on a meeting in a school with a young lady who has significant cerebral palsy. Her parents were talking about whether the student could walk. At that moment she was moving around the table and the physio said it would be great if the student could continue to walk around the classroom, as it would be good practice to get from one place to another. The teacher was a bit reluctant about that, but the principal came in and asked, 'What do we need to do to help the teacher to get to the point where she is confident in working with the student?' The principal was able to say, 'Okay, we will allocate this amount of money and we will offer professional development.'

Ms BIRD—One other thing—which you touched on during your comments—was that it strikes me that it is such a broad field now. When you talk about special education now, compared with when I was trained 20 years ago, it is a much broader field. I suppose the challenge is for a student going into pre-service training. There is so much that they are learning to comprehend. That specialisation is often a post. You have worked for five or six years, you have realised you have a real passion and interest in working in that field.

So it seems to me it would be particularly important, beyond just professional development, to provide that sort of postgraduate option. If you have been in teaching for six or seven years and you say, 'Look, I really want to go into this,' what do you do then? We seem to have lost that old model that said that, at some point, you could do some really specialised add-on education and training that would mean you would then become the regional expert in this particular field. Do you see the universities offering much at that postgraduate level?

Dr Evans—In most universities around Australia, special ed qualifications are offered primarily at the postgraduate level. They have moved to that level. There are a limited number of universities that would offer that specialisation at an undergraduate level, mainly because there is so much else coming in that it is getting squashed out. So that is a particular area of concern to us, because many people who work in special education do not have qualifications. I hate to say it, but we get people coming back from maternity leave, for example, who are trying to get back into the workforce—

Ms BIRD—'We haven't got a program for you; do that.'

Dr Evans—Yes. 'You're the last person on because we haven't filled that position.' I am convinced many of them do a great job, but it really concerns us that they do not have the specialist knowledge that would enable them to do an even better job. The New South Wales Department of Education and Training have a model, for example, where they provide the opportunity for a number of teachers to go back on full pay—

Ms BIRD—That is what I was interested in.

Dr Evans—to actually train in the area. I think they have just reconfigured that model; it has been around for quite some time. That is one avenue for attracting people back into it. But, as for people who wake up one morning and say, 'I really want to do special ed,' I do not think we see too many of those sorts of people. We are getting an increasing number of regular classroom teachers starting to say, 'We need to know more about it,' so they may go into those postgraduate courses at university. We find that a lot of them attend our after-school sessions: we will run, once a term, a specialist session on behaviour management and things like that. We have just run a series of those professional development sessions as part of an association for new teachers, and they have been in quite high demand. Behaviour management is an important one, just managing a classroom also, and teaching reading is the other one that has been popular. The fourth one is assessment: how do I undertake an assessment so I can monitor the progress of my students?

Ms BIRD—Yes. I always remember the golden rule in anything that assessments could be adjusted for special needs. What does that mean!

Dr Evans—The whole idea of adjustments, which comes out of the standards, is one area that the association has taken on very seriously. We have just allocated what I think at the moment is up to $5,000 to develop a professional learning package which we are hoping to distribute to schools and our members and so on. They need to know what they can do as part of an adjustment. I think the term has this mystifying lack of clarity about it at the moment, and we are trying to take advantage of the fact that the standards are there. This is a great opportunity to get to teachers and say: 'We're not talking about something that is separate, different and exclusive. We are talking about your effective practices.' So we come back to really needing to know what the effective evidence based practices are and how we can adjust those. How do we break something down into smaller steps, how do we redirect our questioning, how do we assess—

Ms BIRD—Within a legitimate framework of standards.

Dr Evans—Yes.

CHAIR—Thanks, David; that was very informative. We really appreciate you taking the time to travel to Canberra and join us today. We may contact you if we need further information. Thank you very much.

Dr Evans—Thank you.

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

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

Subcommittee adjourned at 1.04 pm