

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**(Reference: Teacher numbers and recruitment)**

**Members:**

**MS K MacDONALD (The Chair)**  
**MR PRATT (The Deputy Chair)**  
**MS R DUNDAS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 20 APRIL 2004**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Ms K McGlinn (Ph: 6205 0137)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry which have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the committee office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

**The committee met at 9.34 am.**

**THE CHAIR** (Ms MacDonald): Good morning. I will start by reading a statement and then I will introduce myself and the committee. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

Gay, if I might call you Gay, I am Karin MacDonald and this is Roslyn Dundas and Steve Pratt. Welcome and thank you very much for your submission to this inquiry into teacher numbers and recruitment within the ACT. Would you like to start by making an opening statement?

**GAY Von ESS** was called

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes. Thank you. My name is Gay von Ess. I am an autism consultant and special educator and I work privately for myself. My concerns really relate to the provision of services and the training for teachers of children who have an autism spectrum disorder. I was an employee of the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services for many years. I recently resigned and I have been working as a private consultant in the autism area for almost a year now. My biggest concern is the lack of training of any sort, or any in-service, for many teachers who are working with children with autism and specifically for teachers who are employed and put in charge of an autism-specific class of which there are now a number in the ACT.

My concerns relate to all levels of education, from the educational play groups that are run at Therapy ACT right through pre-school, primary and high school. I know of instances where teachers have gone into these specialist areas from a mainstream class without so much as a day's in-service from the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. I have a strong background in special education. I started teaching in the late 1960s and in my first teaching position I had two special education children, and I very quickly specialised in that area. In my experience, and the experience of many other people who work in the autistic area, these children are different from the run-of-the-mill special education kids. It does require a different approach.

Two years ago the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services did have money available and offered the opportunity for teachers to train in the education of children with autism at the first course offered here in Canberra at the University of Canberra. A number of teachers took that offer up and I commend the department for doing that. Unfortunately not all teachers finished the course and it has not been offered again by the department. My other concern relates to provision of teacher assistants, STAs, and their lack of training and education. I realise the inquiry is really directed at teacher numbers and teacher training, but these people are doing a lot of teaching for children with special education, particularly those who are integrated into a mainstream class.

Thirdly, my concerns are in a related area, that the resources that Therapy ACT is able to offer to children who have an autism spectrum are not sufficient. For children who are in

a learning support unit autism specific, the teacher gets a visit once a term and consultation. There is no direct service to the children unless the parents really push hard and get an individual appointment. For teachers who have no experience and no background, a once a term visit is totally insufficient. Some children with autism in these classes are non-verbal; others are highly verbal. They need a different approach. Some children have good gross motor and fine motor skills, but most of them do not, and a lot of this falls into the therapy area and out of the ambit of a mainstream teacher.

That, I suppose, is the crux of my concerns. I am also concerned that all teachers should have some background in autism. Currently the New South Wales Autism Association is quoting one child in a hundred as being somewhere on the autistic spectrum.

**THE CHAIR:** What do they base that on?

**Ms Von Ess:** Research and the figures across the world. So that is, I suppose, the crux of what I have said in my submission.

**THE CHAIR:** You talked in your statement just now and also within your submission to the inquiry about the need for pre-service training for mainstream teachers. You believe that this training should be mandatory?

**Ms Von Ess:** I believe it should be mandatory for teachers who are going to take on a learning support class. I can tell you that it has not been in the past. I know a number of teachers and the training one of them received was that the school asked me to go and do a half-day in-service at the school for all staff. At another school, the teacher visited two classes that were already in operation for half a day and although the teacher and the STA were enrolled or listed to come to an in-service that was being run in the January stand-down period, the school principal decided that it was far more important that this teacher be involved in the school in-service, which had nothing to do with autism despite the fact that she was about to open an autism unit the following week.

**MS DUNDAS:** Why do you think that this situation has arisen, where teachers who have previously been taking mainstream classes with so little extra training, or any kind of background, are being asked to take on learning support units and autism-specific classes?

**Ms Von Ess:** Because there are insufficient teachers with knowledge in the area. There is a high burnout. It is, like a lot of teaching positions, very difficult work. There is also a perception that the parent population can be very demanding and difficult.

**MR PRATT:** Can you tell me, please, more about what this once-a-term visit to teachers involves?

**Ms Von Ess:** This is from Therapy ACT. In the past couple of years their services have been stretched even further and further. Depending on the school, the teacher attends the family team discussion, where the family and the therapist meet, and discuss what the therapy issues are for the child. Some schools allow the teachers to go; at other schools the teachers do not attend. So you already have a difference in how much knowledge they are getting. Then, according to Therapy ACT, they will come out, if the teacher requests it, once a term and provide advice to the teacher.

**MR PRATT:** Over what period—half a day, an hour?

**Ms Von Ess:** I think it is variable. When I was in the position of receiving the services as a teacher in one of these units, if they were late they did not make it up at the other end. So you might be told you are having someone for the morning and they might come for two hours. You might be told that you are having someone for two hours and they would be there for an hour.

**MS DUNDAS:** So these meetings would take place between the teacher and Therapy ACT while the children were still trying to maintain an educational program?

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes, frequently. The therapist would come and observe the child, try a few things and say to the teacher this is what you need to do.

**MS DUNDAS:** So there was some interaction with the students at the time, but most of it was a dialogue with the teacher?

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** So the therapists would actually position themselves in the class?

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes, because they are there to give advice.

**MR PRATT:** To observe the autistic child as well as the remainder of the interaction in the class?

**Ms Von Ess:** No, no, I am talking about the therapists attending learning support units which only take children with autism. Children who have autism in a mainstream class, to the best of my knowledge, access individual appointments should they so wish.

**MR PRATT:** So Therapy ACT does not provide the same sort of service at all to those children in mainstream classes?

**Ms Von Ess:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** You talked about the training of teachers that the department ran and, in 2001, about 10 teachers went through and a number of them dropped out from the initial year?

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes. I was one of the 10 and there were not 10 that finished. So there were some drop-outs, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And they just went back to mainstream teaching, presumably? Did the department follow up with the teachers who dropped out, their reasons for dropping out?

**Ms Von Ess:** I do not know. I know the department. You were told before you were awarded the money that the department expected something back at the other end. I personally have not been asked for anything. I was surprised to have got the award because it was quite common knowledge that I was going to resign. However, I have

done most of my training in my own time, at my own expense. I have been to numerous conferences here and overseas and I felt if the department were offering it and they gave it to me, I was happy to take it. I have since said I would do in-service for people free, to recompense the department.

**THE CHAIR:** They have not taken you up on that offer?

**Ms Von Ess:** No, and I have reiterated that several times—at Therapy ACT, the education component, which is not part of Therapy ACT, it is part of education—and have not been taken up on it.

**MS DUNDAS:** What kind of response have you got though?

**Ms Von Ess:** “Yes, yes, that would be lovely, Gay”.

**MS DUNDAS:** “But we just don’t have the time”?

**Ms Von Ess:** No, no, “We’ll get back to you”. I will be quite honest with you. I think that the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services has found me a slight thorn in their side because I do advocate for children and particularly for children with autism, because this is my particular area of interest and expertise. I have been at teacher meetings at the beginning of the school year where a certain person in the department said, “You are not there to advocate for the children, you are not there to support the parents, you are there to teach them.” Well, I do not think you can teach them unless you have adequate resourcing.

**MS DUNDAS:** Absolutely. I know this is a slightly different point. We have received other submissions that talk about support that is given to people with other learning disabilities, as opposed to people specifically with autism. The education department provides a teacher to support somebody with a hearing issue or a hearing problem and who visits them at their home to help with those learning difficulties associated with deafness. Do you have any kind of comparison to make about the support or teacher training that is given more broadly to teaching children with broader learning difficulties as opposed to children specifically with autism?

**Ms Von Ess:** When I first started teaching the only teacher training that was available in Australia was to teach children with a hearing impairment. Teachers who were employed by the ACT government had that qualification at that time. In the early 1970s I went to London and did a teacher training course there in the education of physically handicapped children. At that point I was teaching at Hartley Street and there was no such course available in Australia. In the past, there have been at Canberra university resource teacher courses and general special education courses. I would think in any system not all teachers who work with special children are qualified. My point is that these children with autism are a very different kettle of fish from any other child, and that is why. But, yes, there would be teachers who are teaching other special needs children who do not have the qualifications.

**MS DUNDAS:** I was wondering whether or not it was a specific problem due to a misunderstanding about how autism is different and how it affects children versus possibly just a lack of support for all children with special needs?

**Ms Von Ess:** I think so. Historically, you raise children with a hearing impairment and they get quite good support. This is historically because parents with these children fought for that support in the 1960s and 1970s when the first preschool teacher was put into a position of working with preschool-aged children with hearing impairment.

**MR PRATT:** How much more of an effort is required in the teaching of, and the personal development of, teachers to obviate this problem of burnout amongst teachers and special teachers aides? How do you describe the bill required, the training bill to address that?

**Ms Von Ess:** I think it is an issue of having support. At some schools, the principals are far more supportive of these units than at other schools.

**MR PRATT:** Sorry, are we now talking about specifically LSUs as opposed to teachers involved in mainstream?

**Ms Von Ess:** I was talking specifically about LSUs. If you are an LSU teacher in a school, most of the in-service and staff meeting and stuff is obviously aimed at the mainstream school and you are very much out there on a limb. Some of the teachers of children with autism have got a group together to try to provide each other with support, and at one point one of the itinerant teachers tried to do this within school time and was told no, this is not on. There is not a great deal of support, you have to go and seek it. As far as burnout goes, some of the children that I have taught have been extremely difficult because to get into a learning support unit autism, there is no criteria other than having autism. So you can end up with children who might be better placed in a school where issues of daily living skills are being taught. You can end up with a child with significant intellectual disability; you can end up with children who run. Mainstream playgrounds are not fenced, as you are very well aware. LSUs do have a small fenced area, but if you went to the unit at Yarralumla where I was, it is like a cattle yard. It is very small and the children just ran up and down. I do not think there is a solution.

**THE CHAIR:** There is no silver bullet is what you are saying.

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes, to the burnout issue. But if you had more support—

**MS DUNDAS:** And do you think more training would also provide some support?

**Ms Von Ess:** Yes, I think it does.

**MS DUNDAS:** If teachers had the skills to help cope with those difficult children?

**Ms Von Ess:** I had six children in a class. When the department first opened these learning support units they put one teacher, one STA, four children. The year they opened Yarralumla they upped the numbers to six children and it is just not possible unless you have high flyers. I have had a number of children with major behaviour problems—children who have broken equipment, thrown things at teachers, attacked teachers. I had one child who would hit, bite, scratch or kick you up to 100 times a day—we kept a tally on that child. We eventually got a bit of extra support, but you have to fight for it and sometimes you do not have the energy to fight for it.

**THE CHAIR:** You have talked about burnout, so presumably as a lead-on from that you do believe there is a shortage in numbers of special education teachers able to deliver training for autism spectrum disorders and possibly other special education needs. I personally believe the shortage is a worldwide phenomenon not just an ACT phenomenon. Do you have a way that you think the ACT could attract people into studying it or anywhere could attract people into studying special education and getting those skills needed?

**Ms Von Ess:** Well, money. There is a special education allowance. I cannot tell you what it currently stands at, but it is in the region of \$1,000 or \$2,000 more a year. It's a laugh. I just cannot tell you the stress there is in working in a classroom. Since I have left the classroom I am working longer hours and seeing more children with autism but the stress level is so different because you are only dealing one-to-one. In some of the classes, if they have a more homogeneous group of children, there is less stress. This happens in any special education class. I know there have been some really horrendous things happen around the town.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you think the problems that you have identified, the lack of training for teachers, lack of support for teachers and high burnout, are having a detrimental effect on children's learning abilities and educational needs?

**Ms Von Ess:** I know when I rang the department looking to resign, the guy could not believe that I wanted to go. I just said to him that I couldn't stand another minute in a classroom. I know towards the end you get snappier and your temper is shorter, you are able to put less in and it also impacts on these kids.

**MR PRATT:** So the types of people who are going into LSU autistic work are really people who are dedicated, who have a very close interest?

**Ms Von Ess:** I think they are people who are interested. Not all of them know anything when they go in, and that is one of my gripes.

**MR PRATT:** So it is for the love of it?

**Ms Von Ess:** If I can just make one comment. A teacher who started this year went in and there was an immediate explosion from a child because they had gone totally the wrong way about it. This teacher is very happy to have some input, and I am working with her. She said to me, "I'm just doing what I was taught to do with ESL children." In other words, talk and talk and go round about. I said to her, that is the very worst thing you can do for these kids." So, she had not even got that basic—be visual and cut your talk.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your attendance today. For the record, I will just put down as well that STA stands for special teaching assistant, LSU stands for learning support unit and ESL stands for English as a second language.

**CHRISTINE TRIMINGHAM JACK** was called

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning. Were you present when I read the card before?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** I was indeed, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You understand that so I don't need to read it again. Welcome, Christine. Would you like to start with an opening statement?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** No. I'm happy to go straight to the submission.

**MS DUNDAS:** I have an initial question. The previous submitter stated that the University of Canberra used to offer some specific courses for special education teachers. Does that still occur? Is there specific training?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Yes. Students take a mandatory general course called "Responding to individual needs" which looks at the whole spectrum of students with some kind of disability. Everybody does that.

**MS DUNDAS:** That takes a semester?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** A semester. As you can imagine that has some limitations—because it's general. We also offer an inclusive education major or minor, which a reasonable number of our students elect to take. Those who do are very committed to that. Some of them work as special teaching assistants in the schools. We did, of course, offer that autism graduate certificate for people who were in the system. It was led by Professor Tony Shaddock who is one of the leading people in the world working in special education.

I would like to say that I wear two hats because I'm also a parent of a child with autism. I normally wouldn't have spoken about this but I wonder if I could have permission from the committee to speak to that. It links with what happens at the University of Canberra where we have a very strong interest in autism—probably because I've been head of primary education, but there is also the link with Professor Tony Shaddock.

Our son is now 18. When I came to Canberra nine years ago there were no autism units at all—except for little children. Because of my position as a leader in education my partner, Dr Neil Eustick, who is a lecturer in education at Australian Catholic University, and I worked with the autism association and the department to set up those units. Our son was the first child to go through any of those units. He has never been to school full time since he's been in Canberra—or in New South Wales. The maximum that education have been able to offer him is about four hours per day, because of the extremely demanding nature of his autism. Because of my position, I'm very aware of what the department offers and of the goodwill of the department, with a limited amount of money, in trying to bridge that gap.

The education of teachers on autism needs to be an ongoing issue. It's not something you do in an undergraduate course; it's something that needs to be done as a postgraduate specialisation in line with the kind of thing that was offered before. I would have to go back and check up about the drop-out rates et cetera on that. I suspect it's to do with the



level of study. It wasn't an in-service as such. My understanding is that it was a postgraduate certificate, and that requires a different level.

**THE CHAIR:** The course is no longer being offered?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** It was funded by the department. We don't have DEST places, which are government funded, and we can't afford to offer those kinds of programs without subsidy from somebody else. It's just too expensive for us to be able to do that. You're probably aware of the dwindling resources of universities at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that there is not really any commentary in your submission about the emerging area of vocational education and training. I'm also aware that the University of Canberra is about to introduce workplace assessor and trainer training for, I think, third and fourth year students going across.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you want to talk about that now and tell us what's involved with that?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I'm happy to talk about that. I apologise for the broadness of my submission. I wasn't quite sure what you were looking for.

**THE CHAIR:** No—it's very broad—that's okay.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** We are instigating this year the work-based training assessment for our secondary students who are likely to be working in that area, so it's across the spectrum. This is the first year and we're reviewing our programs. That will be an ongoing part of our programs from now on.

**MR PRATT:** Are you having any luck in attracting mature-aged technically experienced people to take on a secondary or second phase life career in VET training?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I wouldn't say that our numbers are high, but we certainly are attracting some people. I couldn't give you exact figures on that but I am aware that, of the group that come in, they often come from that area. I have to say that sometimes the transition into teaching is difficult for them. In the school sector it is a very different mode of teaching from teaching in TAFE or being involved in the area that they've worked in. It's sometimes hard for them to make that transition.

**MR PRATT:** A whole new bag of skills called "training and education", as opposed to simply "management and skills".

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Absolutely. We often have one year with them if they've got a first degree and they're coming into a graduate diploma of secondary education. With the course we offer we are funded for 24 credit points but we've been running at 32 credit points because we're aware of the needs of the sector. We've been running that course as a loss but we've managed, in this review, to reduce it to 27 credit points. We continue to run that graduate diploma for secondary, knowing that it requires those kinds of skills, at a loss because we realise the needs of the group. Because we're educators we're not very good at not giving them what they need.

**MS DUNDAS:** In your submission you talked about graduate destinations. I wanted to ask about some of the figures you provided. You talk about the department having received 432 applications from UC graduates, with about half of those being students from the 2003 graduating class. Does that mean that there are another 201 UC graduates, who have been out there for a year or two without having a teaching job, who are trying to apply?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** You have to remember that it depends on their area. The secondaries are snapped up really quickly if they're in maths and science, but that's a limited number. So it depends on the department's area of need. You also have to remember that the department recruits across Australia. We consider that take-up to be very high. I think they interview at 17 universities. The constant feedback to us is that our students leave the others for dead in terms of their preparation, particularly in the primary sector. So that is quite a high take-up.

The particular area I want to address with regard to the destination is the early childhood sector, and I've alluded to the destination there. You're probably aware of the research around early childhood that shows that quality outcomes for young children are identified by the qualifications of the staff, the ratio of staff to children and group size. Those factors are shown in a DEST report. More and more children are in long day care so there's a real need to get trained graduates of early childhood education linked into that field. We've done exit surveys of our graduates for the last three years and none of them are choosing to work in the early childhood sector.

**MS DUNDAS:** They're being specifically trained in early childhood?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** But they're not choosing to work in it. With our degree they can work in early childhood and primary. They're very committed to and interested in early childhood, but they're not choosing to go into early childhood.

**MR PRATT:** Why is that?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Because of the better career path in the primary sector; because of the higher pay; because government preschools are part-time; and also because of the conditions—they don't get the school holidays et cetera. That's something that really alarms us but we are aware of the fact that there is a strategic plan being developed by the department at the moment. I have a position on the government schools education committee—the advisory committee. We've met with Robyn Calder, who is running that, to talk about the need to try and restructure the sector to link graduates with children. We know that these are the good outcomes. On an anecdotal basis we get a lot of phone calls from directors of early childhood centres saying, "Please—we desperately need somebody to come and work. We can't find anybody to come and work with these children." It really alarms us.

**MR PRATT:** What needs to be put into the strategic plan to improve the retention rate in the early learning area?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Well I think there needs to be—

**MR PRATT:** Some sort of a career linkage?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** No, I think it needs to be broader than that. I think there needs to be a creative restructuring of the early childhood setting. If, for example, the preschool sector is running for longer hours, you could employ a graduate. There could be a child-care centre nearby and, rather than bring the children there, you could take the teacher. There's a need for a much more creative way of thinking about a whole package and then a transition program where there is a much closer link between lower primary, kindergarten and the early childhood sectors. Although the preschools are sitting next to them, the way it's structured at the moment is not good.

**MR PRATT:** The sharing of teacher resources across that divide.

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** The whole sector, yes—and of course the pay and conditions. You could have, for example, the qualified teacher working with the kids during normal school terms but having the normal school holidays off, even though the children might be in long day care.

**THE CHAIR:** You're talking about more than just the government preschools, you're talking about the childcare centres as well?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** I am, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You're talking about a total overhaul of that area as well?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Yes, I think it does need it. We're talking about the fact that education and working with young children is not just babysitting. Hopefully parents educate their children when they are at home and working with them but, if they don't, we put programs in to assist and support parents working with their children. That's one approach but we need to be just as cognisant of that as far as long day care that children are being placed into is concerned. It comes under the auspices of education.

**MS DUNDAS:** With the graduate destinations, if University of Canberra graduates aren't moving into the ACT department of education, be that secondary or early childhood, across the spectrum where are they going?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Some of them are being targeted by New South Wales because they come from New South Wales and they want to go back. The secondaries are being snapped up by the private sector, particularly in the area of maths and science, but other areas as well. The private sector is quite proactive in seeking our graduates. As part the "scaffolding literacy program" based at the University of Canberra I've had 19 graduates go out to work in remote indigenous schools in Western Australia in order to develop those skills. I know the department is very aware of that and is very keen for those people to bring those skills back.

**THE CHAIR:** I just mention for the *Hansard* record that the scaffolding program is a literacy program; it's not about building scaffolding around building sites!

**MS DUNDAS:** Do we have a problem in that teachers are graduating as teachers, looking for work—obviously not a maths or science teacher but something else—not

finding it, picking up a different career and never coming back?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I would have to say that our graduates just want to teach. They will hang in there on a casual basis and then on contracts—that's in the early childhood sector too. It's certainly not as bad as it used to be. In the 1990s there was a surplus of teachers. Early childhood graduates were kind of forced into the early childhood sector because there weren't enough positions in the primary sector. Now that things are dwindling these people are snapped up by the primary sector as well, but you do have some who are not getting permanent work straightaway and are on contracts.

**MS DUNDAS:** They hang on and stick it out until they get a permanent teaching job. But then we're hearing about high levels of burnout and teachers three or four years in finding a different career. I know it's not your job to look at that end but do you have any opinion on that, or are there any comments you can make about it?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I do. I've had some experience in New South Wales. I think the ACT system does work and gives good support to teachers, but there are still some who get burnt out and exhausted, particularly in the early years. We're pretty successful in our teaching internship in doing the transition into full-time teaching, and relief teaching in the last semester of their degree. But the demands of teaching are so exhausting that I'm not surprised they're getting burnout—just look at the male/female debate. I have some figures on that—in case you asked.

**MR PRATT:** We'll keep you to that promise.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** They're being asked to be role models. You've got a higher incidence of kids with autism and other kinds of disabilities in mainstream classes. The demand is very tough on teachers. Teachers will spend very long hours: they will work all day, go home, have dinner, work at night and often work at weekends. They often anecdotally say that in the first week of holidays they get sick and they then spend the next week getting ready to go back.

**MS DUNDAS:** How do we address that? Is there something we can do in terms of resilience training, or do we need to put more teachers in?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** No, I don't think—

**MR PRATT:** Or is the curriculum just too choked?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I think the curriculum is too choked. It's definitely a crowded curriculum—there's no doubt about that. I'm hopeful that the current curriculum review will deal with that. At our end, at the university, it's becoming a crowded curriculum. What we're expected to deliver with our students in the time we have is extraordinary. The demands of what we have to cover are so high that it's almost impossible for us to cover it in a four-year period.

**THE CHAIR:** For how long do you follow the students once they have graduated?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** We don't follow them in a systematic research way.

**THE CHAIR:** You don't have any follow up?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** There is an exit survey done about six months after they graduate.

**THE CHAIR:** But not past that?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** No, not past that. In understanding what's happened to them, we pick them up via the department to some degree. Because we have very close links with the department we get the feedback about where they're going through the department. For example, if they go to Western Australia we follow them through but not if they go back to New South Wales or other places such as that.

**THE CHAIR:** The information you've just given us has been from information fed back to you from the different departments? Is that what you're saying?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** How has that been given to you—anecdotally?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** No, in figures.

**MR PRATT:** This is perhaps a slightly sensitive question. Going back to your point about the three to four-year burnout milestone, what role does the issue of disruptive children and children at risk—I'm talking about children at risk of failing to complete an education who have behavioural problems—play in this question of burnout?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** Just on one level. While I'm talking about burnout, the majority of teachers go in and stay in the system—don't get me wrong about that—and I think they cope very well. We have graduates who come back and work for us. So there's quite a strong loop where we are getting graduates coming back and teaching for us. I've been in the back of classrooms for 30 years—I've been involved in teacher education for 30 years—purely on an observational level. There has been a change in the clientele, the children. Twenty-five or 30 years ago you might have had one kid who was going under the chairs and up over things. You'd go back six months later and ask, "Where's that child gone?" You would be told, "We moved them on—somewhere else." You now see a teacher really struggling to engage and hold a significant population of children. I think the issue of disruptive children is really a significant one, particularly in the younger classes.

**THE CHAIR:** What's changed, to have that come about?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** I don't think we really know what's changed.

**MR PRATT:** It's probably a broader social issue, isn't it?

**Dr Trimmingham Jack:** I think there are very broad social issues. Again as a totally anecdotal issue, with my own son, to get some strategies to enable me to deal with him I worked with an elderly psychiatrist who had worked at Yarralumla et cetera. I asked him, "Where is this autism coming from?" He said, "When I worked at Yarralumla they

weren't there; we did not have this incidence." I asked, "What's causing it?" He said, "The environment—chemical and social."

**MR PRATT:** And the rat-race. Parents are much busier. It's just a whole range of things, isn't it?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Yes. There are a whole lot of pieces of the pie. It's very difficult for researchers to separate out what is causing it. It could be the canary in the cage.

**MR PRATT:** Yes, turning blue.

**MS DUNDAS:** Before we finish: Steve, did you want to get those statistics?

**MR PRATT:** Yes. I'd like to ask a couple of questions on this rather controversial area. If the argument that there is a need for more male teachers, particularly in the primary school sector, is to be followed, what do you think we, as a community, need to do to attract young males in schools to seek a career in teaching?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** I will address those matters separately. When we look at our statistics, for example, in our intake for 2004 in early childhood, there were six males out of 52; in primary there were 14 males out of 87; in secondary, the graduate diploma, there were 119 males out of 226.

**MR PRATT:** That's not bad.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** The secondary system is doing all right—that has been a reasonable trend—but they're avoiding the early childhood and primary sectors. Firstly, there's no substantive research that shows that young kids having male teachers produces better outcomes. On the other hand there is significant research that shows us what produces good outcomes for kids. There is the Fred Newmann study on authentic pedagogy that was done in the US, replicated in Queensland by Professor Alan Luke, James Ladwig and Jenny Gore. We know what produces good learning outcomes for kids. It's not to do with males and females. Pedagogy that promotes a high level of intellectual quality promotes a quality learning environment and makes the students' work significant to them. There are a lot of factors under that. It's very useful, very hands-on, well documented research.

If you want to attract more males to the primary and early childhood sectors, there's no doubt that better pay would be part of it. It's very difficult to be a teacher and buy a home because the pay is not high. But there is a second issue and some research has been done. Janet Smith has just finished doing her doctorate at the University of Canberra on male teachers. There are two kinds of things operating in the primary system. One is the fact that, because there are a lot of women there and not many men, it becomes a feminised environment. I don't mean that as a negative thing.

**MR PRATT:** It's just the way it is.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** If you've got a lot of women and one guy it's a bit like that.

**MR PRATT:** You can't talk about the rugby.

**MS DUNDAS:** Yes, you can.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Whether that's important or not is another issue.

**MR PRATT:** I was just talking with tongue in cheek.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** There's another thing that I think is much more significant. That is the kind of concern that young males have about being—

**MR PRATT:** Hands-on?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Paedophilia. Little children are very embodied people. They wee, they chuck and they scrape their knees. They need touching and cleaning up, and female teachers do that. The children hang off you. Male teachers have the dilemma of making sure that between classrooms there are open windows so anybody can see in. That's a real dilemma for them.

**MR PRATT:** And little kids like to be cuddled, don't they?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** They do. We have to tell male teachers, "You must not touch, because this is just too dangerous for you."

**MR PRATT:** What's the way around this dilemma?

**MS DUNDAS:** Huge societal changes in how—

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Yes. I think it's a very significant social issue that we as a bigger community need to look at. To avoid males feeling bad if they pick a child up or appropriately touch a child I guess it means putting them in pods where there's a female teacher in an open area. But, even then, you're still at risk—parents.

**THE CHAIR:** We must move on because we've got other witnesses waiting. We may get you back again, if that's okay.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Sure.

**MR PRATT:** Yes, I'd like to.

**THE CHAIR:** I'd like to talk about issues around team teaching—whether or not single-teacher classrooms are the way to go; whether or not we need to be moving beyond that and if that would provide more support.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** You need a change in physical environment to do that. You've got to have a building set up to do it.

**THE CHAIR:** I would like to touch briefly on the lecturers at the University of Canberra. Do you have requirements on the lecturers to have a return to industry-type set up, where they would at least have some idea, so that they're keeping up to date with changes within the classroom and keeping abreast of things?

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Are you talking about going back to classrooms, as such, to teach?

**THE CHAIR:** Whether it be to go back to teach or whether it be doing some form of in-service.

**Dr Trimingham Jack:** Absolutely. Our teachers are providing “in-service” and working very closely with the school system. I don’t think you would find one of our staff members who is not in some way engaged in out in the schools. I’ll give you some examples. I will talk about myself. I do lots of things but one of my interests is disability. I’ve worked with parents at Turner school, running focus groups to offer support to them and I’ve offered in-service to teachers on the quality teaching model. There are people from our health and physical education area who are out in schools helping them to set up programs around that; we’ve got an art teacher who’s working very closely with teachers in developing that; and we’ve got a SOCE teacher who’s out working on integrated curriculum with schools.

At the university part of your contribution is to the community. Sometimes you get paid for that but often you don’t. You don’t expect to be paid for it; as a consultant it’s part of what you do. We expect you to be out there in the system contributing in some way to the community as a member of the teaching profession. Because you’re doing that and because you’re also going out and supervising students, you’re very close to what’s going on in schools. Then of course we have study leave, where you will have six months and you’ll upgrade. Some people choose to go to classrooms and other people do all sorts of things.

**THE CHAIR:** I’m going to have to end it there. Thank you very much for your attendance today and for the submission you’ve made. We may yet be back in contact with you about some other issues.



**MARK HOGAN** and

**CAROLYN BROADBENT**

were called.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for your attendance today. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. Please state your names and positions for the *Hansard* record, and make sure that you talk clearly into the microphones.

**Mr Hogan:** My name is Mark Hogan. I have the role of assistant director of the Catholic Education Office. Also, I am head of human resources for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn in the Catholic education sector.

**Dr Broadbent:** I am Carolyn Broadbent from the Australian Catholic University. I am a senior lecturer at the university, I coordinate all the field placements and I am involved in numerous teaching and research activities.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for your attendance today and for the submission that you have made to the committee. I am Karin MacDonald, the chair of the committee, and Roslyn Dundas and Steve Pratt are the other members of the committee. Does either of you want to make an opening statement. In fact, you could both make a commentary as an opening statement and then we could concentrate on that and the submission that you have made, if you would like.

**Mr Hogan:** I would just like to say that we appreciate the opportunity to be able to contribute to the exercise. It certainly gave us another perspective on what we do as an education employer in the ACT. We have responsibilities in south-eastern New South Wales as well, so we operate with two legislative systems, two education departments and various things like that. It has given us a good window in terms of where we are placed in the ACT as one of a number of education employers in the city.

**THE CHAIR:** Carolyn, do you wish to say anything?

**Dr Broadbent:** Just briefly that Signadou campus is one campus of a national university. The university has campuses in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In that sense we are larger than we might appear. We work very closely with the Catholic Education Office in the preparation of teachers, but the university itself does offer other courses in social work through the faculty of arts and sciences.

**MS DUNDAS:** I note that the average age of teachers in the Catholic education system is slightly lower than the average age of teachers in the government school sector. Do you have an explanation for that? It could be due to a whole range of things—a higher turnover, more young teachers coming in. Do you think there is any reason for that?

**Mr Hogan:** Possibly three years ago we had a much higher age profile, but a lot of those people have since retired or have gone to part-time, casual and so on while they move into retirement. We've had a number of policies that we've put in place; for instance, a career change program that has operated for seven years for people that have served 10 years or more—that's how it started, but it is now 12 years or more—and who really believe that they need to do something different in education. It has tended to focus a lot on teachers with around 18 to 20 years of service who really feel they've had enough and want to pursue other studies and other work. More often than not they move into volunteer work or social work in different sorts of ways, pastoral work and so on. We've recruited graduates to replace those people, so that program was a graduate replacement program as well as allowing people to have a staged way of leaving the profession.

**MS DUNDAS:** Was it an aggressive graduate recruitment campaign? Most of your teachers come from ACU and there are limits to the number of people who can be at ACU at any one time actually getting their qualifications. How did you meet that demand of so many teachers retiring and so many teachers looking at other careers? How did you deal with that over the last three years?

**Mr Hogan:** In terms of recruiting from ACU specifically, our local campus at Watson has been a good source of good quality teachers for us, particularly as some of those students have gone through our own schools in the archdiocese, so they're very familiar with the schools and they like to go back into that environment. We've also recruited from ACU campuses nationally—in Queensland and Sydney. That's particularly true in the secondary area. We also get graduates from the University of Canberra and occasionally from the ANU and the University of New South Wales, who then do a Dip. Ed. somewhere else. Charles Sturt in Wagga and Bathurst are also contributing a number of teachers to us as well. They like to stay in the country areas.

**MS DUNDAS:** Has there been a significant issue in relation to having that changeover of younger teachers coming in and the more older and experienced teachers going out?

**Mr Hogan:** We've tried to address those sorts of generational differences, if you could use that expression, through mentoring programs and coaching programs. We try to encourage our more experienced teachers who still feel that they can contribute to the development of someone else and who haven't got jaded or a little bit burnt out and just want to do their own job. But that's been good for them too in terms of their own contribution to the professional development of themselves and others. So they've picked up some skills along the way in terms of working with colleagues in a mentoring or a peer coaching sense. That's one way we've tried to do that.

We've also had to think very carefully about how we induct and support our new teachers as well and for a number of years now, over the last two certified agreements, we've provided first year and second year teachers with the equivalent of a half-day release a week for things like classroom preparation, classroom visits, observational work, or to teach in front of their mentor to get some comment and feedback after those lessons. That's a structured, more intensive training program; it's not simply release from class. It is focused around work orientation.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question about the amount of prac teaching or placement that is done by Signadou and the Australian Catholic University. How much is there of that? Is

it the same as the amount being provided by the University of Canberra and other organisations? What's the set amount of prac teaching is the short question?

**Dr Broadbent:** Our students do 95 days in school-based placements. In addition to that they will engage in numerous professional development programs on campus. For instance, the level 4 students at the end of May and early June will engage in a whole week of professional development which is aimed at developing more competency, confidence towards future employment and the extended field placement. Within the 95 days our students are encouraged to go into a community placement outside the primary school for five days or 40 hours so that they understand that learning occurs in many different environments these days. So, as well as offering some service to a community organisation, they are also learning new skills which will hopefully equip them for classrooms of the future.

**MS DUNDAS:** Can you give us an example of what that community placement would be?

**Dr Broadbent:** They go into special education settings. They go into institutions like the national art gallery, maybe the National Museum. They might offer their services to the local radio station. Maybe the Jigsaw company in the arts. It can be in science/maths. It is about two areas of emphasis, I suppose. It is to strengthen their own particular area of interest, so it may be that they are very much interested in the arts, or it may be to learn new things by going into a new area, as in science or maths. It can be helping with Barnardos, volunteer work, after-school programs, early childhood programs, as they like to see what happens before the primary years and what happens to the children after leaving school and before going home. I can provide that information. There are probably 40 or 50 different placements that we offer the students and they find their own placements.

**THE CHAIR:** This question is to both of you. Do you think the amount of placement, of prac teaching, that is done currently is enough?

**Dr Broadbent:** I think students would say no. I think most of us would say we would love to have more. There's no doubt that the interaction between the field work and the work that occurs at the university and in other placements is the richest part of the course and students always identify their field work as the most important element within their course. So I think any extra field placements, whether built into the academic work at the university so that there is a closer link between school-based learning and university work, would only enhance the program.

**Mr Hogan:** I think that is why we've tried to build our induction program around that allocated release so that the teachers can actually interact with what they're doing in a way that's giving them some constructive and positive feedback as well as some fairly critical stuff if they're not doing the things that they should be doing, or if they're allowing situations to develop in their classroom with disruptive children or something like that and they're not preventing those things from happening. So that's where, I think, we extend and we build on practical experience in a sense that they have much greater responsibility as an employee than they do as a student, and it's trying to build that professionalism up in their practice by giving them that reflective and critical feedback that's needed.

**MR PRATT:** Was that 95 days per year?

**Dr Broadbent:** For the course.

**THE CHAIR:** I should declare an interest. I have a primary teaching qualification and I remember my prac teaching experiences—not always with fondness, I have to say: you're here now and these are real children. You're not sitting in a lecture room being delivered theory; it is hands on.

**Dr Broadbent:** Could I also say that, as part of our desire to encourage students to be able to cope with the changing work environments, we encourage them to go into remote and regional communities and also international communities. We've just recently been able to obtain some funding for some students to go into regional areas, but we'd like to do more of that. I think that was a tremendous experience for them in being able to compare different systems and educational environments and just being able to manage and cope with changing circumstances.

**MR PRATT:** So a five-day placement, that objective, might simply be a week during their holidays away?

**Dr Broadbent:** The community learning program occurs any time from 1 January through to October. We encourage students to build that into their program so that it suits their learning frame. It may be weekends, it may be during the holidays. Many complete the program before they come to university in February, so it's completed during January. The international placements and regional and remote placements are part of the regular practicums that occur over the four years, usually level 3 and level 4, but we still have some students in level 2 and in level 1 going into country placements.

**MR PRATT:** Do you have any difficulty in finding opportunities for all of the students to have their 95-day placements?

**Dr Broadbent:** At this stage I would say it is an effort, but we always place our students. I suppose there's a reasonable demand for our students and level 3 and level 4 students are asked to find their own placements. That is part of the process of independent learning. The level 4 students are required to go for an interview with the school principal and the associate teacher. At that stage the principal and teacher may say that they don't think that this is going to work because it's for eight weeks. The student might say, "I don't think I'm going to fit into this school," and the student then searches for another placement. We assist them and support them and we give them all the procedural information, but I think that at this point nearly 90 per cent of our students are placed ready for this year's field experience.

**MR PRATT:** Mr Hogan, what would be the two or three, let's say three, major gaps in training as far as the Catholic Education Office is concerned with the new teachers that it is getting across the spectrum, from any provider? What are the two or three major issues that you think need to be addressed?

**Mr Hogan:** I know that universities in their own ways are tackling these questions, and we might speak to those later on, but child protection issues is one.

**MR PRATT:** I saw that in your submission.

**Mr Hogan:** That goes all the way through their undergraduate training as well, in terms of how you work with children in a closed setting, unsupervised setting. How do you respond to the accountabilities that are required of teachers both in their professional behaviour and their performance as teachers and in the pastoral work that they need to do with children, because we can't divorce the teacher from the pastoral? I think that it is a foolish way of looking at teaching if we think that we can do that.

So there are always going to be situations in which the teachers, whether they're male or female, will be in difficulty and the more, I suppose, awareness and working through those issues there is as they're going through their undergraduate training, the better prepared they are when they take on a class on day one of their career. So there's that one.

Another issue is how to make sure all our teachers, regardless of whether they are trained at ACU and have a Catholic focus to their training or are coming from Sydney University, Melbourne, the University of Canberra, the ANU or wherever, actually see themselves as teachers while they are preparing to be teachers. Practicums give them one experience of that, but I think that the addressing of their professionalism starts as soon as they enrol and as soon as they work through each of their experiences and it's how we actually keep building the layer upon layer of their professionalism and their professional culture so that they're giving when they reach the teaching profession and they continue to give while they receive. It's certainly an issue for us as employers, that is, how we keep the professionalism to the forefront of our existing teachers, particularly those that have struggles every now and then with major issues in their lives and in their careers. So, there's that one.

I think the third one is how you actually deal with what's expected of them by way of learning the trade, learning the craft, learning the skills, coping with the variety of curriculum issues that come up, especially the issues of making sure that every teacher, regardless of their training background, subject area, specialty or whatever, see themselves first and foremost as developers of the literacy and numeracy skills, the thinking skills, the social skills of the students and don't get too comfortable in seeing their role as being tightly defined to one set of experiences, whether it be maths, science, early childhood or whatever. It's the whole continuum issue and how do they as adults—

**MR PRATT:** It's the craftsmanship bit.

**Mr Hogan:** Yes, and seeing the bigger picture, that there is someone that's growing in that group of children.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the ACU follow up on where their graduates end up after they've graduated from teaching?

**Dr Broadbent:** We've certainly started to follow through and we're encouraging some students to come back. For the field advisory committee, we have a representative who is in the field and who was on the committee before, so we're trying to create a bridge between the university and students who have left. There is the graduate survey, of

course, and we're looking to the results of that, which is the official survey. But I think there's an area there for us to track our students perhaps more vigorously than we have done and we've certainly expressed interest in doing that in the future.

**MS DUNDAS:** Are your graduates going on to teaching or are they going on to somewhere else?

**Dr Broadbent:** I would say from my understanding of the students who have received jobs that most are going into teaching placements, some international placements and some national. They don't all stay in Canberra. Many will go back to their own country and regional area and into remote areas too, like the Northern Territory/Alice Springs. But I do know of a few who have entered the police force and gone into sales. I met one at the Qantas desk the other day who had gone into teaching, then taught internationally and then decided that she would like a change.

**MR PRATT:** Perhaps she's the desk training officer.

**Dr Broadbent:** That's right.

**THE CHAIR:** I have to say that I had the experience over a period of a month of having two taxi drivers who had been mature-age teachers and hadn't stayed in it very long. I found it a bit alarming that they had made the choice later in life to go into teaching and had done it and found it just too hard and decided to take on taxi driving. In particular, one said that he just didn't think the support was there for him to stay in.

**MR PRATT:** Mr Hogan, how would you describe the teacher organisational structures in the Catholic, non-government, sector of schooling in terms of the number of mentors you have, perhaps with a bit of a ratio, and how that system works?

**Mr Hogan:** Every early career teacher has someone working with them. Initially, they're appointed to the person and they have a supervisory role as well, but then as an encouragement that supervisory role gives way to a more collegial role in the sense of a peer coaching role. So it's going from the experienced to the newly graduated and moving through more to a collegial fashion. After that, there is encouragement there for people to select their own mentor support person, someone that they can talk to, and it's not necessarily anyone in their school—it's someone else that they may meet at in-services or someone they've gone through uni with who is placed in another school—so that they've got a way of continuing the conversation beyond the staff room of the school. That's how we're attempting to address it. We're trying to meet the reality with various ways of doing it and encouragement at the same time.

**MS DUNDAS:** You make the point in your written submission that you're currently meeting teacher recruitment, but you recognise that it's getting more difficult each year and you list some particular areas that are obviously of future concern. Do you have a future strategy, or a plan in place, on how you're going to deal with the continuing issues that you're seeing arise in teacher recruitment?

**Mr Hogan:** Yes. One of the things we are doing with ACU, and it's mentioned in our submission, is the Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education, which we see as being a practical way of addressing some issues that we are finding, locally anyway, and one of

those is giving people a chance to retrain, if necessary, or to upgrade their skills. We have had a few people who have moved from primary into secondary and, more often than not, where they find difficulty is in the subject depth that they've got to get into in order to do a particular area.

This is a way of providing people with enough depth in the content that they want to do as well as extending those who have currently got sufficient depth to be able to be effective teachers but who may want to move into a further postgraduate course to deepen it even further. That's one way we're trying to address that, but certainly attending every university open day that we can get to. That, we believe, can provide us with another way of displaying what we offer to prospective employees who may come from those universities. That's something we're attempting to do, too.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we will finish it there. There are plenty of other things that we could ask you about, but we do appreciate your time today and also the fact that you've taken the time to make the submission. If we need to, we will be in contact. Thank you.

**ALLAN HIRD** was called

**THE CHAIR:** I welcome Allan Hird. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. Could you please state your name and the capacity in which you appear today.

**Mr Hird:** My name is Allan Hird and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for making the time to come along to this hearing today of our inquiry into teacher numbers and recruitment within the ACT. Would you like to start with an opening statement?

**Mr Hird:** I will. It will not be a long one but I will try and set the context for the AIS in the ACT, which is that we are different from the government sector and from the Catholic Education Office in that we have not got any governance roles in schools. The governance of independent schools lies with the school and that makes us quite different from the other two sectors. We have 13 member schools and they could be summarised as non-government, non-Catholic systemic schools. There are two Catholic schools that are members of the association and they are Daramalan College and Marist College.

I have been in this job for only three months, so I am quite new to it. My background has been in the government education sector, which I left in 2001, so I have some understanding of what the government education sector was like. But I do not know what it is like now, so I would not like to comment on the government sector; it is not my role to do that.

The recruitment of teachers is obviously the responsibility of individual independent schools; we have no role in that either. A man called Dr Ken Rowe, who works for the Australian Council for Education Research, has done some extensive research into what has an impact on student outcomes and he has found that up to 40 per cent of the variation in student outcomes occurs in the classroom. So essentially teachers play a very central role in whether and how well students perform—how well they achieve and how satisfied they are with their schooling. That is a significant thing and that is why the association would like to applaud the Assembly and this committee for taking on this important work. I see teaching as a fundamentally important thing.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously you do not have any part to play in the recruitment of the teachers themselves, but what feedback are your member schools giving you about the issues with recruiting teachers? Are they finding it difficult to recruit in particular areas? We know that maths and science are an issue across the country, and in fact possibly across the world, although I have not checked on that. Are there other areas where they have no trouble, where in fact they have an oversupply of teachers? What are the issues that your member schools face?



**Mr Hird:** Oversupply is not an issue for independent schools because of their different governance structures. In the government sector a teacher has certain conditions. The conditions in the independent sector are not the same. They do not have surplus teachers so oversupply is not an issue. The employment of teachers is a school based issue for the government sector and that leads to a lot of flexibility in staffing and also in the capacity to recruit teachers. There are, as you pointed out, some issues to do with particular areas. Maths and science are the obvious ones. There are also issues in specialist teaching, in languages and in specialist areas like music and those sorts of things, which cause concern. Like most sectors, particularly in the primary area, the mix of male and female teachers can be an issue.

**MR PRATT:** Just on that last point, what is the issue as far as the male and female teacher ratio backups in the independent schools arena are concerned?

**Mr Hird:** In terms of ratios, I have not got figures in my head to give you. But the issue is that there is a preponderance of women in the adults who are working with students. The independent sector would not say that you need to be a man to be a good teacher; that is nonsense. The important thing is good teaching; it is not the sex of the person. However, there are issues to do with role models and the interaction between males and females, which are important, and we see it as desirable to have a more even mix of the sexes in the primary sector particularly.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you have any information on how independent schools manage casuals and how they fill vacancies when a teacher is sick? The ACT government has a pool of casuals that they call on as the situation arises between 7.30 and 8.30 in the morning. Do independent schools keep their own pool of casuals?

**Mr Hird:** They do. I do not know what the government sector does now—my knowledge is dated—but there was a register and casual teachers were required to register centrally. Obviously that does not happen in the independent sector. But the independent schools do have teachers they can call on. They might have been teachers who previously taught there or teachers who have come from interstate for various reasons, such as that their spouse may have been transferred here.

**MS DUNDAS:** So basically each school sets up its own register or casual pool?

**Mr Hird:** Yes, it would have its own, and the formality of that register would depend upon the school's governance arrangements.

**THE CHAIR:** So is there a situation that arises—if you are not able to answer this now, I would be happy for you to get back to us about this—that teachers who are listed in the government casual system may also be listed with some of the independent schools?

**Mr Hird:** I am sure that happens, yes. I have not got any direct information about any teacher, but I did know of teachers that worked in all three sectors—before 2001 anyway.

**THE CHAIR:** So there is no requirement of casuals within the government sector to dedicate themselves purely to that? That would be a bit difficult to ask them to do, wouldn't it?

**Mr Hird:** I do not know what the law is, but I would think that would be a restraint of trading.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** Yes, I know of teachers who have meandered through all the sectors.

**Mr Hird:** Yes, either as permanents or casuals.

**MR PRATT:** This is a question I asked earlier this morning of other people on what the marketplace in your sector wants: what are the major shortfalls that your schools are pointing out in terms of teacher training across the entire sector? What do schools want to see training providers from right across the entire Australian spectrum provide?

**Mr Hird:** I have got information anecdotally through talking to principals about various issues and I think the issues were outlined in the report that came out last year of the federal review that Professor Kwong Lee Dow chaired, *Australia's teachers: Australia's future—advancing innovation, science, technology and mathematics*. That lists a range of issues. One of the important issues is that the interface between schools and education faculties needs to be improved. I think there has been a lack of communication about the needs of schools and also what education faculties can do. There needs to be greater communication between the people who have governance responsibilities for schools and the education faculties.

One of the issues that came out in that report was the practicum. There needs to be a strengthening of the practicum and also an articulation of its purpose. Some of my reading of that report indicated that the practicum was a requirement within a four-year university degree and that the requirement was almost time serving: you had to do so much time out in the school, either observing in a classroom or actually taking lessons; whereas the report indicated that there needs to be some greater transparency about what is going on and some standards and some expectations about what would come out of the practicum. I think it would be important to do that. But that gets back to the schools and the education faculties talking to each other and having a common language and common expectations for a start. I think structures could be set up. I know that there are various committees where the University of Canberra deals with teacher employers. I think that is a good move and should be strengthened.

The other issue that again comes out of that report is teaching standards. Once you have accepted teaching standards—accepted by the profession, by teacher employers, that is the people who are going to be actually using teachers in the classroom, and by the education faculties—you have got a context for professional development. Without that context, a lot of professional development can be misdirected or not be as effective as it could be. So the AIS would support a move towards teaching standards and an articulation of those standards. Those standards need to be set by the profession in close collaboration with the other key players, such as education faculties and the employers of teachers.

**MR PRATT:** Earlier today in answer to that question I was told that one of the other employer groups here would like to see teacher training embrace more closely the art of

pastoral care. Is that a concern in your sector?

**Mr Hird:** It is certainly an issue. Pastoral care has a strong emphasis in independent schools. There are various words used for it, but I know what you mean by pastoral care and it is a fundamentally important thing. Unless you have the right environment for students to learn in, they will not learn anyway. Schools are not just there to make students literate and numerate; they are there for the whole person. I guess what you are leading to is that pastoral care needs to be a part of the primary qualification that young people get when they become a teacher.

**MR PRATT:** Well, I would ask the question whether that is important. Does it make teaching the academic standards that much easier if teachers also are equipped to be able to mentor their kids, exercise leadership and also just dig in a little bit deeper as to how kids are performing overall? Pastoral care is probably a strange word. Clearly in some independent schools you have masters who are established to take on a pastoral care role; it is almost a formal part of their duties. Should that only be a speciality for some teachers or do you think all teachers should be better equipped to look into each child's personal development?

**Mr Hird:** I certainly agree with the thrust of your question. I do not know whether all teachers need to be better equipped. I think some teachers are more than adequately equipped now, but there are some teachers who are not. I think there needs to be a high expectation that every teacher will have a pastoral care responsibility. I do not think you can leave it to one or two.

**MR PRATT:** Housemasters et cetera.

**Mr Hird:** No, it is the responsibility of everyone in a school to take on that role.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for coming in today. I appreciate the time that you have given the committee and we will let you know when the report is coming out.

**Mr Hird:** Can I ask a question about the actual proof transcript of this hearing? Will that be made available?

**Committee Secretary:** Yes, Hansard usually has a fairly quick turnaround. I will be sending you a hard copy, which you can check and authorise, and then it goes on to our web site as well.

**The committee adjourned at 11.13 am**