

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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, 27 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 9.35 am.

CLIVE HAGGAR and

ROBIN BALLANTYNE

were called.

THE CHAIR: Welcome. 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 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. Thank you for your very extensive submission to the committee. We appreciate your taking the trouble to do that. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Hagggar: Once again we appreciate the opportunity to come and talk to you all. The opportunity for enhancing our written submission is valued. We consider that the issues of teacher numbers, recruitment and retention are particularly important. We employed the services of Barbara Preston. She is a noted researcher in the area of teacher recruitment and teacher retention, and a local ACT resident who is familiar with the ACT system. She has been engaged in the past by organisations such as the deans of education—heads of faculties of education who meet under that banner. She has been in the position of making submissions to the federal government and to numerous inquiries around the country. We found her broad and national expertise of benefit to us as we discussed the local ACT circumstance. We are pleased that the issue of teacher recruitment and teacher retention is now recognised as a serious issue at the national level, given that we were probably the first organisation in the country that started to highlight the problem six or seven years ago as we looked at the demographics of the teaching service. You've got detailed information on those demographics in the ACT in the submission.

It's fair to point out now that we're going to face a very substantial number of retirements over the next five years. By our estimates they could be as high as 30 per cent, coming mostly from the most experienced teachers, obviously, and also teachers in leadership positions in schools. The impact of this on the public education system is going to have to be very carefully addressed by government. Whilst the national report under the auspices of Kwong Lee Dow, Professor of Education at, I think, Melbourne University—it may be Monash—highlights a potential national shortage of 30,000 teachers, we would support Barbara's view in the paper that we would expect governments to address the issue before it got anywhere near that level. Certainly, as we look around the country, there are mechanisms now being employed by state governments to encourage young people—and experienced people—into the profession and experienced people back into the profession.

The major campaign of teacher recruitment the New South Wales education department has engaged in over the last 18 months to two years—and we've been the beneficiaries of that in the ACT—is evidence of the sorts of strategies there. They are also in the situation where they offer, in areas of particular curriculum shortage, something called

HECS forgiveness—higher education contribution scheme forgiveness—and small living allowances to education students as well. This is not to the same degree that existed when Robin and I did our training back in the 1970s where you had living allowances, total fee forgiveness or no fees at all, book allowances and the like. The systems are moving closer to that kind of circumstance to address specific curriculum shortages or, in the case of New South Wales, rural and regional shortages. We don't have anything at this point in time for student support in the ACT but it's something we may have to address in the future.

Here in the ACT, when it comes to specific curriculum areas, we're concerned about counsellors in schools. We've now got 11 counsellors who, under the rules of the psychologists board, are not able to be registered because of—in their view—the incompleteness of their training. That needs to be addressed. After many years of being able to employ fully qualified teacher librarians in schools we're seeing a situation of less qualified or non-qualified people creeping back into that role. We sought a review of that with our own department. Other obvious curriculum areas are maths and technology but the pressure to produce more properly accredited VET programs is leading to a situation where it's very difficult to find appropriately qualified VET teachers. Languages other than English is also an area of concern. We are seeing less and less qualified people taking up the area, or simply a reduction in opportunities for people to undertake those curriculum opportunities.

The profile picture created in the paper highlights the second group of the population—that middle grouping, particularly those who were recruited in the 1980s. That cohort came from a period where there were no problems coming into teaching in the sense that, if they trained as teachers, there tended to be work available. They were often taking up the places in universities with lower tertiary entrance scores than in the previous period or the present period, where teaching is in much higher demand, and of course there are also fewer places. These are the teachers who are going to be running our schools in a relatively short period of time. We are concerned that they have the opportunity for proper experiences and training opportunities as well, to make sure they are well experienced, well-rounded, well-qualified teachers as they move into the leadership opportunities that haven't existed in the same numbers for quite some time.

When the Commonwealth Teaching Service was set up in the 1970s you were in a situation where, particularly immediately after the cut-off from New South Wales, it was not unusual to find executive teachers with only five years experience overall, deputy principals who'd been in the teaching profession for 10 years and principals in their early 40s running significant secondary schools. We're going to be in that same situation again because of the fairly rapid retirement of our senior people. The fact that the system is now open to external applicants may have something of an alleviating impact on that, if our salaries and conditions are attractive enough to bring people in from New South Wales.

One of the concerns we have now is that we're sending people out to recruit nationally, which includes sending people to Darwin. The program will be spending about a quarter of a million dollars to get what we would hope to be the best and the brightest in the country but, in fact, our wage profile at the moment is particularly uncompetitive with New South Wales and the private sector because we still haven't settled an agreement. It's absolute crunch point now. New South Wales moved 5.5 per cent on 1 January and I

understand Victoria is about to reach a settlement. In money in hand for teachers at the moment, we are \$7,000 behind New South Wales because the 1 October payments have not yet been made.

That situation will be alleviated for a brief while if we're able to achieve a reasonable outcome over the next couple of months but New South Wales will move again before the end of the financial year. When our teams are out there marketing the ACT as the place to be, if we're not paying competitive wages, that's what they look at. They don't look at the superannuation and they don't understand that we have made some improvements in the areas of class sizes and working conditions. It's the take-home pay that they'll be interested in, because that's what they've got to use to pay their HECS, their mortgages and that sort of expense. As far as retention and recruitment are concerned I put in that plug for a favourable early settlement of the wages exercise because we are becoming concerned for next year's recruitment levels.

THE CHAIR: I'd be surprised if you didn't!

Mr Haggar: That's right. Give me half an opportunity and I'll take it—that's appreciated. We gave you some figures in relation to total male earnings in the ACT. They showed that 75 per cent of males in the ACT don't have tertiary training but, at \$60,000 a year, they are in advance, in terms of total earnings, of the top of the salary scale—just short of \$59,000 for classroom teachers. That might have something to do with the gender imbalance we see. I point out that the salary figure we use in there for top of the scale teachers is a notional figure at this time. Actual money in hand for top of the scale teachers is \$55,000 until our agreement is settled. As it doesn't include the super they are several percentage points better off than that.

The comparison we've made there needs the explanation that it doesn't include the super for the teachers' pay but the point is still valid that young males who see themselves as the primary breadwinner in the family see that teaching—if they're getting to the fourth and fifth points on the salary scale they look at their prospects and decide—is not the profession for them because it can't deliver the returns. We've done a lot about changing that: we've shortened the scale and given benefits for accelerated movement through further study, so you can now get to the top of the scale faster than in any other teaching system in the country. That is quite significant if we're able to get that top of the scale settled.

There are also some very good professional development opportunities that we got through our last EBA for teachers—in particular, opportunities for fellowships that we negotiated with the Carnell government. We want to see a continuation of those because they add to the capacity to attract and retain teachers. But the point at the moment is that, because of the connections with New South Wales, the ACT government is subsidising the private schools in the ACT to enable them to pay higher wages to their teachers than we're picking up here. That's been the case for the last two years. It's the first time in 30 years that we've been in that circumstance.

Part of the reason why there's an enhanced capacity for the non-government schools to pay higher wages is the improved indexation rate. Since about 1996 they have had an annual indexation rate on their Commonwealth funds of about 6 per cent, whereas the very best annual indexation rate we've had was 4.5 per cent last year. Prior to that we

were looking at CPI for many years. You will all appreciate the sorts of pressures that have been on the ACT government and the system since self-government as we've struggled to meet responsibilities with our revenue base.

The final point I'd like to make is in relation to TAFE and the issue—I was going to say a very elderly work force but I won't say that—of an older work force reinforced by the downsizing that's gone on in TAFE over the last few years. The fact that a large component of the work force is not permanent has meant that it has not been a very attractive environment for people with high levels of industry expertise. Quite frankly, they've got to work too damned hard to earn the dollar than was the case back in the more halcyon days of the TAFE funding environment.

We are concerned about the capacity to maintain reasonable working conditions and salary levels in TAFE. If we're losing, and not being able to replace these very experienced teachers with industry specialists then, quite frankly, the ACT's vocational training system will be significantly affected. Robin might want to go on and make some particular points about the curriculum areas but, from my perspective, I would commend the report to you. Given that I don't miss these opportunities I'd like to leave some copies of salary tables showing comparisons between New South Wales and ACT Catholic schools.

MS DUNDAS: You mentioned those areas that are suffering acute shortages—maths, technology and ESL—but you didn't mention teachers working with students with high needs disabilities and autism. That area has been stressed by some other submitters to this inquiry. Is it part of your experience that teachers working with autistic students or students with high needs disabilities are suffering, that there are not enough of them or that there are specific problems there?

Mr Haggar: All of the above.

Ms Ballantyne: I think the way the department has got around the shortage of specialist trained teachers for special needs kids is to invent what I regard as a fantasy that you don't have to have any special training in order to teach a kid with special needs. I think most practitioners in the field agree—they tell me it's true—that an average teacher ought to be able to deal with a mildly intellectually handicapped child and can certainly make adjustments for children with physical handicaps such as hearing or sight loss but that, in the case of medium to severe intellectual disability in particular, you need a different set of teaching skills, and for that you need specialist training. If you use that as the criteria for, "Do we have enough teachers for special needs kids in this category?" then the answer is clearly, "No. We don't have enough trained teachers for that."

MS DUNDAS: Do you think that the lack of training is impacting on the ability of teachers to do their jobs?

Ms Ballantyne: I think it clearly is, yes. Teachers who have children in mainstream classes who may have moderate or even severe disabilities are saying they feel totally at a loss through lack of training. That is one good thing that would help them. I'm not saying it would make all the problems go away because the range of behavioural problems some of those children present with is still going to be quite severe and taxing, but certainly the teachers themselves say that they feel their skills are inadequate for the

task.

THE CHAIR: You touched on the issue of CIT, and I see that the CIT people have arrived. We're aware that they have an increasingly ageing population and that is of great concern. From their submission the number of their staff who are about to reach the magical age of 54 years and 11 months is alarming. As of last year their median age was 53 years so a significant proportion of their teachers are about to reach that age, when there will therefore be a shortfall.

You've also talked about teachers who have been in permanent positions retiring and coming back into temporary contracts, and that will address that to a certain extent. Presumably it won't address it forever because eventually they will want to retire properly. I'd like to know the union's opinion of the way CIT is addressing the potential shortfall in teacher numbers with the increasing number of teachers who are about to reach the magic age of 54 years and 11 months. Given that they don't do it in an overall type of way—they allow each faculty to recruit—do you think this is addressing the situation or not?

Mr Haggar: The fact that steps have been taken in recent times by the CIT to convert more of the casual contract positions to permanent positions is a very sensible move. You're not going to be able to attract people into employment and hold them if you're not able to offer permanent employment and the sorts of security and benefits that go with that. In recent EBA negotiations we focused on issues of professional development for teachers and initial teacher training as well. It's important to give that emphasis.

Ultimately the capacity of the CIT to respond to these circumstances depends on its overall funding and the funding regime for the organisation. It's nowhere near what is required to deliver the kind of quality vocational education and training that's been expected of the institute. They're operating now, in real terms, at about \$10 million per annum less than they were five or six years ago and we've continually expressed our concerns about that. There's been a 25 per cent increase for the institute in productivity terms with the amount of training done per dollar over the last five years and the impact of that has been borne by staff. I'd have to say that, with the workload plus competitive tendering and contestability pressures, in some of the faculty areas the older staff are not in a situation of having a high morale. We're hopeful that the EBA, when we are able to settle it, will be such that it can provide a bit of incentive for people to see their situation as being improved and cause them to consider staying beyond that magical age. For some there aren't the same incentives to go as there are for others. That digresses from your question.

THE CHAIR: Sort of. The issue of recruitment by individual faculties.

Mr Haggar: I think the institute is small enough for the overall management of the institute to keep an eye on how the faculties operate. The agreement to move towards more permanent employment was done by the central management area with the involvement of the director. The monitoring of that needs to be done centrally and we deal with it centrally. If we were looking for an analogy such as, "Would school-level recruitment be a good thing?" we'd view it very differently. We have the capacity to monitor and intervene, with the faculties doing it at the central level, because of the size of the institute.

THE CHAIR: I was concerned more about not taking away the ability of the faculties to recruit the people who would fulfil their needs. The faculties will need to be making the decisions, ultimately, as to who are the best people to fill the jobs because they're all looking at their own specialised areas. But I wondered whether there needed to be an overall approach taken. It's my understanding that there has been increasing pressure on each of the faculties to deal with a number of areas. Do they have the time to go and do an analysis of potential shortfalls or should that be done at a different level?

Mr Haggar: I think that, in the context of a strategic approach, that ought to be done by the human resources area of the institute in conjunction with the faculties because you need that institute-wide picture. But, as they are highly specialist positions, there has to be very significant faculty involvement. You might be in a situation where there are only one or two people within a faculty who have the expertise to make a judgment about a person's capacity to deliver in a particular technical area.

MR PRATT: Retention differs dramatically from school to school but, in general, what are the sorts of pressures you would like to see released on teachers in schools in terms of their daily, weekly and term workloads? What are the issues where you think productivity is suffering and teachers are feeling the pressures that are not necessarily making it attractive for them to stay on?

Mr Haggar: Probably the best piece of work we've done in the area is Lou Zipen's research report, which we've made reference to in the submission. Lou Zipen was formerly an academic at the University of Canberra but now works out of Flinders University in South Australia. That report, which is on our website, looked very closely at the workload of teachers—from preschool right through to secondary college—and identified a culture of work intensification. In some areas that has been alleviated. For example, the class size reduction program, K to 3, has helped enormously to reduce the workload in the primary schools. You can't add the numbers of new teachers into that environment without having a positive impact. We're looking for quality outcomes as a result of that.

We are concerned that in high schools you're still looking at class sizes that can be in excess of 30. One of the things that we think can be addressed over time is class size reduction programs in upper primary and, in particular, high schools. You're in that situation too with the workload of colleges and the assessment regime that a lot of the colleges operate. I think it's in the hands of teachers to do some work to modify that. I've had discussions with the executive officer of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies about the fact that there's probably too much assessment going on in the secondary college environment. That has obvious workload implications for both students and teachers.

MR PRATT: This is ongoing assessment?

Mr Haggar: Ongoing assessment. One of the things the move to semesters was meant to do a few years ago was reduce the workload and allow more, if you like, quality pedagogy to go on. But, as it happened, a number of the colleges have moved in part to quadra semesters. They're dividing it and having a four-term arrangement that increases pressure. I think our principals and senior managers have to take the workload issue on

board in the workplace and make sure that, if new initiatives are being taken on, they're properly resourced and that they are in the situation of streamlining activity, getting more effective groups and teams to work together within the school,

That requires professional development as well. We've used the national schools network in a number of initiatives to try and support that kind of focus. At the systemic level there is no question that they've got to look very carefully at initiatives as they introduce them to make sure that they're properly resourced. Certainly we've had resourcing for some and not others. They're all valuable but there are also questions about how we manage to integrate new curriculum initiatives into the system.

Year 9 exhibitions was a good one. We're still having debates with teachers in high schools. It was never meant to be an add-on; it was meant to be a replacement. Instead they've brought it into the programs. That has meant an intensification of their workload and that of the students as well. People get stressed because they're not able to deliver a normal part of the traditional curriculum. In some cases they don't recognise that there's very real value in the new initiatives being brought into play. So the workload issues must be part of an ongoing professional discussion both at the schools and at a systemic level to make sure that people don't feel the kinds of workload pressures that would, in fact, push them out of the system.

Ms Ballantyne: Can I just add a little to that? I think care needs to be taken, particularly with beginning teachers, that they are not allowed to take on too much too soon. They tend to be highly enthusiastic, they take on jobs that some of the older teaching cohort in their school looking at retirement won't take on anymore. When just fresh from graduation themselves they might want to take on a pre-service teacher; they might take on some of the new initiatives that come up in the school; or they might do some coaching of sporting teams and so on. The load some of them take on themselves is of particular concern and I think they need to be discouraged from that. Through the EBA we're doing some work on what beginning teachers ought to be advised not to take on, or perhaps even allowed to take on, so that they don't burn themselves out too soon.

MR PRATT: Are you happy that there is enough capacity in the system for mentoring to occur, particularly for that group of teachers?

Ms Ballantyne: We sought both a return to the 20 per cent reduction of teaching load that teachers in their first year out used to get when I started teaching and a mentoring program, with some use of that 20 per cent reduced load perhaps being split between the beginning teacher and the person mentoring them in some kind of shared arrangement. It doesn't look like we're going to win that but we hope to win a more modified proposal where there would be a pool of days available for the mentor and the person being mentored to get together to discuss and reflect on professional practice—for them to get some guidance from their mentor in that way.

The answer to your question is that I think there's a capacity to address it in the system but I don't think we have really addressed it yet. It is something that needs to be looked at because it's not just the beginning teacher who needs the time to reflect: the mentor needs to have some time to make that a decent role and not just a kind of official tag that you carry.

Ms DUNDAS: You talked briefly about the recruitment campaigns the ACT government is running and that they are overwhelmingly targeted at teachers coming straight out of university.

Mr Haggar: This is the New South Wales government campaign?

MS DUNDAS: No.

Mr Haggar: For our actual recruitment, yes.

MS DUNDAS: The ACT government's recruitment campaign is focussed almost solely on new university leavers. Do you find that that recruitment strategy is inflexible and doesn't allow for more senior teachers to transfer to the ACT?

Mr Haggar: Certainly the current round is specifically targeted at going into the universities but, because they advertise nationally, there are opportunities that way to pick up more experienced people. Last year we introduced, for the first time, recognition of prior work experience that was non-teaching, for incremental purposes. So it's much easier now for a career transition to take place without significant financial disadvantage. I wouldn't have said that there was a skew to this. You have to get into the universities because that's where the bulk of your potential recruits are. Whilst we strongly support the recruitment of more experienced people, if you're picking up somebody who's in their late 40's, as is often the case, how long are they going to be with the system? Does that help address the overall age profile there is going to be in leadership positions?

MS DUNDAS: Do you think that the calendar of recruitment is somewhat of a disincentive for career transition for a non-university applicant?

Mr Haggar: That has not been addressed to us at all but it's an interesting question. If you're a person who's looking at moving from interstate into the ACT system, then you're a phone call away from discovering what the arrangements are. No-one has ever told us that it's a problem.

MS DUNDAS: I know of teachers who have tried to move to the ACT, and that phone call has been incredibly unhelpful. They've been told, "We don't know where the forms are; we can't help you." These teachers might have five years experience and are moving to the ACT for other reasons. The support isn't there to take in those mid-level experienced teachers just because it's so rare—to a certain extent.

Ms Ballantyne: That could be so, but what Clive's saying is true—they don't come to our attention.

Mr Haggar: They can always ring us.

MS DUNDAS: I think it's because it's such a rarity. I don't know whether or not that's an issue.

Ms Ballantyne: The ones we tend to hear about are people who have transferred from interstate and have found themselves on lower salaries than they were promised or they anticipated—that kind of thing.

MS DUNDAS: So there are situations where people transferring are basically almost lied to in the recruitment process? Would that be an unfair statement?

Mr Haggar: No. I certainly wouldn't say that that is accurate. If you're doing an assessment of a teacher's qualifications often the person who is the recipient of the advice doesn't understand, mishears or what have you. We've dealt with a number of cases where people have come to the ACT from overseas at significant personal cost, fronted up and it turns out that their qualifications don't meet our needs. Instead of going into full-time employment, they have had to go out to the University of Canberra and complete so many units. There have been a couple of cases where the advice might have been clearer but, in other circumstances, it has been very much the individual. I'm personally satisfied that, given the very large numbers of people who are dealt with each year by the recruitment process, on the whole it is a quality process. But because you're dealing with, perhaps, 1,500 applicants and making assessments of those, et cetera, in a very intensive round in term 3, mistakes will be made or misunderstandings will take place. We help fix some of those up.

MR PRATT: Could I ask a question on notice? Is that possible?

THE CHAIR: We might have to get the AEU to come back. There are a number of questions that we need to ask.

MR PRATT: I'd like to hear a lot more.

THE CHAIR: We've got some people waiting so we might get you to come back.

Mr Haggar: Can I suggest that we would be happy to address questions from any members in writing, if you wanted to put a series of questions to us.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we can do that. Okay, thank you very much for your attendance today.

PETER KOWALD and

LAURA MARKS

were called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome Mr Kowald and Ms Marks. 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. Could you please state your name and position.

Mr Kowald: I am Peter Kowald, Acting General Manager, Corporate Services, Canberra Institute of Technology.

Ms Marks: I am Laura Marks, Senior Manager, Human Resources, Canberra Institute of Technology.

THE CHAIR: Thank you both for coming in today and also for the submission that CIT has put into this inquiry of the standing committee. Is there an opening statement that you would like to make?

Mr Kowald: Yes, there is. I would like to outline to the committee two issues of particular relevance to CIT: recruitment and improved tenure for teachers. Recruitment is the area of most concern to CIT. We do generally have difficulty attracting teachers from industries where the level of remuneration is higher than CIT can offer. This problem is most acute in specialised areas such as forensic science, vet science and media studies. It was a problem in information technology until the downturn of 2003-04. It may be a problem again, we anticipate, in one to two years time.

There have also been recruitment difficulties with higher level positions. A recent example is with the dean vacancy in the faculty of tourism and hospitality, where the national advertising campaign did not result in an appointment. We expect that this may improve when we readvertise, as the salaries for the deans' positions have been agreed to be significantly improved from October of last year, in the context of the current certified agreement negotiations that are not yet complete.

I should also mention that in the areas of humanities, English as a second language and literacy and numeracy our advertisements usually attract large and strong fields, so those are examples where the situation is not as tight and there are strong fields of local candidates.

In regard to improved tenure for teachers, in 2002 CIT implemented procedures to improve the proportions of contract and permanent positions and decrease the casual teacher proportion. While this has resulted in some positive shifts, there is still a way to go and CIT will be active in further implementing the agreed procedures and taking whatever other steps we think are necessary to further increase our proportion of permanent teachers. Currently, the proportion of permanent teachers on a full-time

equivalent basis is 56 per cent. CIT appreciates the opportunity to discuss these issues with the committee. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Do other committee members have questions?

MS DUNDAS: You mentioned in your submission the professional development that is offered to teachers at CIT and there is a professional development calendar. Do you think that that is an area that could be improved—professional development and return to industry programs—so that teachers at CIT maintain their links with industry?

Mr Kowald: Yes. It is an area that we have particularly focused on in the last certified agreement negotiations and the current ones, and two years ago we introduced a professional development arrangement within CIT where part of the teachers' salary increase was put into a professional development pool. We have a similar arrangement proposed for this current certified agreement, so there is going to be a reasonably significant investment in professional development within CIT, and that will improve over the next few years.

We are equally committed to return to industry programs. However, the issue has been one of budget. The amount of investment required to allow a teacher go on return to industry for a substantial period of time can be quite significant, so budgetary considerations have limited us in that area.

MS DUNDAS: Do you think that returning to industry or maintaining links with industry would help address the teacher shortages you have in the particular areas such as media and forensic science that you listed?

Mr Kowald: The issue in those areas is more than just the basic shortage of people and the fairly significant remuneration that they are able to get in the outside world.

MS DUNDAS: Is that a shortage of people in the teaching profession of those areas or in the industries as a whole?

Mr Kowald: People in the industry who are prepared to give part of their time to teaching.

THE CHAIR: In your submission you said that CIT requires teaching staff to have suitable current teaching in industry qualifications. I was a bit confused by reading the submission. Is it possible to teach at CIT without having any teaching qualifications or do they need to have as a minimum some formal certificate?

Mr Kowald: It is possible to teach at CIT without teaching qualifications. Our statement was meant to say that we require those teaching qualifications at the end of the day; however, the situation in the real world is that you cannot get people with teaching qualifications in many of these areas. So we take them on board and we do make a pretty significant internal investment in teacher education.

THE CHAIR: And then you upskill them by getting them to do the certificate IV in workplace assessor and trainer or a graduate certificate which—

Mr Kowald: I think we gave you the numbers there for 2003.

THE CHAIR: Yes. You said for last year it was 38 teachers or 7,500 hours in certificate IV. The graduate certificate: where is that, who does that and which certificate is that that we are talking about?

Ms Marks: That is the one that is offered by our Division of Learning Services as leading on from the certificate IV, so it is the next step. We are providing both of those in conjunction with providing release time for people to try and achieve both of those within a certain amount of time.

MS DUNDAS: I have another point of interest in terms of teacher workload and whether or not CIT is suffering higher rates of burnout just with teachers having to take on so much. Do you think there are other ways that CIT could address that? In our last inquiry when we looked at vocational education there was a lot of discussion about career advisers at the institute, the support that they can give to students at the institute and how the actual teaching staff were taking on a lot of that career advisement themselves, which was another workload issue that they had to deal with, as well as keeping the programs up to date and the normal teaching. Have you been able to address that in terms of addressing the workload and burnout?

Mr Kowald: Formally it should show up in our workers compensation cases, and our workers compensation situation for a number of years has been extremely low. Our premium is only one or two per cent so we are not seeing the obvious burnout cases. They do not appear to be happening.

In terms of relieving workloads, we have done a number of substantial things in recent times. In regard to band 2 positions, last year we made a major contribution to administrative support in the faculties, specifically attuned to the band 2 positions. We have also taken steps in several of the faculties to reduce the actual teacher face-to-face hours for band 2 teachers in a fairly significant way, to allow them to focus on administrative and other senior managerial responsibilities. The other important thing is that the impact of flexible learning on CIT and other educational organisations we expect may be a significant contributor to reducing pressures on teachers by offering IT based teaching methodologies which reduce face-to-face individual contact that has been required in the past.

MS DUNDAS: I do not know if you can answer this question, but what is the percentage of courses that are now taking on flexible learning, or how much of the teaching is now through flexible learning as opposed to face to face?

Mr Kowald: I can get that information and I would be very happy to come back and advise you about it.

Ms Marks: I think there are particular faculties—for instance, business and information technology—where the teachers are very IT literate and it is easy for them to undertake the training and do that. Also communication and community services are subjects that probably lend themselves to it a bit more. But I think it is probably dispersed unevenly throughout the CIT.

MS DUNDAS: And would there be some courses that you just do not think would ever be able to learn flexible learning such as hospitality or—

Mr Kowald: Well, I have been surprised to learn that they are using it reasonably well, and the dean has been saying that this is a significant take-up.

Ms Marks: But with hairdressing, for instance, you really have to have the live models there to work on, so—

MR PRATT: Virtual reality.

THE CHAIR: You heard some of the questions that I asked of the union previously. I do not want it to be misunderstood that I am suggesting that the faculties have any less influence over who they actually get within their teaching staff, because they know who is the best person for the job at the end of the day and what they need, but I am curious to know what assessment is being done by either the faculties or overall of potential shortage. You have talked as well about the fact that you have got difficulties at the moment so obviously not all positions are being filled at the moment; is that a correct statement?

Mr Kowald: Well, it is taking some time to find the right people.

THE CHAIR: Right. The other question that came to mind when I was reading through the submission was: is the faculty approach working in total or do you need to have an overseeing body so that, while the faculties are able to be flexible and recruit the right people, you have got some other person from outside of the faculty who is looking at CIT as a whole and seeing whether the overall needs are being fulfilled?

Mr Kowald: In a sense it is a partnership within CIT anyway between the faculties and the central areas on HR issues. In order to get our commitment to decreasing casual teacher proportions and improving permanency, it has to be to a significant extent driven from the centre. But the ultimate decision about how that is done must be generated at the faculty level. So it has worked reasonably well, but we want it to go a little bit further than it has in the past. In terms of the shortage situation, there are overall assessments by senior managers of where the difficulties are, and senior managers as a group are taking action to improve that situation as well.

Ms Marks: I would just add that, as a result of the retirement intentions survey that came out in the ACT government—I cannot remember if it was last year or the year before; it could have been the year before—CIT has put into place a work force planning steering committee which looks at issues of work force planning and succession planning. We have got a number of strategies attached there. I heard you say that you are very aware of the high retention rate of potential retirees in the CIT. One of our strategies is to have a dialogue with a lot of senior managers to find out what their retirement intentions are and to try to gather a talent pool at the levels below, so that we have a number of people who can receive specific training and who can step into those positions. There are also other options—for instance, asking senior managers to take on projects, which allows other people to have HDA in their positions and become upskilled and learn what the job is about, so that they are then able to be an applicant for that position when it becomes available. Senior managers also take on mentoring roles outside of their positions. So

there are quite a number of things that we are putting into place. We are working on this with the faculties and identifying particular positions in the faculties that in the next few years are possibly going to become vacant. So we have on this work force development committee representatives from all the faculties, and they work with us and they take the information back to the faculties. When they need more specialist advice from human resources, they come and talk to us about it and we try to put a strategy in place. But we are trying to have an overarching strategy for the CIT which then filters down to each faculty.

MR PRATT: What proportion of newer teachers do not have certificate IV? Is that a sizeable percentage? Is it something to worry about or not?

Mr Kowald: I would say it would be. I would not be surprised if it is 60 per cent. I would have to come back to you to give you precise numbers if you would like that.

MR PRATT: Yes, I would like to know that—and, given that, what system of mentoring, leadership and teacher training support exists? Are you satisfied that you have got enough capacity, enough experience, within your faculties to look after these newer teachers?

Mr Kowald: There is a peer support program within the faculties and within the institute which is working well. We also have a dedicated teacher education unit that has been very successful in providing the formal teacher training qualifications that we advised to the committee. We do not think we have any difficulties in that area.

MS DUNDAS: Would you be able to provide us with some more information about how the peer support program works?

Mr Kowald: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: I am also interested in what the work force planning committee is doing in more detail, and how the mentoring and upskilling programs are working. If there is something on the intranet or something—

Ms Marks: We have a number of papers that we would be very happy to provide to you.

MS DUNDAS: That would be great.

THE CHAIR: Obviously the informal staff development varies from department to department, not just from faculty to faculty. Do you have anything written down about any of the informal staff development that was done last year for any of the different departments? It would just be interesting to see.

Ms Marks: In fact we try to formalise it—or at least the records—as much as possible. We do that through our—

THE CHAIR: Formalise the informal.

Ms Marks: Yes, we do that through our performance management system. We have a 95 per cent compliance in the CIT with performance management, and attached to that

are professional development plans. We require every member of the CIT—teaching staff and general staff—to sit down and negotiate a performance management plan with their manager, and also a professional development plan. Then there are funds allocated for that professional development and staff are required to complete an approval for professional development form which contains things like the program that they went on, the hours that it took and what qualification or certificate they received from it. Then we put that into a database, so we maintain an electronic database record of, hopefully, everyone in the institute's professional development that they have undertaken during the year, attached to the professional development plan. When their supervisor sits down with them for the review in September, they are supposed to have a look at whether the professional development activities that were outlined in the plan in the beginning were carried out and, if they were not, why not: did the need change; did they do something else? There are other informal things that are happening in the faculties that we do not know about because they are done on a spontaneous or ad hoc basis, but we rely a great deal on the professional development plans.

THE CHAIR: It is good that you are having that plan attached, but that is something that I would probably expect to happen anyway. I was thinking more of the idea of having seminars presented by senior staff and whether any of the departments had any inclination about that. Obviously I do not need to know about committee meetings. That is okay.

Ms Marks: I would just add that we do require everyone at the CIT to go through an induction program and we also have a professional development program called CIT in the VET sector, to which we encourage everyone to come along. The chief executive of the institute, the deans of the institute and a number of other senior staff members present at that and talk about the institute. So, apart from having senior people involved in the programs that we are running, that would be the extent of it.

MS DUNDAS: Where are your new teachers coming from? Are they solely out of industry or are you getting teachers who are VET teachers in secondary colleges coming through to take up positions?

Mr Kowald: No, it is certainly not from that source—

MS DUNDAS: No, it is all industry focused?

Mr Kowald: and they are not coming from other state TAFE systems. They would be people in other professional trade employment within the ACT. Our work force, as I think the AEU would have mentioned to you, tends to be significantly older than in the school sector. So they are generally experienced people who, if we can get them, bring a substantial background of skills with them.

MS DUNDAS: Do you find many people make the transition from private training providers to the CIT?

Mr Kowald: No.

Ms Marks: I think it would be a minimum actually.

MS DUNDAS: Mostly you are drawing people out of industry?

Ms Marks: Yes, the majority would be.

THE CHAIR: I have heard that you are losing quite a few to private RTOs; you are doing the training and then they end up going off to the private registered training organisation.

Mr Kowald: The numbers, interestingly, do not seem to support that, both in terms of retirements and resignations. For the last three years, they have been very low. As I think has been also advised to you, people are not leaving to either retire or go somewhere else; they are staying.

Ms Marks: Unfortunately, that magic figure is not magic for a lot of us.

MR PRATT: What are the shortfalls in the recruitment process? Are you satisfied that enough is being done, perhaps by the department and by the community in general, by talking with industry to look for opportunities?

Mr Kowald: Well, we have existing links such as advisory committees within the faculties—strong, local interactions. Our information packages and our recruitment: we concentrate on those to make them right. We are very keen to improve our advertising. We have not been advised that there is a problem.

MR PRATT: You have not been?

Mr Kowald: No. The issue seems to be the one of remuneration levels.

THE CHAIR: We have received a submission from the ACT Council for Adult Literacy and they have a concern about there being not enough training of adult literacy teachers and that there is no course within the ACT to train people who want to become qualified adult literacy teachers. They believe that there is a looming crisis in supply. They also make the comment that there are many teachers who are employed part time who would prefer to be employed full time within adult literacy within CIT and they believe that that partially accounts for why the majority of adult literacy teachers are female rather than male—the issue of males still feeling that they need to be the primary breadwinner. They believe that the profession is stagnant in the ACT, the majority of the staff are over 45, there are few opportunities for entry into the profession, people interested in the career are unable to access local training, professional development opportunities are very limited and there is no funding for adult literacy research in the ACT. Also, as I said, they believe there is a looming crisis in supply of qualified adult literacy teachers in the ACT and that adult literacy teaching is relatively isolated from literacy teaching in schools and colleges, including the VET program in the schools and colleges. Do you have any comment to make about—

Mr Kowald: I think we have some different perceptions from those of the council. Certainly our faculty that handles literacy education has not shown significant retirements or resignations in the last three years. We certainly agree about the cohort of literacy teachers on our staff who may be casuals; we have taken steps to streamline them into contract, and in some cases permanent, positions and we are going to continue

to work on that. But we are certainly not aware of a shortage; nor do we have a big demand, because they are just not leaving—that is within our total budget situation, anyway. CIT is not significantly expanding, so we do not see a recruitment difficulty, but we agree that we have needed to take—and we have taken—steps to improve the employment arrangements within CIT. Anything to add to that?

Ms Marks: No, I do not think there is anything to add to that. I just emphasise the measures that we are taking to convert those teachers to long-term contract or permanency.

THE CHAIR: They have said that they think that possibly there is a need to have a specialist course here in the ACT for those people wanting to go into adult literacy. It is the first time I have heard that there is a huge demand out there from people wanting to go into it.

Mr Kowald: Our advice to you earlier was that whenever we advertise in these areas we get strong pools of, usually, well-qualified people. So we have a different perception.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is fine. There being no further questions, thank you very much for your attendance today and for your submission.

Meeting adjourned from 10.42 to 11.32 am

TIM KEADY,

ANNE THOMAS,

MICHAEL BATEMAN,

IAN HOTCHKISS and

STEPHEN GNIEL

were called.

THE CHAIR: I welcome representatives from the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and 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. Would you please introduce yourselves and state your position.

Ms Thomas: I am Anne Thomas, Executive Director, Resource Management Division.

Mr Keady: I am Tim Keady, Chief Executive, Department of Education, Youth and Family Services.

Mr Bateman: I am Michael Bateman, Director of Human Resources.

Mr Gniel: I am Stephen Gniel, Assistant Manager, Teacher Recruitment.

Mr Hotchkiss: I am Ian Hotchkiss, Manager, Workforce Management.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your attendance today and for your extensive submission. Would any of you like to start with an opening statement?

Mr Keady: I would like to open by going to a corrigendum. I would like to correct an error on page 15 of our submission. At the top of the page there are four dot points, the third of which reads “on an employed basis” and in parenthesis the figure of 63 per cent appears. That figure should be 93 per cent. I apologise for that error.

THE CHAIR: That is a bit of a difference.

Mr Keady: Yes. Apart from that, we are here to assist the committee and to answer questions.

MS DUNDAS: I have some questions about the recruitment process. It is quite obvious from your submission that the bulk of your recruitment is people who are straight out of university, or one or two years out of university. What kind of recruitment campaign do you have for people making a professional change at an older age? The demographic profile shows that we have a large older population who are looking to retire and a very

large young population who are the new university graduates. What are you doing to address that middle age population gap, as it were?

Ms Thomas: I might just start and then hand over to Michael or Steve. The recruitment process itself is the same process for anyone who is seeking employment in the ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. We do not distinguish in terms of the process itself between younger graduates who may be doing their first undergraduate degree and other types of entrants into teaching.

Most, if not all, of those people will be at university simply doing another form of entry into the teaching work force. That might be a diploma of education or one of the other postgraduate entrants. So we do not distinguish in that sense. Nor do we distinguish, in terms of the process, between people who may be wanting to move to the ACT from other states and territories; they will respond to various advertising and media campaigns that we have.

I will hand over to Steve or Michael who can talk more about the various proportions of new grads we have compared to people who come in via other places.

Mr Bateman: I will just stay with the marketing part of it first. We do market ourselves at university career markets, which are advertised by the universities in their local areas. We advertise nationally and from that we get calls from people who indicate that they are not currently at university but are looking at coming back into teaching or have qualified and want a career change. We will advise them when we are presenting at the university so that they can attend.

I think this year we are running a Saturday morning in Darwin. We advertise in the local press and we will be there to try to pick up some people who are not at university. We are looking at that side of it, but we have not ventured down into that as much as we focus on the universities.

Mr Gniel: Following on from what Michael has been saying: we are looking to travel to do that in each of the major cities. We certainly do that in the ACT where we offer information sessions for people who are looking to come into teaching or are currently teaching in another sector—in private industry or some other area.

One of the other things that we have done recently that looks at attracting those people, which is keeping us competitive with other states and territories, is the recognition of additional qualifications. We look at some form of recognition for people with additional qualifications such as law degrees and those who may be coming in to teach law in our college system or in the secondary schools. There is also recognition of prior experience for people who may have been working as accountants or something like that for a number of years, looking at what additional skills they are bringing to our system.

Michael talked about another issue as well. The set-up of the teacher recruitment unit last year has given a focus for people to contact in terms of email addresses, websites and phone numbers. People who are looking at coming into teaching in the ACT government system have a direct link into someone that they can talk to about recruitment.

MS DUNDAS: When did that—

Mr Gniel: In April last year. We answer questions all the time about what other paths people can take to come into the teaching area. We obviously then talk to them about the courses at University of Canberra and Signadou. We also encourage them to look around at distance education, which works well for some people, depending on their personal situation.

MS DUNDAS: Without any disrespect to the private school sector, do you get many teachers crossing—who may have started in the private school system and then move into the public school system?

Mr Gniel: Yes, we do. There will be times when we get a number of teachers from a certain school that may be going through change and things like that. So it does depend a little bit on the circumstances of the individual schools. But, because we do the national advertising and things like that, it is not really limited just to government to government systems.

We get people applying from all over the country, as well as from overseas now because we are also advertising through teacher recruitment agencies internationally. We offer people the chance to apply to come to Canberra. But returning to Canberra is probably a bigger thing. Many people obviously go overseas after university and perhaps teach in England for a little while. Some of them are used to going through recruitment agencies and will then hopefully come back to the government system via those.

MR PRATT: What are the major pressures in terms of retention of teachers? I am not talking just about the cohort group that we know is about to retire—although that is an issue that must also be addressed—but younger teachers and those who have been in the system for three to four to five or eight years. What are the major pressures identified by you, principals and teachers as the reasons why teachers may be seeking an alternative career stream.

Ms Thomas: I might just answer that by making reference to some work that ministerial council did a couple of years ago. It is a tiny bit dated, as it is 2001 data, but a survey was done of teachers nationally, including in the ACT and across both government and non-government sectors, and it found that the major factors in terms of retention—these were the things that teachers said were the sorts of issues that they considered—were remuneration, resources and workload, employment conditions other than remuneration, professional standing in the community, reduced class sizes and student behaviour. They were the six things that nationally were the major factors of importance in terms of retention.

MR PRATT: Right. Have you done your own studies to supplement that quite well-known report? Have you upgraded that in recent times since 2001?

Ms Thomas: No, not specifically. That seemed to me to be at least reputable data and data that you could place some reliance on given that it was quite a large sample. It also is consistent with some work that was done probably two or three years before that, commissioned by MCEETYA, that looked at the factors that influenced young people into coming into the profession.

I do not know that that data has actually ever been published, but Michael and I, because of our involvement in various working parties for MCEETYA, were made aware of it, and some of those factors are consistent with the sorts of things that young people were saying were important to them in coming into the profession. There was a slightly different emphasis. For example, the image and status of teaching were quite important. The work surveyed teachers, parents and students about their perceptions of teaching as a career and it was very interesting that students and parents held teachers in very high regard generally—this is also national data—and in much higher regard than the teachers held themselves, which I thought was an interesting finding. But, no, we have not done any specific ACT survey work following up on that.

MS DUNDAS: I will jump a little to ask a very specific question. We have had a number of submissions that have talked about teachers who are working specifically with special-needs children—autistic, high needs, disabilities—not just in specific learning support units but in the mainstream classes. There has been a lot of concern about training for those teachers. What kind of training are you offering teachers who will be working with high-needs individual children? Is that an identified area of shortfall? We often talk about maths and technology and science as being the shortages, but does the department identify a shortage in special-needs teachers?

Ms Thomas: Not to the same extent, although in the ACT areas of shortfall can be quite volatile. I will answer your first question first and then perhaps you might talk about the supply and demand stuff. There was some special education training for autism spectrum disorder in particular offered in 2002. That was a special training course run through the University of Canberra. Nine classroom teachers enrolled in that course and were supported through the department to do that.

Therapy ACT also provides training in autism in particular to teachers. But over 2001-02 a total of 58 teachers were funded to attend various special education courses and workshops. Twenty-four special ed teachers were funded to attend autism conferences and workshops as well. That is continuing this year; we have 60 teachers who are attending system required professional development related to disability and also some other national conferences on autism.

I think it is worth mentioning also that in 2003 the major theme for professional development in schools was inclusivity, so a lot of schools in terms of their own school based professional development days, of which they are required to have a minimum of four each year, had to adopt inclusivity as the focus of at least one of those days. I am aware that a number of schools used two or three of those days to deal with inclusivity, which of course embraces students with special needs.

MS DUNDAS: Before we get to the supply and demand stuff, how many of those nine teachers that started the course at UC successfully completed that course?

Ms Thomas: I am not sure. I am aware that some of them did not, but I could not tell you the number. I am sorry but I will have to take that on notice.

MS DUNDAS: Okay, thank you. Can you also expand on or provide us with more information about the courses that the ACT offers. Are they in the classroom? I understand that Therapy ACT has to visit some of those students for their therapy

needs. Is it training that is happening then or is it other specific training that is being provided to the teachers?

Ms Thomas: I will have to take that on notice as well, Ms Dundas, and get back to you on that.

MS DUNDAS: Thank you. Mr Bateman was going to talk about the supply and demand issues around the special-needs teachers.

Mr Bateman: The training depends on the level of training required. We have some difficulty influencing a lot of the teacher training institutions outside the University of Canberra and Signadou, but New South Wales requires people exiting teacher training to do some training in a lot of those areas. It would not be as specific as probably required in a lot of the areas, but people get some training at entry level and then if they pursue careers in that area it is a matter of being able to find the training.

The difficulty with, say, the autism area in particular is that a lot of the training is sponsored training, it is fairly intensive and you lose access to the person while they are in training. So it depends on the level that is required and agreement on what are the programs in those areas.

MR PRATT: We have received some feedback about beginning teachers and the mentoring of beginning teachers. We have heard comments that perhaps it would be a very positive move if beginning teachers had some of the weight taken off their shoulders in those first three years to allow for more mentoring to occur and to also allow the mentors to have more time to mentor those teachers. What is your comment about that? Is that a fair comment or are there systems in place that are coping with that?

Ms Thomas: There are systems in place, but I think the issue for us in the ACT at the moment is that we are now taking into the work force much larger numbers of new teachers than perhaps we were six or seven years ago, where we were only taking in relatively small numbers because the employment market was much flatter. It is certainly something that we have been putting our minds to in the context of the sort of induction programs we currently run for beginning teachers, but also some issues that we have been having negotiations about in the context of the next EBA, in terms of the needs of beginning teachers.

We have a fairly robust probation and assessment process for all teachers in their first year of teaching and that provides them with a fair amount of structure and feedback on their performance in that first year. I think it is fair to say that the ACT probably does that better than a lot of other states and territories and partly that is because we are able to, given our size, but also I think there is an acknowledgment by principals and other teachers that that first year is really critical. I think you are right; I think it probably is a longer period of time than that.

MR PRATT: In terms of retention of those guys in that—

Ms Thomas: Yes, absolutely. You put a big investment into recruiting them into the system and, clearly, you do not want to lose those people because they are not supported. I might get Steve and Michael just to—

Mr Gniel: I was just going to add that the initiative Professional Pathways, which was put in in the last couple of years—it might have been 2000—has meant that every teacher, no matter what their experience level, has an adviser, which is a mentoring type of role, as well as their supervisory officers in that process. I think that was something that made those teachers in their first year of teaching feel a lot more comfortable about having a panel and assessment procedures because it did look at supporting them throughout their career.

Teachers, no matter at what level and what experience they have, have all got a panel and all have that adviser. So I guess that takes up some of that retention discussion we have been talking about. Teachers have that support all the way through. We were talking about particularly the initial years, and perhaps there are some reasons for additional support as well as the Professional Pathways.

THE CHAIR: Can you provide us with information about Professional Pathways? That would be very useful for us to have a look at.

Mr Gniel: Sure.

MR PRATT: May I just follow that up, too. Perhaps I could start with Anne and just see where it goes from there. In terms of that pathways program and what clearly is now a much more formalised approach to mentoring, if you could get more resources where would the priority be in improving the leadership/mentoring role? What sort of benchmark would you like to lay down as a department for all schools to take up?

Ms Thomas: I am not sure if I understand your question correctly; please tell me if I do not. At the moment the nature of Professional Pathways focuses on a professional dialogue between the teacher and his or her supervisor, identifying some goals, identifying some appropriate professional development and learning for the teacher, whether they are beginning teachers or any other teachers.

What I think would be useful, particularly for beginning teachers, would be perhaps the opportunity for observation of more experienced teachers in the classroom—the opportunity to look at best practice and to look at, for example, student management where it is been done well by other teachers, so that they can expand that range. Rather than just going to courses all the time or being directed to do professional readings, for example, they actually see best practice in the classroom, in a similar way that they do when they are training; but, of course, once you are in a classroom yourself that learning can be much more meaningful. Is that the sort of thing you were after?

MR PRATT: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Can I ask as a follow-on to that about the concept of team teaching. Is the department looking at any work in regard to that as one way of supporting new teachers, possibly pairing of new teachers with more experienced teachers in a team teaching situation?

Ms Thomas: It is not something we are specifically looking at at the moment, but I am aware that in some schools it happens, simply because of the design of some of our

schools lends itself very much to that kind of approach. You have probably visited schools yourself and seen where there are four classrooms designed around a pod and what happens is that the teachers that are working within those spaces do in effect team-teach. So I am sure that principals will make decisions to pair up new teachers with more experienced teachers where that is at all possible.

Mr Bateman: Team teaching would be fairly common in primary schools in particular and more common in the middle school structures within some of the high schools. It would not be a teaching in colleges; it would be a preparation thing and probably a moderation technique as well. So teaming would be seen in lots of different guises across all the schools. It would be pretty difficult not to have it in some way.

MS DUNDAS: Is team teaching more difficult with, I guess, the move away from open plan schools over the last decade?

Ms Thomas: I am not sure that there has been a move away from them, actually.

MS DUNDAS: I know of two schools that I went through that were open plan that are now closed plan and I know that is happening in a number of schools.

Ms Thomas: I do not know whether you have visited Amaroo, but Amaroo is a very interesting school because, whilst there are classroom spaces, it is actually very open. There are doors but they are able to be opened and closed and there are very open corridors.

MS DUNDAS: The majority of ACT schools or government schools, I would say, are.

Ms Thomas: Yes, I was just commenting on that.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, they are good examples but the majority of the system would be a closed school program. Is the design of a school impacting on how teachers can participate in team teaching and actually get their job done?

Ms Thomas: I suppose it depends, as Michael said. To some extent that would be true if you had a school where all of the classrooms were discrete and teachers never did any other activities together, but, as Michael was saying, teaming can take place in a lot of different ways in terms of preparation and preparation of classes. We have executive teachers in schools whose role is often to be the supervisor or leader of a group of classroom teachers. In a sense that is not simply a supervisory relationship; it can be a joint planning relationship that happens at the faculty level as well.

Things like assessment and doing things cooperatively are really common in our schools, particularly in primary schools but also in secondary schools in terms of things based around faculties and activities such as the exhibitions project, for example, which requires teachers to really plan work together. If you are just thinking about what happens inside a particular classroom, you are right, but I do not think that is the whole story.

MR PRATT: I won't ask the silly question then: would you like to have some more money and teachers to improve capacity? But in the resource question area is there a

priority for consideration of perhaps increasing the number of lead or head teachers—whichever definition you want to use—or is that a non-issue in terms of improving this mentoring/leadership/quality assurance type function in schools.

Ms Thomas: Well, obviously principals, deputy principals and executive teachers all have very important leadership roles to play in our schools. However, it is also true to say that the way that we currently resource our schools not every school is large enough to have a deputy principal, so the leadership structure, particularly in some of the smaller schools, is pretty flat. It is something we have been giving some thought to just in terms of structures and whether or not there is some sort of minimum size of leadership group that is required to run an effective school, but we are still working that through.

MR PRATT: So it is a review thing.

Ms Thomas: Yes.

THE CHAIR: With regard to retirement with that looming 54 years and 11 months coming up for a lot of our work force, what strategies is the department developing to cope with that?

Ms Thomas: I might just say a couple of things and then pass over to Steve and Michael. Just by way of introduction, one of the areas in which the ACT is well placed, believe it or not, is that the age profile of our teachers is a tiny bit higher than everywhere else in the country. That places us in a very good position because our retirement of boomers is happening now, whereas in some of the other larger states and territories it has not yet started to kick in to the same extent.

So we are now recruiting larger numbers of teachers without having to be in such direct competition with the bigger states and territories who will be sucking up really large numbers in probably four or five years time. So, even though it sort of sounds counterintuitive in some ways, we are well placed to be able to replace our large group of imminent retirees.

THE CHAIR: You are saying we have got a bigger lead-in time because it is happening earlier.

Ms Thomas: Yes, exactly.

THE CHAIR: But I am assuming that the AEU, if they were sitting here, would argue that, with New South Wales and Victoria offering more in pay, in four or five years time when those states are looking to replace their work force as it retires they might start sucking up and they might have the advantage over the ACT in being able to offer the higher salaries.

Ms Thomas: We have not noticed at this stage any leakage to New South Wales. In the last recruitment process we made a number of early offers of employment, as is our practice. Of course, not all those early offers are accepted, but 73 per cent of them were, which was a really good outcome for us.

The reasons that people gave for not taking up an offer of employment with us were very

various but some of them were just simply that they got offered jobs in other places that they would rather be—they came from Sunshine Cove and that was where they wanted to stay—or other issues. None of them indicated that they rejected offers with us to take up employment in the New South Wales system, for example. So none of our recruits from other states rejected our offer and took up another offer. I might hand over to Michael and Steve to fill you in a bit more about what we are doing in terms of replacing teachers and that ageing work force issue.

Mr Bateman: I guess it is fair to say that the focus of our strategy is on replacement rather than retention, because once the super option kicks in it is difficult to retain. But we do pursue people. A number of people will register as casual teachers, so they are not lost to the service completely after retirement; quite a number of them will register and keep working for some period of time. Not all will take the super option, so you cannot say that everybody aged 54 is going to be gone next year; that does not happen. It is a fairly high percentage of them and it sort of varies from year to year.

So the focus is on being attractive enough to get people to come to us. I guess salaries are a consideration, but we are competitive with New South Wales in particular, and probably various points in front of Victoria depending on the cycle. I do not think it is a major consideration. Once people are in the system, we have got lots of advantages over New South Wales and Victoria. You can move schools in the ACT and not change your house, and that is pretty good really. Also our career structure and promotion at the moment are very attractive for people coming in. So various things about lifestyle and also career opportunities, which we can market quite strongly, are very attractive to people at this point in time.

Mr Gniel: The introduction of the teacher recruitment unit to look at those things has been a strategic thing done by the department to cater for what are large numbers of teachers to recruit. In the last two years we have offered in excess of 300 permanent positions each year and we are looking at doing that again for the next couple of years at least. So it is a fairly huge job for us.

Michael talked about some of the marketing that we are doing and I have already alluded to our websites and things like that that we are doing to make things more accessible for people. We are also expanding our university visits, to try to get to as many unis as possible throughout Australia to offer the ACT as an option for people. It is quite interesting that at some of those universities people still do not see the ACT as being separate from New South Wales. So there is a need for us to get out there and say that we have our own system and that they will need to apply specifically for the ACT if they are seeking a job here.

We were also talking about people rejecting early offers. It is slightly higher, obviously, from people who live interstate because it is a bigger thing for them to move. But I think we are reasonably successful in attracting people to the ACT and part of that is the fact that we do offer them permanency straight up. That still is a really encouraging thing for people who are finishing university; even before they have gained their qualifications we are giving them an offer of permanency based on their being successful.

So there are a few different strategies that we use that have been taken up by some of the other states; Tasmania, for example, now does a graduate recruitment program as well,

and New South Wales are out there covering all the universities.

THE CHAIR: Could the committee get a copy of the recruitment package that the department uses, please, so that we can have a look at it? I would be interested to see it. Do you actually have in that the issue of permanency, because that is a big incentive to come and work in the ACT?

Mr Gniel: Yes, we do. In our information guide we talk about that and also in our ads that we put in the national press. One of our big selling points is obviously that we are offering permanency before the end of the year. In terms of the pack, we can get you one of those easily; the new ones for next school year have been completed now.

MS DUNDAS: We spoke a little bit about teachers and special needs and you have indicated other areas of shortfall. You have got the mass retraining initiative that you are hoping will address that particular area of shortfall, but are there any specific campaigns that are working to address the shortages you mentioned in other areas such as English as a second language, ICT, physics and the other sciences?

Mr Bateman: The reason maths is there is that we saw that as our prime area of need. It will not solve all the problems but it gives us some breathing space in the ability to recruit the best people for the job. One of the difficulties when you are looking at areas of shortage is rushing in and losing sight of the quality argument while concentrating on quantity.

In those other areas, science has not been a particular issue for us. We will probably have some difficulties in the science area in the more highly specialised areas in colleges because, as you have probably seen from the age profiles, the college age profile is different from any of the others and we have had more impact in the ones other than the colleges, so we expect that there will be some issues there. It is something that we have got to deal with and we will have to look at whether we need to consider things similar to those in New South Wales with physics and chemistry, training current science teachers to pick up those areas, if we are unable to attract sufficient numbers directly from university.

The other area of concern for us is LOTE. Generally that is in the primary area and is more based on, I guess, the demand. It is generally not a full teaching load so it is very difficult to recruit people to part-time jobs or spread them across a number of schools. So we have got to look at other strategies. We are looking at encouraging students at universities and training institutions to combine LOTE studies with mainstream primary so that they come out with more than one specialty. That has been a strong focus of our recruitment and work with universities, to move away from a single specialisation.

MS DUNDAS: You mentioned before that areas of shortage are quite volatile in the ACT. Do you want to expand on that?

Ms Thomas: Yes. The point I was making was that, because we are quite a small system, we can be fully staffed one day and in two days time three teachers can have retired or resigned, for example—if they are all maths teachers, you have a shortage of maths teachers, essentially—whereas in larger systems such as New South Wales, which has got about 75,000 teachers, there is more capacity and more flexibility in a system

that size than we have, particularly when we are talking about some of those areas of shortage.

One of the challenges each year really is to be able to accurately assess how many teachers of a particular specialty we need to recruit. We took the decision last year essentially to over-recruit or overestimate how many teachers we might need, to make sure that we could fill positions at the beginning of the year.

The other thing is that schools have to make their staffing demands in August or September the year before for the following year, so part of our job is to try and help them be able to anticipate what their needs might be for the next year accurately enough so that we can recruit at the critical time. It is really difficult, as you can appreciate, once it is March or April to find teachers to fill unexpected gaps in, say, a high school or a college. Most of the new teachers will have been employed elsewhere by that time. Making those judgments towards the end of the academic year is really the key part of our work force planning challenge each year, and we have to help schools be able to do that in order to inform us.

MS DUNDAS: The practice seems to be to move teachers around the system a lot more than used to occur. A teacher could stay at one school for 10 years, but now I think it is two or three years.

Ms Thomas: Yes. For new recruits to the ACT government school system since 1999 we have a mobility policy. It does not yet affect teachers who are already in the system, but for anyone new into the system their first placement is made for a maximum of three years, their second five and subsequently eight, I think. That has been the practice for the last three or 3½ years.

MS DUNDAS: What was the policy rationale behind that? Was it to address needs in certain areas, or sharing of skills?

Ms Thomas: It is a good question. There were several reasons. Essentially, from our perspective there are advantages in teachers who are new to the teaching system experiencing the practice of their profession in more than one setting. Whilst many teachers did that voluntarily, we found that certain cohorts did not. One of the real difficulties was in the college area. New young secondary teachers whose first placement was at college were very difficult to move and were very reluctant to take up a position in, say, a high school three or four years down the track.

That is in a sense reflected in the age profile of college teachers. You can see that it is still a much more stable cohort, but becoming less so because we are able now to put new young teachers into colleges and then require them to experience a high school setting at least once in their teaching career.

That was done for the good of both the system and the schools, in particular high schools, but also because we felt that professionally it was better for teachers not to, I guess, get stuck in the first school they ever walked into; they needed to expand, broaden and experience different students, different colleagues et cetera. Do you want to add anything, Michael?

Mr Bateman: I guess it is part of our commitment to ongoing learning and development; people develop by having new experiences. The other issue that we were trying to address was with the ageing of the work force; we were finding that promotion was happening much more quickly than it had previously. People were getting promotions after, say, five years, whereas the previous experience had been in excess of 10, and we were keen to ensure that those people had, as Anne said, different experiences before they stepped up to the next level. It is not always healthy to stay in the same place and continue to do the same job every day for 30 years.

MR PRATT: On the rather contentious gender issue—male/female teachers and particularly the issue, as some will advocate, of recruitment of male teachers to the primary school sector—I still have Fran Hinton’s answer ringing in my ears and she did not consider it to be a major departmental issue. For the benefit of this inquiry, could I just ask you whether 12 months later this is considered to be an issue and is the department looking at it as a concern or not?

Ms Thomas: I suppose it is a really complex issue, as I am sure you know because you are very interested in it. The issue of the feminisation of any work force has a social and an economic history to it and I think teaching is no exception to that. You can look at other professions, such as nursing, which probably share some kind of commonality, but there will be differences there, too, because obviously that is an even more feminised profession. From my perspective, from an HR perspective and an equity perspective, an ideal work force would reflect the community that it serves, in terms of gender, age, non-English-speaking background and all those other ways that we categorise people.

That is from the perspective of thinking about equity and ensuring that we have equitable access to employment. But I still do not think that there is any evidence that having that ideal work force composition, simply having a different profile work force, would necessarily produce better pedagogy, better teaching practice or better learning outcomes.

Teachers, whether they are male or female or indigenous or non-indigenous, are trained and educated to deal with many students who have many different learning styles. It is not just a case of one for boys and one for girls; there are many others and so all teachers have to learn to develop their own teaching practice to meet the needs of all those individual students. So I think the jury is still out in terms of work force composition being the most important thing. The quality of pedagogy is critical.

Another thing I thought I would say—I have no evidence of this; it is simply based on my knowledge of teacher training commencements—is that there was definitely a flatter teacher employment market in the early 1990s and you can see that the number of places available at university shrank very considerably for about a five-year period, reflecting that. I suspect that some people who were looking for secure employment may have made the decision not to go into teaching but to go into some of the other emerging employment markets at the time—like the IT industry. So we may still be seeing—

MR PRATT: The effect of that?

Ms Thomas: Yes, I suspect that that is a possibility. The other thing I would say is that the ACT’s capacity to influence these sorts of things is probably pretty small. There are

250,000 teachers in this country and we employ 3,000 of them. So, with the issue of supply and demand, we are not big buyers in that market. I am sure Fran was saying that we wanted to get the best teachers into our school system. Last year we took many of the male teachers who applied because they were in that category, but the actual supply of graduates is still pretty low, and I think our capacity to influence that is limited, frankly.

MR PRATT: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much for your attendance today. There are still a number of questions that we would like to ask, so we will place those questions on notice to you.

Ms Thomas: All right.

THE CHAIR: I understand the minister is coming back on 4 June. You may be coming with her and we can have a chance to ask some more questions then. Thank you very much for your attendance today, for making your time available and for the submission that you supplied.

The committee adjourned at 12.26 pm