

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
SOCIAL EQUITY**

(Reference: youth services at the Adolescent Day Unit)

Members:

**MR J HARGREAVES (The Chair)
MS R DUNDAS (The Deputy Chair)
MR G CORNWELL
MRS H CROSS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

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**Secretary to the committee:
Ms J Carmody (Ph: 6205 0129)**

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 11.35 am.

JASON WOODS and

SUSAN PELLEGRINO

were called.

THE CHAIR (Mr Hargreaves): We will convene this public hearing into the youth services at the adolescent day unit. I welcome Jason Woods and Susan Pellegrino. 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.

Just to give you some background, the committee visited the ADU a short time ago and we were particularly impressed with the way in which the programs were delivered there in terms of outcomes for the kids, but we were a bit disturbed to hear that there appeared to be plans to change the nature of the service delivery from what is essentially an off-campus social program with an educational overlay to a cluster model which is an educational program with a social overlay. The committee—I know that this was something that the coalition was a bit concerned about earlier—was concerned to hear about that.

Some of us have found out—and I would be interested in your views later—about the formal and, more importantly, informal networks that the ADU has in the context of kids that do not fit into the jigsaw of a school—connections with your organisation, with the cottage at Calvary, and the differences between the kids that will go through the ADU and the kids that will go through, say, Dairy Flat. We are aware of those distinctions but we would be interested in your views on those distinctions. We were also concerned to hear about the question of need—whether or not there is justification for a recommendation to have a similar unit set up in Belconnen, for example, so that both ends of town are catered for. We are aware that there are not lots of kids in this situation, but we believe that they are at a very real risk of enhancing their marginalisation. These kids have a chance of success if given an opportunity, some guidance and some programs to do it. If we do not go down that track properly, these kids will end up in the juvenile justice system or be homeless, if they are lucky.

That is the context within which the committee is considering the ADU. We have had a look at the Conway report. At first pass, it would have to be one of the worst pieces of academic presentation I have seen in a long time. I am surprised that someone of such eminence would put their name to a paper which has missing from it a decent literature review. We have also seen a draft report from Mitchell and Vanzetti. It refers to some work done by Long and Carmichael. The Vanzetti and Carmichael/Long work seem to be at complete odds with the Conway approach. That is where the committee is coming from.

I ask you to make an opening statement and then we will see where we go from there.

Mr Woods: I currently work with the Ted Noffs Foundation. My role within the foundation is as education coordinator. I run a twofold program: a program for people 14 to 18 years of age who currently attend the Ted Noffs Foundation rehabilitation centre and a day program for community students and they access it.

Ms Pellegrino: I am the policy and project officer at the Youth Coalition of the ACT. I am here today in that capacity. We do not have an opening statement. We are more keen on using the time to answer questions that the committee are keen to hear about and deal with issues that the committee wish to raise with us.

THE CHAIR: Just to kick it off, as a bit of background could you let us know what connections you both have with the ADU? How does what they are trying to do fit in with the philosophies of the things that you are trying to do? Would that be appropriate, do you think?

Mr Woods: As I mentioned, the Ted Noffs Foundation is a rehabilitation centre with quite similar philosophies. In my experience in the past, I worked at the adolescent day unit for a brief period, roughly three months. Three months prior to that I helped to coordinate and manage the adolescent day unit. I have also worked with the Quamby Youth Detention Centre, with the Galilee education services and now, obviously, with the Ted Noffs Foundation. One of my beliefs is that the adolescent day unit fits into the sector to meet a specific need of students that perhaps, I would argue, other services do not manage to address at this stage. In the overall scheme, I think they are aiming for a group of students who, because of their approach, I feel quite strongly do benefit a lot by having that service in place. I do not know if that answers your question, John, or if that is what you are looking for.

Ms Pellegrino: The Youth Coalition have ties with the adolescent day unit at this time, through attending some of the meetings of the alternative education network, of which they are a part and a member, and also through supporting the value of alternative education settings, whether they are government or community-based. We think that there is great value for young people in those settings being available and we would certainly be keen to see an expansion of services rather than anything that would seek to take away from what we currently have.

I have also worked at the ADU, but that was many years ago, in 1998 and 1999, so I have direct hands-on experience. In my contacts with the staff and students who are there at this time, I can see that it is still a valuable education option and support. Broadly, education services—by way of psychosocial support and skills—are being offered to those young people in a safe setting. The target group is a specific one for young people with mild mental health issues; it is not duplicated anywhere else. I know there is often a push and pull by schools or other services which might be desperate to get a young person in because of presenting behaviours. That might mean that there is a gap in services, not necessarily that the ADU is the best place for that student or young person. There was a question, I think, about the difference between the ADU and the ADP.

THE CHAIR: From where you are sitting, yes.

Ms Pellegrino: I think there is a very clear difference in what the two different settings do with their target group, the way they operate as a result and the kinds of skills and programs they run. As I said, the ADU has a target of working with young people with mild mental health issues, whereas the ADP, I believe, targets young people with behavioural issues, which is a different kettle of fish altogether. Behavioural issues are not presented as a result of a mild mental health issue. Combining the two would not benefit either of those programs at this point.

THE CHAIR: In your view, should the ADU be retained within the youth services sector or the educational services sector of the department?

Ms Pellegrino: I noticed that that was mentioned in the report by Conway. I suppose I did not get a clear understanding of the reasons why there was a recommendation that it be transferred to the education side of the department. In my mind, if something isn't broke you don't need to go and fix it. I think that it does have a good setting in youth services in terms of the links that it is able to make with the rest of the youth sector and the rest of the community. I think it is well placed there. Sometimes the education department programs can tend to become a bit isolated, having a more specific focus. I don't see a reason for that shift needing to happen.

THE CHAIR: I would like to see what you think about some specific references from Conway's report. Some have left me with questions. I am going to ask the same sort of questions, incidentally, of the department because we won't necessarily get a chance to talk to Professor Conway himself.

I am on appendix 1 to the review and I am starting off on page 5. It talks about the itinerant student management consultants. There are more words in the title than the number of teachers doing the work. I am a bit concerned about that. The second paragraph states, "ISMC staff identified as a key issue poor student literacy levels combined with poor teacher curriculum content and presentation choices." But the next statement I thought was revealing: "This combination leads to a lack of student engagement and behaviour problems." Would you agree with that? I couldn't see, firstly, how the two were connected and, secondly, where the logic came from. It didn't seem to me to be consistent with what I had observed.

Ms Pellegrino: If we are talking specifically about the ADU, I think that the benefit that the ADU has been able to maintain is in being able to have a flexible approach to each individual student's needs—their educational needs and also, as I said, their greater psychosocial developmental needs. The key ways in which the adolescent day unit are able to engage young people are through the relationships that they are able to develop—the setting allows for strong relationships to be developed; approaching the work from a strength-based basis; looking at how to foster their interests; and developing their social skills, which I think are vital for the young people that are targeted for entry into the adolescent day unit. When we talk about engagement I think that the academic skills are important. Of course we need literacy and numeracy and those things, but there are so many issues to address before a young person is able to engage in—

Mr Woods: Essentially, young people present at the ADU and struggle to maintain their placements at schools not because of their literacy and numeracy levels, although as Susan says they are extremely important, but because of the poor social skills, plus the

psychosocial type stuff that present and the mild mental health issues. They are the real issues that are stopping their development within a mainstream school. The ADU's primary focus is to address that that is the reason they do struggle. If you work within an environment where that is your priority, to formally develop curriculum for that doesn't allow for the flexibility that is required to meet the needs of the student. So, if a student presents and is in crisis for whatever reason, to say "This is the curriculum for the day" isn't going to solve the problem.

THE CHAIR: If I can just seek your agreement or correction, what you are saying is that there is the attitude that the education of the young person is a prime consideration. The ADU's approach is that social issues with the young person are the primary issues and that educational issues are secondary. When we visited, it seemed to me that they were good at teaching kids to cope within their social environment; the kids were there to learn to cope within their own personal social environment. But the kids weren't engaging in the mainstream setting.

Mr Woods: Yes.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes. How to manage positive relationships as well as how to manage in a mainstream setting are skills that many of those young people need to learn.

THE CHAIR: On page 40 of appendix 1, Conway talks specifically about the ADU. I found some of this stuff a bit contradictory. On the one hand Conway was talking about putting this into a cluster model. The second paragraph, the operation passages, states, "The program is under the coordination of a youth worker with no qualifications in education, psychology or mental health." Later on it states, "Professional supervision of the program is provided by a member of the youth and community services section who has a PhD in education." It seems to me that they are contradictory statements. Given the connection with the cottage, how important is it that people have qualifications on site in education, psychology and mental health?

Mr Woods: From my experience and from what I saw at the adolescent day unit, when required they access support either through CAMHS, mental health or other functions. More often than not, the young people are referred from the schools themselves which have their own counsellors and psychiatrists on board. So a lot of the issues have been assessed and diagnosed previously. I don't see that they are lacking that by not having somebody on site. I think there is the support there to access those sorts of things. In terms of the report as well, one of the positions is funded by another section of the education department. The coordination of the academic needs of the young people is done by a trained teacher.

THE CHAIR: By the executive teacher attached to the unit?

Mr Woods: My understanding is that one position is funded by the student services branch—unless it has been changed. It works within the unit itself and its primary role is to coordinate the academic curriculum.

THE CHAIR: That would be consistent with the intention of the ADU to have kids put back into the mainstream classroom. There has to be a connection with the mainstream education programs along with the social development of those kids.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you think that the professional mixture of youth workers and educators at the moment—apart from there not being enough educators—is about right?

Ms Pellegrino: I think it is a good setting for that multiskilling and the ability to be flexible in the way that young people's issues are approached and addressed in a problem-solving manner. I think that it is a good combination of skills. They also have a strong link with CAMHS and the cottage. Support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is there and available as required.

MRS CROSS: This is a hypothetical question. Is there an element of parochialism interfering in what could be the best interests of a child? Is the education department, for example, trying to interfere in the work of the social side of things with children; if so, why?

Mr Woods: That is a very difficult question to answer—for me anyway. One of the issues that I saw when I worked there was that it is very difficult to have a service where one of the members isn't managed by the service itself. That would run into problems, I think, any time. One of the things that are required there is for people to work as a team and to work closely. So that can be overcome as such. I didn't overly get a sense that there was strong opposition to what was happening.

MRS CROSS: If a decision has to be made on who manages the final picture, who should it be—education or youth?

Mr Woods: I would say that the youth services branch would probably be best.

MRS CROSS: You said that education plays a contributing role, but not the overarching management role, simply because youth's primary focus is the youth, the child, whereas education is more broad and encompasses many things. Is that correct?

Ms Pellegrino: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: On a different point, one of the solutions put forward by Conway in the main body of his report is to have a greater focus on trained youth workers and school counsellors in the mainstream education system, that we deal with these issues in the schools. That is the solution he has put forward. If more funding was put forward to have more youth workers in schools, how do you think that would work? Even with that push being put forward, do you still think there will be a need for some students to be separated from mainstream education before they can go back into mainstream education?

Ms Pellegrino: I think there are always going to be children and young people identified very early on in the schooling system as having needs and issues, unless the whole mainstream school system changes. But at this point in time those issues cannot be addressed in a mainstream school setting.

MS DUNDAS: So there is always going to be a place for the ADU?

Ms Pellegrino: Unless the mainstream school system changes dramatically. I think that there is going to be a place for those alternative school settings.

THE CHAIR: Susan, model clustering is certainly going to assist some kids, but you cannot substitute the two. If you want to take kids out of the classroom as well, good on you; that will help some kids. If they are taken out of the classroom and put somewhere else, but within the same school, they will still have social interactions in the schoolyard. That is fine; that is good. It will help them and stop them from going to a place like ADU. But at the end of the day there are going to be 20 or something kids in this town who are always going to need it.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes. Children and young people who do have contact with the juvenile justice system and come through the care and protection system have major issues that they need to deal with in their lives. Different environments and supports will continue to be needed for those young people and for young people with specific mental health issues and intellectual disabilities, or the combination of those issues, that won't be met in the mainstream school setting. We would certainly advocate—research done for the ACT homeless needs analysis also advocates—that we should be looking at expanding our range of alternative education settings rather than reducing them.

MS DUNDAS: What kind of radical overhaul? We could spend days talking about how we need to overhaul the mainstream education system. Are there any kinds of subheadings about what would need to be done in our schools to better help students who are having emotional and social problems, as opposed to the larger juvenile justice mental health care and protection issues? The ADU is set up to help those kids in the middle—those who are not necessarily known to the care and protection people, or in the juvenile justice system, but are just not fitting, as you have said yourselves, into the social settings of the school.

Mr Woods: I see the step of what is happening with youth workers in schools as quite important as well, because you have the meeting of the needs of certain kids within the school system. Forgive me if I'm wrong—you might correct me here, Susan—but, when we speak of radical overhaul, that would be looking at that particular group of young people—to meet their needs within the school setting.

I believe we need more approaches and more alternatives, so that all the needs of our young people are met. You have the majority of young people in the ACT who are going to fit within the mainstream system. They are going to thrive and they are going to do extremely well there. You have another group on the fringe of that, where the youth workers are going to be absolutely fantastic, within the schools, to enable them to maintain their placements there. As John suggests, you are going to have a range of young people within the system at any one time—I'd say a little bit higher than 20—who will always—

THE CHAIR: Would you like to put a number on it?

Mr Woods: I'd be guessing but it would be higher than that. I'd say three times that, at least. The youth justice system would be a good indication of some of those students. I guess what I'd see as best practice is having places like the ADU, where they can have it.

Other institutions: for example, I'd have to get people from the Ted Noffs Foundation in here, who look at the drug and alcohol side in combination with education. There are also other ranges. There are the eclipse program and DCAP-type programs which meet the needs of another group of students.

MRS CROSS: Susan, you used the term “radical overhaul”. That concerns me.

THE CHAIR: Did you use that term?

MRS CROSS: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: She did.

MRS CROSS: Yes. It was just a momentary exaggeration. If that is accurate, I'm concerned that an overhaul needs to be radical. That indicates to me that there is a more serious problem than we think. If that is the case, can you expand on that?

Ms Pellegrino: “Radical” might have been a bit emotive. It has already been recognised that there need to be some curriculum changes within mainstream schooling, and changes in the way things are done within mainstream schooling. The curriculum renewal task force was set up; there was the youth workers in schools initiative; there was the review of school counselling services and there is the within reach of us all strategy, that has a number of other reviews marked underneath it. There is recognition that there are changes that need to occur and I think there is work happening to look at those changes.

THE CHAIR: I want your feelings, advice or comments on what happens to kids who are out of school for, say, two years or so. If they don't get a place at ADU or ADP, where do they go?

Ms Pellegrino: ADU and ADP are not necessarily going to be the right places for those young people. There is a good range of community based alternative education settings such as the YEP program at Youth in the City, which has attracted many young people. Those young people may be referred from, for example, youth justice services, or they may have been out of the school system for quite some time. Because of their contact with the case managers within that service, they have recommenced their schooling—their education—on their own initiative, with support from the centre.

There is also the Galilee program, which caters for a range of young people with specific needs who, once again, can't fit in the mainstream schooling system. I think it is true to say that there are often not enough places within those programs,. The resourcing for those programs perhaps isn't as great as it could be because of the complexity of the issues that have been brought to those settings.

THE CHAIR: Do you think that the people who are looking at the resourcing and those sorts of things recognise that one of the two principal aims is to get kids back into the system? In fact, those measures are regarded by these people as being an alternative to the schooling system, instead of something which is basically working towards a joining up of the two services at some time in the future. I think that the non-understanding we may apply there is having an effect on the willingness of people to apply resources, if

they have them.

Do you think there is anything in there, or do you think that my interpretation is correct—that perhaps they don't understand that Galilee, Youth in the City, et cetera, are not permanent alternatives, and that, in fact, such programs are aimed towards an integration back into mainstream life—community life? For young people school is the biggest manifestation of community life in their lives. It is starting to come to me that that concept is being missed by people like Conway. Perhaps he ought to come on board with that a little bit more.

Jason, when you say that the figure you are talking about may be three times that, I accept that you wouldn't have a clue, any more than I would, about exactly how many there are. But I trust your exposure and judgment about roughly how big this is. ADU has about 20 going through it?

Mr Woods: That is my understanding, yes.

THE CHAIR: The question is: what is happening to the other 40? Are they wandering about the place, going in and out of other programs which are not quite suitable for them, or are they living under a bridge somewhere?

Ms Pellegrino: Your comments might apply to what is happening for some of those young people. I think there is also a need to look at specific groups of young people and what is happening for them—for example, young people who are in the care and protection system. It is my understanding that they should each have an education plan that is worked out by the education department, in recognition of the vulnerability of those young people, simply because they might experience many changes in their lives.

THE CHAIR: Can I take you back half a step? When a young person goes into the care and protection system they have a case management plan done for them. Are you suggesting that perhaps there isn't an educational component to that—or one that is not strong enough?

Ms Pellegrino: No, I'm not suggesting that. My understanding is that there is a responsibility for family services and the education side of the department to work together to develop a specific educational plan, as well as having a broader case management plan.

THE CHAIR: From the people that you see, is the relationship between the education component and the youth services and family services component of education working in respect of those sorts of educational and case management plans?

Ms Pellegrino: I'm not sure. In looking at the outcomes for young people in care, the CREATE foundation, which is the advocacy body for children and young people in care, does an annual report of outcomes for young people in different states and territories, which is available on their website.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps an opportunity exists for them to do a little better in that regard. It might save you a lot of work if they did.

Ms Pellegrino: There is also Marlow Cottage and the young people housed there. Some of them may be accessing mainstream school systems, or the range of alternative education settings. For those young people who are not able, perhaps because there's not a place, to engage at mainstream school because of their presenting issues, the Richmond Fellowship, I believe, is meant to provide a day program. But my understanding is that they are not funded by the department to provide that day program. Therefore, there is no day program because there is no funding. The young people in that setting are probably some of the most vulnerable that we are aware of. The resourcing of that needs to be addressed, to ensure that those young people are engaged in positive day activities, no matter what they might be.

Mr Woods: A previous question was around what happens to the young people who are not accessing programs. Probably the most common way they pop up, as far as the system is concerned, is through the youth justice system, at the end of the day. As Susan just finished saying, as far as their behaviours, needs and what they get up to during the day are concerned, if they are not engaged the alternatives are usually through crime, drug use and that sort of pathway, I guess.

Ms Pellegrino: Or picked up within the youth sector, presenting for assistance with housing, accommodation or food.

Mr Woods: And health.

Ms Pellegrino: I suppose that presents as an opportunity to try and re-engage a young person in educational pursuits, but there are many other issues that then have to be addressed.

THE CHAIR: There are bigger problems in their lives than education at the minute.

Ms Pellegrino: Exactly. By the time it comes to that, there are.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps I can talk to you about your experiences with ADU, and from Ted Noffs, and one of the things that struck me about the suggestion of doing clustering within schools, which is the program we are talking about as an alternative to an ADU. I'm having difficulty accepting that, I have to tell you, much as that might surprise you. It seems to me that one of the beauties of programs like this is its lack of size and that the physical environment and the number of people involved in the program is more of an extended family size than a community size, which is existent in the schools.

If we were to say that we are missing 40 kids and we were going to recommend that the government look at fixing that, or putting services on for those 40 kids, certainly the clustering arrangement would cope with that. But I'd like your views on whether that would be counterproductive. We wouldn't want to see a doubling of places at the ADU at Erindale, because it would take away the ambience of that place as well. Are we looking at the need to have another service of approximately the same size located elsewhere, because of the size of the program and its contribution to the efficacy of that program?

Mr Woods: I'd argue that one of the fundamental reasons why the ADU does work well is due to its size. It is one of the needs that the young people feel is missing from the

system. They are no longer just a number; it is more like a family—and there are the social skills that they are lacking in the education system to get that. I'd be strongly advocating to have it replicated somewhere else. It is currently at the Erindale Centre. To have one northside would be good.

MS DUNDAS: You just made a point about the importance of the size, and a family setting to help those young people. I refer to some of the recommendations Conway put down.

THE CHAIR: What page is it?

MS DUNDAS: I refer to page 28, in the table of the Conway report, not in the appendix. Conway talked about the ADU having a limited focus without educational or mental health leadership. That appears to be the main criticism that comes through the Conway report about the ADU, which runs contrary to everything we've just discussed about how the family size setting enables young people to get back into school. I guess I'm wanting you to respond to that specific criticism about the lack of emotional and health leadership that is put down by Conway.

Mr Woods: I was quite surprised. When I was reading through my notes before, one of the questions I was very interested in was how they made that statement. There is no evidence I can see that backs it up.

THE CHAIR: In the appendix, he says that they have leadership there, with a person with educational qualifications to PhD level. That seems to be a bit at odds with what that table says.

Ms Pellegrino: It would have been good to see the original report that was done, and for the previous reports that were done of alternative school settings to have been made available to the public.

THE CHAIR: Such as Long of 2001. Long and Carmichael of 2000 might be helpful. We might explore the unpublished reports.

Ms Pellegrino: I think that that openness and information are critical for all of us to be able to work together to develop a better whole educational system, which includes—

THE CHAIR: Yes. We will pursue those two unpublished reports because they talk specifically about the ADU, and also about alternative settings. I'd be interested in your view on this: to me, the problem seems to be that we are seeing—not to put too fine a point on it—a turf war between the educators and the youth workers; that the educators have a monolithic organisation behind them with the money, and the youth workers have just their compassion behind them and bugger all else.

It seems to me that it is now a competition of the philosophy of primacy, as I said before, instead of recognising that there is room on the farm for both. What I'm starting to hear is that this is an alternative setting; you can increase or decrease other programs around the place, but there is a place in the world for this type of thing and it should not be in the marketplace. How do you feel about that?

Ms Pellegrino: I think that is the recognition that the school system does include legitimate, well-needed alternative education settings. And I think the recognition of those alternative settings, both within government and within the community, is needed. I looked at the ACT schools plan which was developed for 2002-04. That made little mention of alternative education settings. I would have expected that recognition to allow linkages and to allow students access to what is needed when they need it. Whether in the government setting or the community setting, those alternative settings are a critical part of the education plan for the ACT.

THE CHAIR: I think that is because there seems to be a policy of preoccupation with mainstream success, instead of marginalised kids.

Mr Woods: I guess it is my belief that that is the case.

THE CHAIR: You guys see the results of that sort of thing. I guess that's the point I'm raising here with you.

Mr Woods: One of the things I can add to that is the idea of inclusivity, in particular for the group we are talking about. That is one of the things that occurs for the students the ADU sees, and the like. The concept of inclusivity is that the majority of the school environment will win over, and eventually the young people will integrate back into the school. This is going back to the cluster idea. It is my experience that it is these very young people the ADU work with who are more dominant within the environment, and that they usually drag other kids the other way, with them.

In answer to your other question regarding philosophies, I'm in a unique position. I'm teacher trained, but I have been a youth worker for a long time. I see the youth worker and teacher both having the same focuses, which are sort of around social and educational issues anyway, except that one just puts the other as their primary goal. I don't know if you share that view, Susan. So I don't see any reason why there should be any issues with that occurring within the sector. I think that both sides are working for the same thing at the end of the day.

THE CHAIR: But we must also recognise which approach has the primacy. Referring to the Conway report I reiterate that that was, in my humble view, a very poor piece of academic work. It seems that the adoption of the notion of primacy is where the issue is at, at the minute. If they were not in the same department—if family services and youth services were in separate departments altogether—you would have a turf war between two departments about which one of them has primary carriage of the program. It is blurred by the fact that they are in the same department at the moment, but we are still seeing the same contest.

What people ought to understand—I'm picking up your stuff, Jason—is that the social issues have primacy here. People ought to recognise that, then bring the combination of skills from all of it together in a team approach and get on with it, recognising that the aim is to fix the social skills, basically resocialise these kids, prepare them, and then put them back into the system.

Mr Woods: I would agree with that.

Ms Pellegrino: I think good work is done on an individual basis within individual mainstream schools. There are teachers who strive to make their schools as inclusive as possible, through trying to develop different programs and different curricula. But I still think there is a place for the alternative school systems.

MRS CROSS: One of the things I observed when we went to the ADU and spoke with the young people there was the success rate, and the difference the program had made to the lives of the young people, from a number of perspectives. Their academic achievements seemed to have improved and their focus had improved. Their relationships at home may not have been fixed altogether but they were not exacerbated. In fact, the inflammation was reduced.

I noticed from talking to the young people that the environment at the ADU gives them a sense of achievement and their self-esteem increases. If we have a facility that is providing children not only with a safe environment but also with an environment to help them get back into mainstream eventually, why is it that we don't have another one like that, or even two more, given the numbers you mentioned earlier? We would need at least two more facilities to be able to cater for the number that you referred to earlier—one down south, one in the north and one in the centre. Don't we need those?

Ms Pellegrino: As I said, I think we need expansion of alternative education settings. Whether they would be based on an ADU model or not, I'm not sure. Do you know what I mean? The adolescent day unit targets young people with mild mental health issues. It would be good for someone to look at the young people currently attending the different alternative education settings—for example, young people who are attending Galilee—and look at the referrals they haven't been able to take up, and the issues of the young people who presented who they weren't able to engage, and examine the reasons why they weren't able to engage those young people. I think there is a need for more, but what that looks like I'm not sure.

MRS CROSS: Maybe I'm reading this wrong, but are you worried about being specific on what you think we need more of? If you are worried, why are you worried? And if you are not worried about being specific—it sounds to me like you are hedging a bit.

Ms Pellegrino: Because at the moment we've got a range of alternative settings that are doing really well.

MRS CROSS: For different kinds of kids.

Ms Pellegrino: Exactly. That is why I'm not sure where the expansion is needed in terms of the kind of model.

THE CHAIR: So you are saying that probably all of them could do with a boost in resources anyway.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes. Why not develop another Galilee on the other side?

THE CHAIR: You don't want to pick out one and say that that is a more deserving cause than the rest at this point in time.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes, but also—

MRS CROSS: But if you could, Susan, what would you do?

Ms Pellegrino: I don't know.

THE CHAIR: You could give more to Ted Noffs anyway!

Ms Pellegrino: I think the capacity and the resourcing for community-based alternative education settings need to be looked at. We've been asking that for a long time.

MRS CROSS: Where is the greatest need? In order of priority—we cannot be all things to all people now—if you were to say, “Helen, these are the areas of greatest need. We need to immediately address this in the next month, this in six months and this in 12 months,” what would the three priorities be?

THE CHAIR: You don't get an opportunity like this often!

MRS CROSS: What would they be?

Ms Pellegrino: I don't have the information on all that stuff I was talking about, as to who is currently attending those settings and the turnaway rates.

MRS CROSS: You are not worried about saying it, yet you are not sure.

Ms Pellegrino: I am not worried about that. I'm not sure. I don't have the information available.

THE CHAIR: Jason, if I were to ask you that, what would you say? The same thing?

Mr Woods: For very similar reasons, I guess my view and my concern are around approaches and philosophies. I think there is quite a difference in those. In targeting a group, I'd say it would be extremely useful to have something. If you were to put it on a continuum, you'd have the range from school to the offline units, to some of the behaviour units, to more of the alternative education. I believe there is presently quite a need at the bottom end. You have services like youth in the YEP program—they are doing an amazing job. I guess that, for some of those young people, that is the last stop.

One of the things I would also like to see is this: within my own service we are looking for funding, et cetera, at the moment for a day program which we have been running for the last six months. Our focus is particularly around drug use. It is my understanding that a lot of the places—even the ADU, I'd argue—would run groups and that sort of stuff around that. That is something that makes the Ted Noffs program quite unique. Again, it is another model meeting the needs of a different client group. But I'd really be looking at the bottom end to the middle at the moment.

THE CHAIR: You are basically doing a risk analysis on all the kids—and those with the greatest risk we “attack” first.

Ms Pellegrino: As I said, we can look at what is happening for young people at Marlow,

and look at what is happening for young people residing at Marymead in the high support program.

THE CHAIR: It is interesting that the ADU haven't asked for extra resources; they just asked to be left alone.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes, and that seems reasonable.

THE CHAIR: Maybe there is a message in that for some people.

MS DUNDAS: What I'm hearing from Susan is that we need to do the analysis of who is currently missing out on those alternative programs and why, and then feed in the resources.

Ms Pellegrino: For example, there was also an indigenous education program for young men that started up at Galilee in 2001, and they were looking at expanding that for young women, but I don't think they were able to get the funding for that. So what is happening with those young people? Where are they currently engaged?

MS DUNDAS: I believe the whole development of that project was put on hold after the fires.

Ms Pellegrino: Possibly.

MS DUNDAS: That was last I heard about that particular program.

THE CHAIR: It seems to me to be rather interesting that the bureaucratic response to kids at risk has been a tad compartmentalised. The people who have concerns about educational outcomes have done their research, published it and not done much with it. People who have decided that it is drug issues have done research on that. There are people who realise that there are folk out there who have mild intellectual problems and behavioural issues. They are usually caught between a rock and a hard place because the Mental Health Act doesn't recognise them as having problems. We've got those issues, but there is not an overarching connection between all of those.

Jason, you talked about the continuum of risk for these young people. What we don't see is a longitudinal study which addresses that continuum of risk for these kids and works out where we are doing well, where we are not doing so well and where we need to throw resources across the portfolios. Is that a fair call?

Ms Pellegrino: Yes. I think that, ultimately, as Jason said, it is about including young people in our communities. We need to look at positive ways in which that engagement occurs .

THE CHAIR: Susan, I will ask you one of your favourite questions: do you think a commissioner for children and young people would fix this problem?

Ms Pellegrino: I don't know if it would fix the problem but I believe it would certainly be a great asset in keeping the issues on the table and keeping a focus on these issues.

THE CHAIR: To keep the blowtorch on them.

Ms Pellegrino: Yes. There is definitely a need for that specific focus.

THE CHAIR: Jason, do you want to respond to that one?

Mr Woods: I agree, yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time.

Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 3.33 pm.

KATY GALLAGHER,

FRANK DUGGAN and

CRAIG CURRY

were called.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for joining us, minister and officers of the department. As you would be aware, this inquiry, which is a fairly short one, is into youth services at the adolescent day unit. 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.

By way of background for officers who do not know, the committee visited the adolescent day unit. We thank Mr Johnson, who is here, for his hospitality that day, and also the young people who were there. They revealed a bit of themselves, and they didn't need to, and we appreciate that. It was really good. Anita Moranson, the executive teacher who was there, was very helpful. I would like that conveyed to her.

We have looked at some papers associated with the issue about the efficacy of the program and whether it should be continued in its current form or whether it should be changed in some way. We thank the minister for providing us with the information: the draft review of the operation of the adolescent day unit and Youth Connection by Mitchell and Vanzetti and also the Conway report and its appendix. We thank you for that.

It is interesting that, when we looked at the two documents, they were at times in conflict with each other. One thing that stood out was that the Conway report seemed lacking in literature review and a substantiation of the points made. The Mitchell and Vanzetti report did have a bibliography. A couple of references sparked our curiosity. Minister, should the committee have access to this documentation? There are unpublished papers and I assume that unpublished papers are for internal consumption by management, or is it just that they didn't get that far?

Ms Gallagher: It is normal in inquiries for the opportunity to be given to make an opening statement.

THE CHAIR: Yes, I was going to get to that.

Ms Gallagher: I would appreciate it if I could do that. I will address your first question about unpublished reports. The understanding I have from advice given to me is that they were not commissioned as pieces of work for the department. There are two unpublished pieces nominated in that report. As to whether those reports are handed over, that is a decision for the author. The department's view is that the author should be releasing those unpublished reports. The reports were not commissioned as pieces of work for the department.

In relation to the alternative education programs, I was fortunate enough to listen to some of the evidence given at the public hearing this morning. I think it would be useful to start by saying that this is an area that the department and I are very interested in. We acknowledge that there are a number of children who, for one reason or another, don't fit into mainstream schooling. At the moment there are options available through the ADP, the ADU, Youth Connections and Youth in the City. There is another that I cannot think of at the moment. There is a range of alternative education programs. I would like to hear discussion about whether that is enough. I think you could always say that it never is.

The department, in recognition of some of the pressures faced by children, young people and the schools in dealing with some of these young people, has focused enormous energies on student support services over the last year. That has included creating an executive or director position. The person in this position would be in charge of student support services for the first time. It would be their responsibility to bring together students with disabilities, to deal with welfare, counselling and behaviour management issues—Joanne Howard is in the position at the moment—to provide some executive support and make it a primary focus within the department.

There has also been an increase in student management consultants from 4.5 to 8, an increase in funding to support behaviour management programs of \$250,000, the establishment of a school board at the Hindmarsh Education Centre and increase in the number of teachers there, a range of student welfare and management policies and the promotion of positive behaviours in schools. A whole range of things have occurred in the last year to give priority to student support services in schools.

In relation to the Conway report, I am a bit concerned that there is a view that a decision has been made to amalgamate the ADP and the ADU. I can say here that that decision has not been made. Dr Conway outlined a number of considerations in the report. We have taken a number on board, but there is a number that we haven't. The government or the department has not adopted the Conway report in any way. The focus of our energies at the moment is to look at how we can enhance the programs we have. Conway says in his paper that consideration should be given to amalgamate, which is where people may have jumped ahead of where we are, because we are at no means at that stage.

We are looking at every way we can to enhance the programs that are offered, both at the ADP and the ADU. Some of that is about location and whether it is appropriate to have the ADP operating at Dairy Flat. There have been some serious safety concerns for

teachers out at the ADP, for example. It is very isolated. The question is whether those students should be isolated at Dairy Flat. The same applies to Erindale janitor's cottage—whether it is the appropriate place for the ADU and whether it provides the right environment.

Whilst I acknowledge that connections are being made with the college, we are talking about 12 to 15-year-olds and whether that is the right place for them. We are looking at these things. This is very much about enhancing the program, not trying to change something that is working by any means or taking away the psychosocial focus of the program. We are considering enhancing the educational focus of the program. These children are of compulsory schooling age and the department has a responsibility to ensure that part of what is offered to these children is education focused. That is where we are at the moment. I am happy to answer questions.

MS DUNDAS: Can I just jump in with a quick opening question. Can you then tell us the status of the Mitchell and Vanzetti February 2001 draft review and the status of the Conway report? Are they just things you are thinking about? What status do they hold?

Ms Gallagher: Frank might have a view on this. From my understanding, they were pieces of work that were commissioned. There have been some useful things in both of them, but there are things that we would not necessarily want to do either. The status is that we are taking informed decisions but we have not adopted them as the way forward. Frank, do you want to add to that?

Mr Duggan: Some of the recommendations of the Vanzetti report we acted on, but acted on in the sense of the relocation, to get them more integrated with a mainstream school, being Erindale College. We are also looking at the professional development opportunities available to youth workers and the staff. It is that sort of flavour that we endorse. The paper has a range of suggestions—some we endorse; some we don't.

THE CHAIR: One of the things talked about in Conway's paper is the possibility of clustering and having the services physically within a school but separate from the activities in the school. Have you developed an attitude on that sort of possibility?

Ms Gallagher: Not yet. We are looking at it. As you would know, there is some merit in not isolating kids in a special program and keeping them within a school setting. At the moment they are with Erindale College, which is a school. They are 12 to 15-year-olds, so maybe it is appropriate to look at high school options to keep them within their peer group. It is on the table and is being looked at. One of the things we do need to address, whichever way we go, is the accommodation for both of these programs. But no, a decision has not been taken.

MRS CROSS: Do you have a personal view on the matter, Minister?

Ms Gallagher: I do have a personal view. I don't know whether it is relevant really. I like the idea of kids the same age being kept together. It is like children with disabilities. We have 1,800 children with disabilities attending schools: 1,500 are in mainstream settings now and 300 are still in the special schools. A lot of the developments in inclusivity has been about pulling people together, not separating them. But that is a personal view I have and it applies in a range of settings. As to whether that would suit

the young people attending the ADU, I have not made my mind up on that. I do acknowledge that the program is working for a lot of these kids. We want to enhance that and I don't want to put at risk anything that is going on there. I think that needs to be dealt with very sensitively. These are high school students and there is merit in looking at whether there is capacity within a school for these children to attend.

MRS CROSS: Is pressure put on the people around you by education so that they can take over this issue versus youth having this issue?

Ms Gallagher: Not at all. I have Craig here from the education side and Frank from the youth services side. In my dealings on the whole subject of alternative education I have found that these two areas talk together very well; they have to. It certainly hasn't been the case of taking anything off someone. There is acknowledgment across both sections that education is very important and we need to look at how we enhance that.

That is what we have done at Quamby with the Hindmarsh Education Centre, with the board. We have put some extra teachers in there. At some stage we would like to see it attached to a mainstream school. Those discussions are yet to be had. The aim will be to start making those connections and having it seen as a legitimate school, which is part of what we are trying to do. But certainly from my dealings—and Frank and Craig might like to add something here—the two areas are talking together. This is all about how we provide the best options for young people.

THE CHAIR: Do you see either of the two areas having primary carriage of the program? Supposing your department has one minister and two departments—we have had that sort of incidence in the past; you can have one minister and two departments—which one would be the more appropriate to have primary carriage of this? I guess it comes down to the statement you were making earlier about the psychosocial focus versus the educational focus. I am trying to find out which is the more important of the two focuses, given that they have to work together.

Ms Gallagher: It probably comes down to whose budget funds it, too.

THE CHAIR: It might do, and that is where the minister's power comes into it.

Ms Gallagher: It is with youth services now. I have certainly not taken any advice or been briefed on moving it from where it is, but I have had discussions about how education can work and enhance what they offer within the area it is now.

MRS CROSS: At least you get on with the minister.

THE CHAIR: Very well, as it happens.

MR CORNWELL: This question is on the same topic. As to the review of the operations of the ADU, on page 2—

THE CHAIR: Excuse me, Mr Cornwell, is that the Mitchell and Vanzetti review?

MR CORNWELL: Yes, that is correct. I refer you to page 2, paragraphs 3 and 4. I am a bit confused at the range of options that appear to be available to students at risk. Would

you like to comment on this?

MRS CROSS: Do you mean the temporary withdrawal or partial withdrawal of community schools at risk services?

MR CORNWELL: Yes. There is a whole raft of things here: official groups, Eclipse and Ginninderra—

MS DUNDAS: It is the list that includes Youth Connection, ADU—

MR CORNWELL: Yes. Would you like to comment on this?

Ms Gallagher: Do you think that there are too many different services?

MR CORNWELL: I am asking the question actually—yes.

Ms Gallagher: I would have to say no. That is based on demand and the fact that most of those services and programs cannot meet the number of referrals that they are getting.

MR CORNWELL: Why are there differences, though, Minister?

Ms Gallagher: All of them do things a little differently and deal with children a little differently, but that is because these young people are all different. Youth in the City, for example—

MR CORNWELL: We accept that people are all different. I am wondering why there are so many little differences. How important are they?

Ms Gallagher: Craig will probably explain that. There are some differences, for example, with youth and with a non-government provider—say, Youth in the City. Young people voluntarily go there. They get an accredited certificate at the end of their course work. It is a different age group as well from what we are dealing with here where we have compulsory school-aged children who are coming in and out. We are a bit worried about them and need to pull them out for a while, but try to get them back in. I have thought the same thing, though: we have a few little things dealing with 10 children here and 10 young people there.

Based on the success that most of these programs are having, the key thing is to keep children in some sort of educational program. If they are about to drop out, the best thing to do is to keep them in there, even if they are only holding on by a fingernail, and encourage them back in. Each one does things a little differently and the results that are happening in non-government and government programs demonstrate that these programs are meeting the needs of the children and young people that are accessing them.

MR CORNWELL: Are you happy with that?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. I understand your point, though. Craig, do you want to add to that?

Mr Curry: Certainly. The programs have really been tailored to meet a range of needs

of students in different settings. I will just look at the ones that sit in education. The high school support centres, for instance, are for high school students who may be on suspension or may be having temporary difficulty with their school. They are centres that these students can go to and access some sort of education program and get some of their school work followed up while they are in that program.

The student management consultants, for instance, should really support teachers in schools to help them develop better skills for managing students who might have quite challenging behaviours. The adolescent day program, of course, has a focus on students who have quite difficult behaviours and who might be disengaged and so they are going to spend some time at an alternative setting. The Eclipse program is for students in years 9 and 10 and at the Canberra College. It is about students who not necessarily have difficult behaviours but are finding it difficult to fit into regular mainstream education. It is a full-time education program but it is really looking at alternatives to engage those students. It is trying to look at the various needs of students and programs have been developed over the years to attempt to do that with different focuses, if you like, and different aims.

THE CHAIR: One of the things that we heard about when we went and visited the unit was its dedication to the re-placement of students in school programs. I don't know whether or not that is as high a priority in the other programs because I am not familiar with them. It seems that that aspect of what they are about has not been picked up in either of these two reports particularly well. I presume that is fairly high on your list of how they are doing.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

THE CHAIR: With respect to the Mitchell and Vanzetti report it seems as though the consultation process was reasonably good. I might not necessarily agree with some of the things that you said in there, but that doesn't matter. There is a literature review to back it up and what seems to be a reasonable consultation process. I don't have the same confidence about the Conway report, though. Dr Conway isn't here for me to ask him but I would be interested to know just how much time he spent at the ADU. How long did we go down there for—a couple of hours?

MRS CROSS: For a couple of hours.

THE CHAIR: It was absolutely brilliant. I wonder whether Dr Conway has spent very much time there talking to the people who are running the show.

Mr Duggan: There were two methodologies used. The Vanzetti report was very much looking at quality and direction with key stakeholders and young people and how they went about constructing the report. They took a very qualitative approach to it. My understanding of Conway was that he wanted to draw together reams of reports and do some qualitative analysis of what each of the reports was saying and then to package them up. There is quite clear reference and we actually purchased a review that was quite qualitative-based. It used participant observation and interviews with young people and stakeholders. I think Conway was more a report that pulled together previous reports and then analysed that information. That is my understanding of how they differ in methodology.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I don't get that flavour at all when I look through it.

MRS CROSS: What page are you on, John?

THE CHAIR: I am just looking at appendix 1, page 40. It seems to me that there are quite a number of statements made without substantiation peppered through the reports.

MRS CROSS: How long did Professor Conway spend at the unit?

Mr Duggan: My understanding was that it was under an hour.

MRS CROSS: How is he able to write a 76-page report—I am not being critical; I don't know the man—when he spent under an hour—

Ms Gallagher: The Conway report takes in a number of reports. It differs from the other report in that that report was about the adolescent day unit and Youth Connection. This report is about alternative settings in the ACT—from primary school right through secondary school, across youth justice issues. It is a broader brief. As I said in my introduction, whilst Professor Conway is an extremely well-respected educator, this report is not a blueprint for our way forward. He has provided us with some useful information and has given us some considerations to look at, but there is a whole range of areas that we pull information from, including the outcomes of the young children and young people in the programs. That assists in making determinations about where we go from here.

I think there is unity—I don't think the committee will disagree with this—in the direction in which we are focusing: enhancing alternative education options in the ACT. We are not taking away anything from the system, reducing it or taking away from the successful programs that we have in place; we are looking at how we can make it better. We are also making sure that we meet our responsibilities to provide education to these kids.

THE CHAIR: Can I just pursue this a little, if I may. I think we take the point that you made a number of times so far, that is, we are about making sure that the kids are looked after—and better, if we can do it. I think that is laudable.

MS DUNDAS: And educated. I make that point again.

THE CHAIR: Yes, make your point again—making them learn and all that sort of stuff. What concerns me is how much weight would be given to various pieces of information available to you in that decision-making process. I was quite taken aback by some of the things that I found in the Conway report. I have to say that I wouldn't be relying on it all. On page 40, for example, one of the paragraphs states, "The documentation provided shows each member of the ADU has a specific task. The program is under the coordination of a youth worker with no qualification in education, psychology or mental health." The last paragraph on the same page states, "Professional supervision of the program is provided by a member of the youth and community services section who has a PhD in education."

That seems to be contradictory. Conclusions have been reached with that sort of contradictory stuff right through it. I applaud the Mitchell and Vanzetti report in terms of its academic rigour as a contributor to what you are doing. I don't necessarily agree with what is in the report, but that is beside the point. It is an academically rigorous document. I don't have the same confidence about it, and I think that view is shared by the committee.

Ms Gallagher: I have said that the report is not a blueprint. You are raising your views on the report to a new level. Perhaps you need to give Professor Conway the benefit of defending his piece of work if you are going to make statements like that about it. We have found it a useful piece of work. We are not adopting it wholeheartedly, but it has provided us with some information. We will use the committee's report to guide us and also use our stakeholder consultations. I meet with the youth sector very often. I have been to Youth in the City and out to Gugan recently, which is where you get information about the directions, gaps in services or areas of need. This report isn't the be-all and end-all, but I really think Professor Conway, considering some of the statements, should be given the opportunity to defend his work if you have such serious concerns about it.

THE CHAIR: We had toyed with the idea of inviting him.

MRS CROSS: We haven't criticised his work.

THE CHAIR: I have.

MRS CROSS: That is okay. I understand that you have a balancing act and that you have to speak to everyone. There are diametrically opposed opinions on how to approach this. As a layperson looking at the unit—I have only been to it once but I have spent a lot of time there with my members—it seemed to work effectively. It is one of those formulas that just seems to succeed. I would hate to think that when you have a successful formula it is tampered with, unless you can enhance it and make it even better than it is at the moment. We—I mean the generic “we”—are not working, I hope, towards a predetermined conclusion. I assume that, by assessing all the work, you will look at the benefits to the children who are at or have been through the ADU. Given that it has been a successful formula, and when you collate all the information, would you consider opening a second if it looks like it would be beneficial and will return the kids who have gone through it to mainstream education eventually. Is that fair?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I think that is fair. This year we have opened eight new units across Canberra within schools to meet the demand of the number of students with disabilities coming to school—specifically around, say, autism units or learning support units within schools. From the number of young people accessing the adolescent day unit, there is certainly a demand there. All the referrals are dealt with. Some of them don't get an immediate place within the ADU; they get it when it becomes available.

As I have said before, I don't see this as an area where we are going to see decreasing need. The way we are looking at it now is to meet the needs of students in 2004 and beyond, acknowledging that we are probably going to get more and more kids who, for one reason or another, are disengaged from school. I don't know the answer to that. Mr Cornwell might have some views on that. I presume that the number is going to increase and we need to make sure that we have education options for those kids. I am

looking at all of that as we go into the next budget round. It is about demand and about programs that work.

MRS CROSS: I am probably pre-empting a decision you make, but I need to ask this question now, given that we have learnt from previous experience that we should ask the questions: given that it is a successful formula—we all agree that it is a successful formula; no-one in here has said to me today that it is not—if you get advice, whether it is philosophically opposed or supportive, how will you deal with the politics of it within your own department? It may be the youth side against the education side; there may even be people within education or youth who have diametrically opposed views on it, because someone wants to run an agenda they genuinely feel is good that is different from what the ADU is doing. It's like a balancing act. My concern is the collateral damage to the children.

Ms Gallagher: By the time the advice gets to me it's in one piece, so whatever happens at the departmental level has been sorted out. I said before that the youth services side and the education side are together on this one. Everyone agrees that what is going on there is really good. At the moment, it has a specific focus around the psychosocial framework, which is good. We are looking at how to introduce more of an education focus within the framework working there at the moment. I think these kids are presently getting three sessions a day. One of those has to have an education focus. Some of the discussion we are having is on how an education focus can be blended into all of those sessions—enhancing it that way, not taking away the model with the youth worker and the case worker that is working so well.

MRS CROSS: As to the control of the ADU's hierarchy, do they report directly to education or youth, or to both?

Ms Gallagher: I think they go through to youth.

MRS CROSS: They are free to discuss things without being impinged upon? There's no issue there with politics?

Mr Duggan: I think I'm free to discuss anything in the department—I'm well known for my discussions. No. My view is that we go back to the Hindmarsh model. I think it's a very good model. We have been able to work with our colleagues in education to enhance that program quite dramatically. This is stage 1. Stage 2 will be if we can tie it to a mainstream education facility, which I think would enhance it again to another level.

It is the same with the ADU. The psychosocial model works, but, in my view, we've got to get these kids into all the alternative opportunities, whether they be mainstream education or vocational education, but we need to have those linkages. It is my belief that the more we can enhance their education, the better the opportunities they will have. Feasibly and realistically, the more they enhance their education, the better the opportunities they will have in our community. I think we should be working together to achieve that.

MRS CROSS: What highlighted the success of this unit was the technical presentation that one young person gave to us.

Mr Duggan: Yes. Technical presentation is our model, but it is the exhibitions program from education. For me, that is the demonstration of the relationship. It was our engagement of the young person to make them feel strong in an environment, improve their self-esteem and get them highly motivated, but it was the exhibitions program from education that we had utilised. The accreditation was through the education department that said that this was on a level that we could accredit.

MRS CROSS: So it is a complementary formula.

Mr Curry: The teacher is supported through education by one of our level 2 behaviour management or student management teachers.

MS DUNDAS: To move the topic sideways a bit, one of the major focuses of the ADU is the youth workers working so closely with children. In one of these reports I think Conway almost recommends that we take the ADU, put it back into high schools and move more of the youth workers into schools. Part of that program is already on the agenda with the youth workers program going into schools.

Ms Gallagher: That didn't come through the Conway report though; that was responding to another report.

MS DUNDAS: The counselling review, yes. But the question which flows out of the discussion we were having this morning with the Youth Coalition is about picking up the kids at the fringes and how they are either being moved out to an alternative program or kept in the mainstream setting. The question is whether the youth workers in schools will limit the demand for another ADU. Do you see that happening?

Ms Gallagher: It would be great if they did. The best outcome would be if they managed to address the issues a young person had within the high school and that young person was able to stay at the high school. I think that's what the ADU is about—taking the young people who can't do that out for a while, but putting them back, and making sure they go back. If they don't ever have to leave in the first place, that would be a really good thing. I don't know whether, with some of the young people who would go to the ADU, one youth worker in a high school would have the capacity to deal comprehensively with that.

These are early days, and eight youth workers have started. It will be interesting to see how their workloads progress during the year, the sorts of issues they are dealing with and how they manage their workloads within the schools. But for some of these young people, I still think there will be an increasing need in this area. Access to alternative education settings has increased and I think that, if you go to any non-government provider or government provider, they will say the same thing.

MS DUNDAS: I guess that's the flip side. Do you think there will be more referrals to, and more demand on, the ADU because students will be having contact with youth workers at a greater level than they would have had before and the youth workers might say, "It would be better if you pulled out," whereas before they would have just been labelled as perhaps a difficult kid and kept in, and then not actually achieved any good educational outcomes?

Mr Curry: I think the youth workers can contribute, really. There are two aspects that I was thinking of in reflecting on your question. Firstly, I think that, if a student returns from the ADU to a school setting, then it would be the youth worker who would need to pick up that student and support them through that whole reintegration process and work collaboratively with the ADU youth workers. I think that doing that is a very important part of their role. I've lost my thought on the second part. It will come back to me.

Ms Gallagher: As to whether they create more demand, we will have to wait and see.

Mr Curry: I hope they will not do that. I think they are there to work collaboratively, in a multidisciplinary team approach, with counsellors. So I would hope that is not what they would be doing.

MS DUNDAS: It's one of those things. We have seen it with the rise in the level of autism.

Ms Gallagher: Exactly.

MS DUNDAS: If you start testing for it, you start finding it. If you start having youth workers working with kids, issues are going to come up. It's about how they are then managed.

Mr Curry: That's right.

Ms Gallagher: It will be interesting to see this year. That's partly why we've gone for a half intake. We want to see how it develops this year before we go to the full 17. But yes, it will be really interesting to see what happens this year.

MR CORNWELL: I have been listening to talk about alternative education, groups on the fringe, returning to mainstream and things, and I'm still a bit confused about this group of bodies that are assisting. What is the difference here between these and the late, and as far as I'm concerned unlamented, School Without Walls?

Ms Gallagher: I think SWOW catered for a number of young people in one setting,

MR CORNWELL: That is what I'm trying to come to grips with—this new group.

Ms Gallagher: I was going to school when SWOW was around and, sadly, it's not around now.

MR CORNWELL: I'm showing my age now, aren't I?

Ms Gallagher: I think we're dealing—as Craig answered before—with some different young people today than we were back then. We don't have one place where everybody goes, which SWOW did offer. From memory, they had a high school.

MR CORNWELL: Yes—a high school/college, actually. What happened to it?

Ms Gallagher: I believe another government closed it down.

MR CORNWELL: It just seemed to disappear and be incorporated into the college system.

THE CHAIR: Was it not in fact transferred, at least in greater part, to Dickson?

MR CORNWELL: That's what I thought.

THE CHAIR: But not all of it. Some of it—the lesser valued stuff—was not transferred. Then Dickson and its DCAP program was essentially the successor.

MR CORNWELL: Hence my question as to how these new areas fit in.

Ms Gallagher: And have grown. They have responded very much to need. When there has needed to be a program offered, particularly for young people within schools, we have put together a program to meet the needs of those students. It is no longer offered in one setting. Because SWOW was in one setting, everyone could go to that place, whereas now we have programs offered around Canberra that meet different needs of young people. For example, there is the messengers program, which deals with young people with mental illness. They don't actually offer a program; they go and provide support within schools. That is a bit different from, say, youth in the city or the adolescent day program, which is dealing with a different type of young person. I think it would be highly inappropriate, in dealing with the differences, disabilities, illnesses and needs that these young people have, to put them all together in one location.

MR CORNWELL: So we have refined it.

Ms Gallagher: Perhaps, yes, targeting to the needs of the student, but also without having one place where we chuck all the kids that don't fit into other schools, which is a good idea, too. It's not something that we would go back to and say that all difficult students should go there.

MR CORNWELL: I seem to agree on SWOW.

THE CHAIR: I have a question about the services that Family Services provide to kids at risk, like the kids at the ADU. Are those services audited in terms of the efficacy of the programs? Are they checked out? Are the programs audited?

Mr Duggan: Are we audited as a department?

THE CHAIR: Yes. I don't mean in terms of money and that sort of thing, but in terms of the efficacy of programs.

Mr Duggan: We report on it. We report on the ADU every year, yes. The reports are in our annual report on certain key performance indicators, yes.

Ms Gallagher: And quarterly reports.

Mr Duggan: And quarterly reports that are signed off to make up these final figures. We report on it through the key performance indicators quarterly and then in the annual report each year for the ADU.

THE CHAIR: This is really a question, I think, for Mr Curry: what is the equivalent of the education services that are provided to the same kids at risk? Are they reported on?

Mr Curry: The equivalent program?

THE CHAIR: Yes. For example, if the minister said that she wanted to know how successful the outcomes were for kids at the ADP, ADU or something like that. I've just heard from Mr Duggan that there is reporting on how those things are going and they would be provided to the minister and onwards and upwards to here, I suppose.

Mr Curry: With the program that is in some ways in parallel except it has a different focus and a slightly different clientele, the ADP, data is kept on the referrals to that program, there are links and records kept through the student management teachers in terms of the actual individual learning programs that those students have, and all those students return to school. So that one is an in and out of school process. The way the program currently operates, the students actually retain their enrolment at their school and only spend two days a week at the ADP. They're not actually leaving their school while they're attending the ADP, so the records that are kept around the ADP are really in consultation with their home school and could be reported on.

THE CHAIR: We test whether the psychosocial programs for those kids are working, but do we test whether the education programs in conjunction with those psychosocial ones are actually working as well—for example, whether a particular student is responding to numeracy, literacy, PC skills and all that sort of stuff in the context of the reasons he or she had to come out of the school in the first place?

Mr Curry: Students in education special programs all have a review process whereby we look at the outcomes against their ILP and measure the success, so that when they go into somewhere like the ADP there would be planning done at the entry point about how long they might be staying in there and that would be done in consultation with the school.

I suppose one of the things I could give as an example that we did take out of Conway was that he suggested that we should be a bit more flexible in our approach and not just lock ourselves into a 20-week period, because all children are different. We didn't have a problem with that sort of view and we're moving towards that in the ADPs because some students might only need five weeks or 10 weeks, others might need longer. That really is related to the accountability around whether they are getting outcomes from the program.

MS DUNDAS: I wish to follow up on that. Mr Hargreaves mentioned that there would be statistics kept on the outcomes of the ADU and the ADP. That was actually a recommendation out of Mitchell and Vanzetti, which is about keeping track of individual students and their reintegration into high school, so the success of the program in the short term. Are those statistics now being kept? Can you say that the students are being successfully reintegrated into their high schools and achieving social and educational outcomes?

Mr Duggan: We record fairly specific key performance indicators around the many

students who attend the ADU, the achievements of personal goals set by the students when they have been admitted and as part of a case planning process and individual work program development for them. We merge with those. We then have a 10-week integration period after we get them back to the high schools and we only end our involvement when we know that they've either been in school or a vocational educational component, or training, or sometimes potentially work. So that's when our contact ends. They may also be supported by our Youth Connections people as well, so we do have from a case management perspective some of that intervention. But other than that, we don't have a statistical record base, Roslyn.

MS DUNDAS: But you have got the 10-week follow up and, if that reintegration process doesn't work over those 10 weeks, there is another program. If it does work, it's a tick to a certain extent.

Mr Duggan: Yes. I think that it is appropriate that you know that they have been reintegrated to where we've got them and we've put up a process around that to support them.

Ms Gallagher: I think that part of your question relates to what happens after that. Do we track them afterwards in education?

Mr Curry: What happens currently with the ADP is that they're in the program for two days—

MS DUNDAS: Sorry, the ADP and the ADU?

Mr Curry: No, just the ADP, if I can speak to that.

THE CHAIR: Well, can I just ask you to refer to what happens at the ADU as well, because that is what the inquiry is about.

Mr Curry: I'm sorry.

Ms Gallagher: No, once they return to school from the ADU.

MS DUNDAS: Yes, they are in the school; they have been reintegrated for 10 weeks out of the ADU. What happens in week 11?

Mr Curry: If there was an appropriate integration process occurring, there would be lots of consultation and discussions happening at the school about the particular student and there would have to be some sort of support put in place in terms of people who were linked in with that student. It might be that one of our student management consultants took that student on as part of their case. It might be that the school counsellor links in with that person. So there will be strategies put in place, depending on where the student had gone, what school and what their particular support needs were back in that mainstream setting.

The other thing we would have to say is that we probably don't, at this point in time, have any longitudinal data to say what happens to people over time and that would be something that we would like to look at to see the long-term outcomes of these

programs. That would be beneficial for us and we need to move towards that.

THE CHAIR: Often people at the ADU have a mild mental health issue. My understanding is that there is a position for a psychologist on staff, but it is not necessarily needed. Certainly, the coordinator indicated in conversation that it was not necessarily needed, given the way in which the program is delivered. I understand that there is a relationship with the cottage at Calvary. Firstly, what is the nature of that relationship? Secondly, does it actually provide that sort of psychology service? Thirdly, does it follow the young persons into school when they are reintegrated?

Mr Duggan: Our relationship with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Youth Services is very strong, and we have working protocols with CAMHS. In relation to the ADU, they would be followed. The actual team leader from the college sits on the referral panel, so all the receptions into the ADU have that expertise on the panel and the young person who would be serviced by CAMHS would continue to have that service appropriately supported and worked through as our case management process with them at the ADU. If they do return to mainstream education, I would presume that if the child was still in need of mental health services it should follow them. It is a fairly integrated approach that we have there, so my expectation is that it would follow them. You would have to ask CAMHS for the definitive answer on that, but our understanding is that all services that they are offered at the ADU would continue until the provider feels it is time to withdraw.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate that. Thanks very much for that. What I am trying to get sorted out in my head, and it is starting to crystallise, is: when a student is determined not to be able to be responsive within the school setting and it is decided that the ADU is a good spot to go, presumably conversations are held between the stakeholders—parents and people like that—and also the school from which the kid was coming, the ADU coordinator and CAMHS and a program of reintegration is worked out then so there is a dedicated timeline. That, I would image, is part of the contract that the young person signs off to and all that sort of thing. Is an exit plan also determined, with a decent timeframe?

Mr Duggan: We generally aim for about 20 weeks at the ADU and then a 10-week transition back; but, as with the ADP, if there are issues, we can be flexible about the timeframe. The young person comes in and an individual learning plan is done from the educational focus. We recently introduced a new case management framework for the whole of Youth Services, so we would then work through that case management framework with the young person.

The young persons set their own goals and their own achievements. We work to that. When the young person is leaving, we have already been in contact with the school fairly early in the piece to find out who the contact people are, using the principal or a coordinator at a certain level, and then we go into an exit plan and, if the young person goes back to school, the exit plan is pretty comprehensive about who are the support persons, who are the mentors. The coordinator follows up on each individual young person who leaves. The linkages are there at the reintegration back into the school. I think it's a reasonably comprehensive way of dealing with young people and it's quite multiagency and multidisciplinary focused to meet their needs.

THE CHAIR: It sounds like a very structured and determined program in terms of the continuum of services that these people need from the time of the identification of a problem to the actual achievement of a solution. It's a shame sometimes our adult justice system has not picked up that same model. Perhaps it is working on it as we speak. I think that Education and the ADU are to be congratulated.

MS DUNDAS: There has been mention of the referral unit not meeting demand, but you said that you do try to place every student eventually. One of the recommendations of the 2001 report was to pick up on that. What happens to the kids who don't get placed?

Ms Gallagher: Frank probably knows more about this than I do. My understanding is that, if they don't get a place immediately, they can come in as a vacancy comes along, but they stay in their school setting whilst awaiting a place, or that supports are put into the school setting to enable them to stay there whilst they are waiting for a place.

MS DUNDAS: There isn't any discussion about whether alternative education settings are appropriate for them?

Ms Gallagher: I think all of those would be looked at on an individual basis on the referrals.

MS DUNDAS: Frank, can you just explore that?

Mr Duggan: No, it is exactly as the minister is saying. There is the pattern that I talked about earlier and they do secondary consultation back, so they do come up with a range of alternatives, advise the school of a range of other appropriate placements or suggest some support in the school environment. They will relook at the referral when another vacancy comes up. So they actually work, as the minister said, quite cooperatively with other providers, and the panel is made up of the right professionals to do that.

MS DUNDAS: The support to the school if a vacancy is not available is almost immediate, so that once the demand is recognised it is being dealt with almost immediately?

Mr Duggan: There is negotiation with the school. For example, if a young person is having problems, we might use Youth Connections to work with the school and offer support until the vacancy level is available. On that type of process, the panel engages with the referring agent and tries to put in some support. That is an example where Youth Connections would get alongside the young person pretty quickly and support them in the school environment—the situation has been alleviated. They may be referred at a later stage.

MRS CROSS: How many kids are on the waiting list to be placed? Secondly, how long do they have to wait to be placed?

Mr Duggan: We don't operate a waiting list, Helen, because the situation changes quite a lot. We estimate we get about 50 referrals a year and we take 20.

MRS CROSS: When you say that you take 20, do you mean that the others don't qualify? Is that what you mean?

Mr Duggan: Pardon?

MRS CROSS: You get 50 referrals and you said you take 20. What does that mean?

Mr Duggan: We are contracted to provide 20 places in the ADU—well, not contracted; we provide 20 places because it is a 20-week program and we usually work off about eight young people.

MRS CROSS: What happens to the 30 kids that don't get a place?

Mr Duggan: That's what I'm saying; we'll either support them, support the school or suggest alternative education placements.

MRS CROSS: How long do the 20 have to wait to get a place? Is it immediate?

Mr Duggan: We can take a young person on any given day, so it's determined on who is exiting and who is coming in. I'm not being evasive; it's quite a flowing, fluid sort of process.

MRS CROSS: Would you be able to take the 50 if you had more money? Is money the issue?

Mr Duggan: I don't think the staff would want 50 in the one place at the one time, but yes.

Ms Gallagher: Capacity is an issue.

Mr Duggan: Yes, capacity levels and there is a four staff to eight students ratio, a very high staff level.

MRS CROSS: So it is a resource issue, because if you had more staff you could handle the other 30? If it is a resource issue and the staff only want to handle so many, we have an issue with the limited number of staff, which is a resource problem. If we had four times more staff, we could cater for the other 30?

Mr Duggan: You may, but those 30 students could have been picked up in other programs as well, Helen; that's what I'm saying.

Ms Gallagher: There are other alternatives. It's just that they can't go to the ADU.

Mr Duggan: No, they can't go to the ADU, but there are alternative education options out there, as has been discussed.

MR CORNWELL: Are they referred from the schools?

Ms Gallagher: Mainly from schools, yes.

MR CORNWELL: I have a very simple question; maybe the answer is obvious. Does this apply to government and non-government schools?

Ms Gallagher: Good question.

Mr Duggan: The majority, I would say, would come from the government schools.

MR CORNWELL: I understand that, but presumably it would apply to both.

Mr Duggan: Occasionally I would get some.

MRS CROSS: Are the 20 mainly from government schools?

Ms Gallagher: We could probably get back to you on that. That is 20 over any year. We can give you a snapshot of perhaps last year and where they came from. I would say that most of them would come from government schools.

MR CORNWELL: I would say that, too.

Ms Gallagher: They'd be expelled from non-government schools.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time, Minister and officers; we do appreciate it.

Ms Gallagher: I am conscious of previous committee appearances and, if there is anything that the committee thinks needs to be brought to my attention immediately, I would appreciate it if that could be done either now or in writing to me, anything that has arisen in written or oral submissions that you are highly concerned about.

THE CHAIR: I do not have anything in mind at the moment, but I will accept your invitation. I think in writing would be a good move.

Ms Gallagher: Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 4.33 pm.