

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 1**

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**At Seaforth on Friday, 19 November 1999**

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**The Committee met at 1.30 p.m.**

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**PRESENT**

Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile (Chairman)

The Hon. P. Forsythe  
The Hon. Dr P. Wong

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**THE HON. DAVID BARR**, MP Member of Manly, before the Committee:

**CHAIR:** I welcome the media and members of the public to this hearing of the General Purpose Committee No. 1 for this inquiry into the proposed closure of Seaforth TAFE. I advise that under Standing Order 252 of the Legislative Council, evidence given before the Committee and any documents presented to the Committee that have not yet been tabled in Parliament may not, except with the permission of the Committee, be disclosed or published by any member of such Committee or by any other person. Copies of guidelines governing broadcast of proceedings are available from the Committee table at the entrance to the auditorium.

We thank Mr David Barr, the Member for Manly, for appearing before the Committee. As a member of Parliament you are not sworn in. We know all your details. Do you want to make an opening statement?

**Mr BARR:** I certainly do, Mr Chairman. I will begin, Mr Chairman, by, if I can, tabling the TAFE websites and I do that simply because on the back side of that it shows Northern Institute of TAFE, it shows Seaforth Campus.

Mr Chairman, in November 1998 the Northern Institute of Technology unilaterally pulled out of Balgowlah Boys' High School. They did that without any prior consultation with the high school and I made an issue of this matter because I felt it could be a precursor to the closure of Seaforth TAFE. There was a front page story in the Manly Daily and the then local Member, Dr Peter MacDonald, was involved in the issue. Dr MacDonald contacted the then deputy director of the Northern Institute, Mr Sivakumar. Mr Sivakumar told Dr MacDonald that the Seaforth TAFE had been evicted from the Balgowlah Boys' High School site. That was not true. It was a unilateral decision and in fact there were only discussions after the event. This can be confirmed by the principal of the high school, Mr Dennis Houghton. Dr MacDonald was somewhat put out, to say the least, that he was misled in this way by a high level bureaucrat in the Northern Institute.

This Committee has already heard the subsequent comments from the various officials in the Northern Institute, Mr Sivakumar, Susan Holland, Pam Pielgrain, so I will not go through those, but all of those people gave a commitment that the college would continue.

Manly Council did write to the Minister and in my submission I would like to correct something I have said, that there was no response to any of the Manly Council letters. I apologise for that. There was one response. I was told by Manly Council that there had not been. However, the Parliamentary secretary, Tony Stewart, did make a reply to a letter from Manly Council. That is dated 31 May. He talks about the campus at Seaforth as well, just to rub that in, but he has given some information about the pull out from Balgowlah Boys' High and he ends up by saying:

"I trust this information will satisfy the council that the campus at Seaforth is continuing to operate."

I would like to table that.

**CHAIR:** We will have to have a motion just to give us the authority to accept the documents. We take the originals.

**Mr BARR:** I will be handing eight out in all.

(Letter from Tony Stewart dated 31 May table)

**Mr BARR:** In August 1999 we then heard from Mr Sivakumar that Seaforth Campus was to be closed. We are told in the department's submission that the Managing Director of TAFE endorsed that decision in late July. There was no consultation with staff, with students or the local community. It came as a bolt out of the blue and at the time it was claimed that a \$4 million saving was needed. \$4 million was the figure bandied about by the bureaucrats at the time. We have subsequently found out from the department in its submission that the correct figure is \$2.95 million, it is not \$4 million.

The grounds for closure were given as student numbers declining, the building fabric, the demographics, and the economic justification. I would like to go through each of those, Mr Chairman.

Student numbers. The figures have already been tabled to this Committee. Student numbers have, in fact, increased by 5.3 per cent between 1998 and 1999. I would point out that over the past few years some courses, such as the management course, has gone down to Brookvale. It was located at the annex. They then show up as Brookvale enrolments, not Seaforth. If you are going to hive off courses and then say student numbers have declined, well, they will if you take away courses. But the point is, notwithstanding that, that the numbers have actually increased.

The second point concerning the building fabric. Mr Don Moller, the project architect for the 1995 refurbishment, will be giving evidence later this afternoon. On page 3 of the submission of the department they say:

"Brookvale is a large and modern facility while Seaforth is some four decades old and in need of considerable maintenance. Students will benefit from the improved facilities."

Mr Moller will rebut this and as far as the issue of students will benefit from improved facilities, that is not the HSC students, it is not the art and design students, and it is certainly not the students with disability.

HSC, there will be 1.2 rooms, no laboratories. You would have seen this morning the quality of the laboratories at the Seaforth Campus. Art and design, it now appears that the diploma will be going across there when it had not in the past, and I will come to this sort of issue later how there has been planning on the run. But there is a presence of the diploma at Brookvale which there was not going to be at all when the decision was made.

As far as disability is concerned, I will table a letter from Karen Healey who is the consultant for students with a physical disability to Tanya Lahey. Tanya will be giving evidence later this afternoon.

**CHAIR:** We will just have a motion to table the letter.

(Letter from Karen Healey tabled)

**Mr BARR:** Karen Healey points out that building C and building O will be accessible, and that is where the art section is.

She says in the third paragraph; "Due to the steep slope of the campus, independent access between building C or O and building M" - that is where the canteen, library and campus association is located - "is only achieved if a student drives between access points. In my view the provision of powered wheelchairs or an attendant carer with a manual wheelchair user would pose a risk to safety."

Now, she is saying there, the consultant for the disabilities, that basically you can not get down to where the student facilities are with either a manual wheelchair, be it with a carer, or a machine operated one, that is a risk to safety. I find that quite astounding that in a supposedly modern campus there is no disability accessibility. Whereas, at Seaforth there is good disability access. Tanya Lahey, of course, will be giving evidence as far as that is concerned.

On page 18 of the TAFE submission it states there, it acknowledges, that there are disability problems. It says, "The campus has strategies in place to minimise access issues for disabled students". That is just puffery. There is nothing in place and there are no plans as such at the moment. That is a sweep it aside kind of assertion that is made in that document, without any substantiation.

Now, I would like to come to, Mr Chairman, the issue of the economic justification and I seek permission to table a report that I have had commissioned by Centennial Consultancy. If that could be tabled.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I put it.

**Mr WONG:** Seconded.

(Report entitled "Proposed Closure of Seaforth TAFE, Commentary on Submission by the Managing Director of TAFE New South Wales" by Centennial Consultancies tabled)

**CHAIR:** Who was it authorised by?

**Mr BARR:** I did.

**CHAIR:** You did personally?

**Mr BARR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You paid for it personally?

**Mr BARR:** It has to be paid for some time. I am expecting an invoice and that matter has to be dealt with. I would like to take the Committee members through this document and I will start with page ten if you have all got that. 4.1; "Commitment on Reducing Unit Costs". Halfway down it says Dr Boston advises that he has agreed that New South Wales over the three years of the ANTA agreement, Australian National Training Authority Agreement,

basically, will seek to achieve a reduction in unit costs by 3.26 per cent. It has acknowledged that TAFE has higher unit costs than the other states. But the next paragraph says: "It should be stressed that TAFE's calculation of unit costs is not confined to the costs of employing teachers, supplying materials or paying for electricity or telephones in colleges which are actually involved in providing services to students."

Turning over the page, top sentence on page 11. In other words, unit costs includes money spent by TAFE on its head office and on its various layers of administration in institutes and colleges. In other words, unit costs are made up of just not what is happening at the coalface but what is happening in the bureaucracy and it is something that I will be emphasising, that TAFE has many layers of bureaucracy, it has many institutes, it is top heavy and the costs are top heavy.

This report also points out, going two thirds down the page, where ANTA in fact says it can not be assumed that the lower the unit cost is the better and it is pointed out there that in fact New South Wales has the highest portion of non-English background students; the highest proportion of indigenous students; a higher participation rate for women in vocational educational training - over the page - and it has the highest output of annual hours curriculum associated with recognition prior learning.

Going half way down the page. It should also be noted that while Dr Boston, in the department's submission, emphasises unit costs in his submission to the Committee it is just one of eight measures of the efficiency and effectiveness of national vocation and educational training system adopted by all states.

The final paragraph down there, Mr Chairman, it says: "If" - if - "it is accepted that the closure will result in annual savings of \$240,000", a figure which is highly contestable, that is the department's submission, it will save \$240,000, "this amounts to only 0.020 per cent of TAFE's gross expenses of 1.2 billion. Any claim in reduction of operating costs by closing Seaforth TAFE would not go very far in achieving this target. Nor may the closure of the Seaforth site be necessary if more radical reforms were undertaken of the department and TAFE's management structure with the aim of reducing overheads and diverting more resources to direct service delivery."

Over the page on page 13 it says, at the very top: "The decision to close Seaforth TAFE appears to be taken without appropriate analysis of the social and economic impact of this course of action. It is only after the decision has been taken that a report purporting to be an economic appraisal" - that is purporting to be an economic proposal - "has been prepared. This provides for a very narrow and flawed analysis".

Now, going back to page 6, Mr Chairman, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training Annual Report, it says there, that is a third the way down:

"It is surprising to find that the latest 267 page annual report for the department makes virtually no reference to steps taken to reduce administrative costs. The only mention of action taken to reduce administrative costs concerns the rationalisation of corporate services. No mention of possible over-manning through the retention of an administrative structure characterised by layers of bureaucracy."

Going over the page to page 7. At the top of the page it says:

"In a report published in 1997, the New South Wales Government's Council on the Cost of Government revealed that the increase in real expenditure in TAFE over the years has certainly not gone into service delivery."

It then goes on after the tables are shown. It says:

"In the period 1989 to 1995, real expenditure in TAFE increased by \$203 million or nearly 28 per cent in real terms (ie after adjusting for inflation)."

I point out this is an extraordinary increase in spending over a short period. At the bottom of the page it says:

"However, not much of this increase in expenditure and staff numbers went into teaching staff. According to published data, there has been little movement in real expenditure per full-time equivalent students and per student contact hour between 1993-94 and 1994-95."

While there have been increased costs, little of it has actually been seen at the coalface. The closure of Seaforth TAFE must be seen in this backdrop of what is going on in TAFE overall.

Going to page 12, Mr Chairman, and I hope this is not rushing you too much or boring everyone but I think it is important to go through these steps. I have actually mentioned pages 12 and 13 already. I would like to then go on to the review of the department's economic appraisal that was done by the consultants John Hawkless starting on page 19.

On page 19 and 20, basically this critique says that the Hawkless consultants, even though they have done what they call an economic appraisal have in fact not done an economic appraisal, they have done a financial appraisal. An economic appraisal is a much wider notion. In fact over the page on page 20, the last paragraph, where it is quoting from extracts, it says:

"These extracts suggest that Hawkless Consultants have misunderstood the concept of 'economic analysis' entirely. An economic analysis, properly undertaken, should assess costs as well as benefits."

The point that the Centennial Consultants are making is that they have not factored in wider considerations in the documentation. It has been very narrowly based.

On page 23 it points out the costs and benefits not identified by the consultants. It lists a whole bunch of things. It says:

"They do not attempt to identify and quantify such matters as",

and there are a number of dot points. I will not go through those. I will just point out the last dot point, it says:

"The relative suitability of the Seaforth Campus for disabled students (given the terrain of the Brookvale site)."

There are all sorts of other things. At the bottom of the page, the last paragraph in the middle of that paragraph it says:

"While the report contains some occasional rather sweeping statements about 'student outcomes', these statements are only introduced in order to justify a failure to incorporate assessments of a range of potential costs and benefits in the analysis."

Mr Chairman, on page 25 they go through the financial analysis of the Hawkless documents and they make a couple of points beginning number 1. It says:

"The Hawkless analysis assumes that the option of continuing the Seaforth operation involves the equivalent of an initial capital outlay of \$5 million. This is not made explicit in the accompanying discussion, but is evident as a negative cash outflow in the spreadsheet provided in Attachment B. This arises from the consultants' apparent confusion between an economic appraisal and a financial appraisal. An economic appraisal may have some regard to the opportunity cost of capital - but they have not attempted such an exercise."

Point number 2: "Further, the consultants assume that the \$5 million value of the Seaforth Campus will remain unchanged (in real terms) for the next 20 years. In other words, they have ignored the holding gains likely to be earned by TAFE or the State Government from retaining a valuable parcel of real estate in Seaforth."

On both of these points it says: "This irretrievably biases the analysis in favour of the 'refurbish Brookvale' option."

Going over the page to page 26, Assumptions About Operating Expenditure in Hawkless Consultants' Report, second last paragraph:

"No explanation is provided as to the source of any projected savings from closing Seaforth. Savings are claimed to be \$193,000 per annum being (a) the total of existing Seaforth operating costs of \$293,000, less (b) an assumed additional recurrent operating cost of \$100,000 per annum to be incurred at Brookvale. Note that these figures have simply been assumed, not analysed".

"It appears that the Hawkless Consultants have simply adopted figures provided to them without enquiry. Despite the apparent precision of schedules and spreadsheets, the data used in these exercises are contestable and flawed."

Finally on this report, Mr Chairman, they do in the last couple of pages do their own alternative calculation and I will not go through that. I will just end with their conclusion on page 30. They have gone through an exercise of an option and have said that:

"The NPV of this option is less than that of the 'retain Seaforth' option. Hence the 'retain Seaforth' is the more attractive option."

"The question must then be asked, how could closure of the Seaforth site option be viewed as attractive to TAFE?"

"One possibility is that sale of the Seaforth site may be seen as a way of obtaining short-term

cash which can be offset against recurrent spending. Dr Boston has already pointed out that the asset sales may be used to distort the 'unit costs' reported to ANTA. Such a treatment might help solve the short-term problems facing TAFE management, though this would involve only short-term and illusory gains."

I have not addressed one other issue and that is demographics.

**CHAIR:** Just before we finish on this submission, Centennial Consultancy, do you have anything about them? They are critical of the other consultancy. Have they undertaken other educational projects? It is for the Committee because if we base our recommendations on this we could be challenged as to their expertise in that area.

**Mr BARR:** I will undertake to get some background.

**CHAIR:** Some of the other projects they have handled, the size and importance.

**Mr BARR:** They are a very eminent consulting firm. The other point I should make about this report is that --

**CHAIR:** We will take that on notice. You will send us a statement on their background.

**Mr BARR:** Yes, as soon as we can, Mr Chairman. I point out there were other people involved, not just me, in requesting the report and also the payment of it which is to be sorted out.

**CHAIR:** The community.

**Mr BARR:** Community, yes. In the light of the comments I have made about the overmanned bureaucracy of TAFE, I would like to table another document.

**CHAIR:** What is the title of the document?

**Mr BARR:** It is actually a Question on Notice that I put to the Minister in the House. What I was getting at in this document or these questions was the number of TAFE staff comparing 1988 with 1998 and the question I basically asked is: How many staff were at head teacher level or above in 1988 and in 1998? Secondly, of those, how many were involved in teaching or how many were non-educational. What that shows is quite a significant increase in the non-teaching components of people on head teacher salary or above.

The difficulty with these figures is that there are people who are classified as educational who in fact do no teaching whatsoever, such as people like heads of studies. So in fact the increase is even bigger than these figures would suggest.

(Question on Notice from Mr Barr to the Minister tabled)

**Mr BARR:** I am going through the different strands to the department's justification for closing the college, and I have gone through enrolment numbers, I have gone through the building fabric and the economic justification. The issue of demographics. It was said last week

that the 1996 census showed basically a flat projection; an ageing population and a declining population. I am on Manly Council. Anecdotally we know there are many young families moving in here and I would like to point out a few facts on this.

Firstly, under State Parliament Planning Policy number 53 there was a big push by the State Government for urban consolidation and that includes the Northern Beaches area. In fact, Warringah Council is still wrestling with that issue at the moment, but there is a significant push for urban consolidation to stop the spread of the metropolitan area out west.

Secondly, I point out that at Warriwood there has been a release, or there is about to be a release, of 1,500 lots for a new housing project and that will involve 4,000 people.

Thirdly, I met with the Transport Minister, Carl Scully, on Tuesday this week to talk to him about transport issues. Mr Scully said that the Government is still committed to putting in heavy rail between Chatswood and Dee Why. There is a rail link being built between Chatswood and Parramatta.

I have misgivings about that, in essence, if there is a heavy rail link between Chatswood and Dee Why, Dee Why will become something like Chatswood as well. It will have enormous effect on urban densities, and it will be an enormous push to make the line economically justified.

The point I am making in this is that education is a long-term planning issue, you don't close down a college on a short-term basis because of budgetary requirements this year, when there are things happening down the track that indicate there will be more people on the peninsula. The last document in terms of the demographics, if I have permission to table this, Primary School Enrolment in Manly Electorate.

**CHAIR:** Who produced that document?

**Mr BARR:** I got that from education.

**CHAIR:** Department of Education.

**Mr BARR:** And that shows that in the primary schools in the Manly electorate, the schools are listed there, there has been a six per cent increase in primary school enrolment in the past two years. Now, primary school students become high school students and they become TAFE students. The point here is if there is an increase in primary school students there is something out there happening demographically.

**CHAIR:** Seaforth Primary had an increase.

**Mr BARR:** Yes, the only one that doesn't show an increase I think is Harbord. That is only marginal.

In terms of the justification for closing the TAFE I suggest the 'Emperor Has No Clothes'. I suggest there has been no planning in this, no proper analysis. They have been cobbled together after the event. I think it has been highly unprofessional the way the TAFE bureaucracy has gone about this and I believe it reflects all the way to the top, to Dr Boston. I think politicians

should be careful in making comments about public servants, but the point is a decision has been made which has a very adverse impact on this area and people should be called to task on it.

The next point I want to make, Mr Chairman, is what has happened since the closure or the announcement of the closure and already last week this committee did hear of the total lack of planning, the ad hoc nature of it, things changing on the run, where there was going to be no HSC at Brookvale, now there are going to be some HSC, 1.2 rooms. There is no science blocks there, but they will find some ways of getting students to whatever blocks are possible. There may be even a head teacher appointed out there. It has been the same with the art and design. The diploma was not going there, now there are bits going there, there is total confusion, staff do not know, the greater public do not know, the students do not know, it is pretty disgraceful.

I point out this; if you are going to increase the facilities at Brookvale for art and design or HSC that means either that the business studies sector is going to have reduced class sizes, reduced class numbers and reduced access to computers, or there is going to have to be more money put into Brookvale than they are saying to accommodate everyone. At the moment in the business studies area, in the accounting and real estate and management, it is not clear how many rooms there are going to be and how many of the students will be able to be catered for in those various courses. I suggest that is an unsatisfactory way of doing business and it comes about because of the indecent haste in which this decision has been made and in the scramble to plug up gaps as they evolved, without any proper consultation, without people knowing what is going on and it has been all on the run.

One of the other issues I am most concerned about, I tried to raise it with Warringah Council and with A&P who are at Warringah Mall, if you are going to take 1,200 plus students, 1,200 plus with bits of the HSC and art and design, then that has parking and traffic implications for what is already a difficult area. You have seen the whole Pittwater Road access is a peculiar entry. I would say that the TAFE site at Brookvale is an unusual one. TAFE must have got it on the cheap a long time ago. That is all I can say. It is not really suited for a big college campus. The Warringah Mall management did put out, if I may table this, a newsletter.

**CHAIR:** What is the title, it is a business letter, is it?

**Mr BARR:** Yes, from the Warringah Mall management to all customers. It is about customer parking.

(Newsletter from Warringah Mall management tabled)

**Mr BARR:** Basically this document says that 36 per cent of the car parking spaces at Warringah Mall are not taken up by shoppers. They are taken up either by commuters or by Brookvale TAFE students and their estimate is that 80 spaces a day are being taken by students from Brookvale TAFE.

The department, in its submission, has said that they are going to increase parking to 370 parking spaces, that is 30 more spaces for over 1,200 students. I am suggesting that Warringah Mall is going to have more than 80 car parking spaces used by students and that is going to be a problem to them. They are introducing paid parking after three hours but if a student is there for a four or five hour period, I would suggest that one or two hours of paid parking isn't a disincentive to going across there especially if there is no other parking. I do not think that has

been thought through properly at all.

**CHAIR:** We would allow some time so the committee members can ask some questions.

**Mr BARR:** I will end by saying that I did have a meeting with the Minister on October 20, I had requested a meeting on August 27, it took two months to get a meeting and many phone calls. At the meeting was the "Save Seaforth TAFE Action Committee" and myself and we presented a petition of 3,000 names to the Minister. Those petitions have kept coming in and there are 4 or 5,000 names now, I would suggest, on that petition.

The Minister did say he would get back, he has not done so yet. It was at that meeting that Mr Burkhart did say, he was present with Mr Bourke, that the repair of the roof would cost \$400,000. That was the only thing said at the meeting, the roof would cost \$400,000 to repair.

My concluding remarks are that I think the way TAFE has gone about it after the event has shown ineptness and poor management and it gives no confidence in the way they made their initial decision. Having had the consultants and documents and run through the figures, TAFE is looking very poor on this issue and I think there are some serious questions to be asked.

I end by tabling another financial analysis of the department's document done by Mr Ian Russell. I will not go through that. I will end there, thank you, Mr Chairman.

(Financial analysis by Ian Russell tabled)

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Barr, for giving us your evidence and particularly documenting it so efficiently. Any questions from the committee members?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Mr Barr, the department has given an estimate of \$5 million as the valuation of the site, from your knowledge of the region is that an accurate figure.

**Mr BARR:** I would not know to be honest, I have no idea. It sounds feasible. I think the Dover Heights site got 8 million, that had a huge parking area. The real estate market has gone up since then and this is not Dover Heights. Ballpark I think it sounds about right.

**Mr WONG:** A few questions, number 1, you talk about primary school increased enrolment six per cent over the last two years. How does that reflect in high school enrolment?

**Mr BARR:** What happens with high schools in this area is there are a lot of local public schools, primary schools, and then they go to private school. So the high school situation is a different situation. There are a lot of students who go over the bridge to the private schools, SCEGGS and the various other schools up there. The local primary schools capture a lot of the local kids, the public high schools do not capture so many. When they finish with their private school, then they are still living in the area and many still need to go and do a TAFE course.

**Mr WONG:** My second question has been the different versions of whether Seaforth TAFE numbers are going up or down. Is there evidence to show the committee one way or the other.

**Mr BARR:** The enrolments have gone up this last year. That is agreed by everybody, including the department, notwithstanding the fact that courses have been taken away from Seaforth. I would suggest as an alternative that what should be looked at is to centralise business courses and HSC courses there, and art and design at Brookvale. That is one of the issues that the Seaforth Action Committee has been talking about. You can certainly talk about rationalising courses and maximising the best use of the two facilities and that would be a good way to go.

**Mr WONG:** My third question, whether we like it or not, again there has been argument whether Seaforth TAFE, the unit cost has gone up or come down compared to the national average. Do you have any results one way or the other?

**Mr BARR:** The consultants do make a point about Seaforth TAFE, given there is no administration staff there, the unit costs would be low.

**Mr WONG:** There is no evidence?

**Mr BARR:** I can only produce what is in this report. It is buried in there somewhere, I do not know if they put a figure on. If you are using that as largely for student use and teaching staff, then unit costs are down.

**Mr WONG:** If you do find it, can you table or send it to us?

**Mr BARR:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** Have you made any inquiries as to whether there is a departmental policy that governs the closure of educational facilities, for high schools to be closed?

**Mr BARR:** Thank you for asking that question, Mr Chairman. I actually tabled a bill in Parliament last week and I am hoping it comes up for second reading this coming week, that bill seeks to amend TAFE Commission Act to bring it in line with section 28 of the Education Act, which requires a process of review and local consultation and the minimum period in which you can close down a high school, or a school, is about 18 months. The Minister must make an announcement by June 15 and it can not be closed until the end of the following year and I would ask this committee to support that, because you can see what has happened here has been quite outrageous and if there had been this process of review and consultation these sorts of things could have come out, they could have talked about alternatives and ways of not abusing the local community the way it has been done by the TAFE management.

**CHAIR:** You could argue that even though a TAFE is not included, which is a single-standing institution, Seaforth, that the department should have treated it in the same way with the same 18 months consultation?

**Mr BARR:** We had some trouble drafting the wording after this campus/college issue and I think the wording talks about the TAFE establishments. There may be a loop hole in that. You would be really going against the spirit of it if you were to close down a facility like Seaforth without going through that process, that is if it gets up.

**CHAIR:** Your consultancy report has emphasised a factor which has become clearer to me, the last paragraph you quoted, that there could be a plan by the department to use the unit costs reported to the Australian National Training Authority because this affects the federal Government funding and if they are trying not to lose money, they have to take emergency action and Seaforth may have said, we get the --

**Mr BARR:** Quick money.

**CHAIR:** Make Seaforth the target.

**Mr BARR:** Any fool can sell off valuable assets. That is not the appropriate way to run such an important outfit as TAFE. Its strength has always been its outlets and accessibility. The many outlets where the local community have access, that has always been the strength and it is beginning to undermine this.

**CHAIR:** That could be the trigger.

**Mr BARR:** I think it is a short-term budgetary panic, yes.

**Mr WONG:** Mr Barr, in view of its possible effect on disabled people, the female population and AFB and the youth at risk, have you got any complaint to the anti-discrimination board?

**Mr BARR:** Ask Tanya Lahey when she comes.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Mr Barr, you said you met with the Minister on 20 October. Did the Minister indicate reasons why Seaforth was closing?

**Mr BARR:** No, he didn't say much at all. He listened to us. He listened to some of the people who put evidence forward here and some others and then gave an undertaking he would get back to me.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Has he?

**Mr BARR:** No. So, in all this time I have had nothing in writing from the Minister and he has not got back to me. It took a lot of work to get a meeting with the Minister.

**Mr WONG:** Mr Barr, also we have heard that there seems to be some security problem, in particular for female students at Brookvale. Do you have any evidence, including a police report, or recommendations that justify that concern?

**Mr BARR:** No, I do not, that is a good avenue for some further study, I will follow that one through.

**CHAIR:** Just following up my earlier question now about this ANTA business. If the department is trying to influence its report to the federal Government, would that mean they have to do something to the actual property of Seaforth urgently?

**Mr BARR:** Sell it quickly.

**CHAIR:** How can they say these figures now affect the budget and it is still sitting there.

**Mr BARR:** We do not know what is going on behind the scene for that matter. This report does talk about the cycle when you are looking at unit costs and sell-off of property, the cycle.

**CHAIR:** They could perhaps foreshadow sale?

**Mr BARR:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** And perhaps in a magical way?

**Mr BARR:** It is possible. They could perhaps somehow factor it --

**CHAIR:** It would seem strange to include it without selling it.

**Mr BARR:** Unless you are planning to sell it quickly.

**CHAIR:** Are there any reports in the community of organisations seeking to purchase this property?

**Mr BARR:** There are rumours, and I will not mention those rumours, but they do involve private schools. A concern I do have is the primary schools in this area are very successful; they thrive. If the Government sells off an educational facility and it is bought by a private school for primary purposes, it would actually start to undermine public schools here, which is a concern. Each little school like Harbord and Balgowlah Heights and Seaforth, well off and not so well off, really are terrific. They have a vibrancy about them and they flourish and I am concerned that we keep it that way.

**Mr WONG:** It is a hypothesis now. In your opinion, when do you think the department made such a decision to close Seaforth? When? What month?

**Mr BARR:** One could be conspiratorial about this. I do not know. I believed in November last year that it was on the cards and then we had those undertakings, those public statements saying that it is not going to happen and so I let the matter drop. Obviously there was something. It has been in the pipeline in some minds. Without going through any proper process, without going through any real transparent review process and analysis. The analysis they come up with now is dated 5 November.

We do not even have their internal - in fact, we have no internal documentation including the document they undertook to present to this Committee last week which is the Minister's signature on a submission. I would suggest either that document does not exist, or it has been lost, or it is so flimsy that they do not wish to produce it. None of that reflects well. They gave an undertaking to table that document to this Committee. There is nothing that we get in writing apart from their - and we forced it out of them at this hearing - their submission.

*Inquiry into the proposed closure of Seaforth TAFE*

**CHAIR:** We will pursue that document.

**Mr BARR:** I think it is important, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** In case they keep delaying that. Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee. We know you have done a great deal of work on this issue.

**Mr BARR:** I appreciate having the opportunity to present that, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** I apologise that we do not have any Government members here at the moment.

**Mr BARR:** May I just add, there are a series of letters from the various local businesses about the closure of the campus and how it will impact on them. If I can table those.

(Letters from local businesses concerning closure of the campus tabled)

**(Mr Barr withdrew)**

**JULIE SUTTON**, Councillor for Warringah Council, 17 Panorama Crescent, Frenchs Forest, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** In what capacity are you appearing before the Committee?

**Ms SUTTON:** I wish I knew. I think I am a representative of the local community, I assume.

**CHAIR:** Did you receive a summons issued under my hand in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Evidence Act, 1901?

**Ms SUTTON:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Are you conversant with the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry?

**Ms SUTTON:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** At the conclusion of the formal statements I have to indicate to you that we can actually take evidence in camera if you consider at any stage during your evidence that in the public interest certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request and resolve into a confidential in camera session. But I should warn you that Parliament may override that decision at any time and make your evidence public.

**Ms SUTTON:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Do you wish to make a statement before we have questions?

**Ms SUTTON:** Mr Chairman and members of the Committee, I fear I have nothing like the erudition exhibited by the last person who appeared before this Committee and I was asked, not really quite at the last moment, to appear to give a sort of public and community aspect to this inquiry. I was a high school teacher --

**CHAIR:** We have had the Mayor of Manly appear before us already.

**Ms SUTTON:** I am in Warringah. I was a high school teacher at schools in Frenchs Forest, Killarney Heights and Davidson for 22 years, so I have a very good knowledge of the local high school situation. I would like to say in passing too that even though there has been some discussion about the fact that the high school enrolments perhaps have declined in public schools, there has been an enormous influx of private or independent schools. These schools have sort of compensated for the enrolments falling in the public schools.

For example, just in Frenchs Forest or in my area we have the Oxford Falls Grammar School which now has a high school, we have the Christian Covenant School, that is just within walking distance practically of my house, and we have lots of other high schools that are starting in the area. Of course, just because a young person has a private school education, it does not mean that that person is going to go on and go to university. Many of those young people go straight to tech as my own sons did who were educated in the area.

Now, I am just going to go through a few things. One of the things about being a local councillor, in local government on a council, is it is pretty well 50/50. The people in the gallery, half of them hate you and half of them love you. So this guy gets up and gives a big speech, then the other guy gets up and gives a big speech, a big clap. So it is about half and half, unless you stack the gallery. So I am used to having half the people against me and half of them for me. So in this it is unique. Everybody to whom I have spoken, and I have spoken to countless people - I went to the dentist this morning - what a day, dentist in the morning and this in the afternoon but anyway, I do not know what I have done to deserve that - but the people at the dentist said, "What are you going to do this afternoon?" I said, "I am going to that Seaforth inquiry." Well, the bloke did not want to fill my tooth. He just went on and on. I went down to the shops, and I thought I will just ask a few other people, and everybody whom I asked is totally against the closure of this college. They call it a tragedy. The outcry there is immense.

When I was at the Forest High School for many years at Davidson and Killarney, it was in the very bad era of the drug problem. I know it is bad now, but we had a very, very bad time. We had lots of drop-out kids, kids from poorer families, kids from rich families and I do not know how many of those young people finally got themselves together and went to tech. That is what they did. Now a lot of them went to Seaforth because they had dropped out in, say, year 10 or 11 and they went to Seaforth to get their HSC. Not one or two, hundreds of them. That was the way to their becoming proper people. All of them did not do it, some of them went there and then they left.

I have to say from 1980 until 1989 I was on the board or the committee of Seaforth College of TAFE and Dr Metherell did not reappoint me. Anyway, I had a great time there. For nine years I was at Seaforth College of TAFE and came to know it and really admire it very, very much. I feel that the colleges sort of change people's lives even more than universities do, and I have three university degrees so I am not anti-university and my sons all now have university degrees having gone on from tech. Two of my sons left school in year 10 and then went on to tech and then went on to university, so I am actually a perfect example.

I also have something else to say about the disabled. I am very much involved in the International Year of the Older Person and in the disabled problems around here. For example, the Spastic Centre has been a big feature just up near my home and we have the Fisher Road School and we have the Warringah Special School and Patricia Forsythe would know that I have been very much involved in this sort of thing. Disabled access is one of the biggest problems we have here because there are so many people in this area who come here because of those particular places.

The disabled access at Seaforth is excellent. They are very wide corridors. They are very wide open-air sort of places. When I was there, one of my greatest achievements when I was on the college committee was to get the canteen going. We finally got the canteen going. It is accessible by the disabled people.

Things like this make a difference. When I first got to Seaforth tech you could not get a cup of tea. I do not know if anyone here remembers, but there used to be a little sort of kettle thing in the corner and you turned it on and it was incredibly dangerous, and we got a canteen going. It is great and it is accessible by disabled people.

That might not seem very important but if you have just done eight hours on the shop floor of a factory or in the mechanics place fixing cars and then you come to tech on a freezing cold night. It always seems to be freezing cold when you go to tech, I do not know if you have noticed that, it always seems to be cold - they can go and get a cup of tea and something to eat. We have made tremendous improvements. I have not been there as an active person for many years but all of these things have happened.

Now, the local businesses have used Seaforth tech and I notice David Barr tabled some letters and I have some letters too from local businesses and I will table them in case they are different ones. I have this letter here from Sue Holland whom I know because I have been very much involved with Brookvale TAFE and North Sydney TAFE and, you know, it says - you have got that letter, have you not - it says "not going to close until" - whenever you think the century is going to end, and I know there is some discussion about that - "an integral part of the institute into the 21 Century". So whatever she understands by that, it certainly should not be closing now.

(Letter from Sue Holland tabled)

The business about the urban consolidation was an excellent point brought up by David Barr and that is something I have been very heavily involved in with Warringah Council. In Warringah we do sort of think we are, you know, a cut above the rest and nice leafy suburbs and that sort of thing. Suddenly we are into urban consolidation. We have these large tracks of land being developed, not just in Warringah but in Pittwater and Manly - I suppose there are not many large tracks in Manly, a couple - and suddenly our population is increasing.

We have been told many times that if a heavy rail ever came here or a light rail, our population would certainly go up to 250 thousand, no worries whatsoever, and that we would have more or less high-rises. In Frenchs Forest and Warringah we sort of think-high rise is two or three storeys, maybe five. There were a couple of older buildings built many years ago, but the whole area would change. I do not know that we would want that.

But if it did, would it not be absurd that from Palm Beach, all of those places along there, Cottage Point, Terrey Hills all those places, you have to come right down to Brookvale to do the HSC? It is bad enough now, but in this large area, to take away a huge - not a huge - but a significant educational institution that serves the needs of so many people would be a disaster. It is about the most politically incorrect thing I have ever heard of. We have to help the older people who want to get back into the work force. We have to help the disabled, we have to help the women who are trying to get an education, and I was one of them. I brought up three kids pretty well on my own and I was in the position of having three small children doing a part-time degree and not having a car or driving licence and having to do everything by public transport. I invite any members who are really interested - I do not really invite you because you would not be able to do anything else - to try to get from here to North Sydney by public transport and then try to get back at night. Just forget it. It pretty well does not exist.

I had to do my part-time work with public transport and it was incredibly difficult, so I do speak from real experience. You sort of feel it is so unfair and you are up against it. Now many, many people have trouble getting to Seaforth. Of course they do, it is not all that easy to get to by public transport, but it will be a lot easier for a lot of people who are already there than to get to Brookvale.

The matter of the parking. I have been very much involved with Brookvale over a number of years and I agree that the parking is going to be a big problem and I have been intimately involved with the new construction at Warringah Mall. I have been very heavily involved. Every single thing they do comes to Warringah Council and parking is a massive problem and I think to say that there are problems with parking at Seaforth and not at Brookvale is simply inaccurate, although I do not have all the figures at my fingertips, of course, to support that.

One of the big problems that we have talked about is the Fine Arts. Now, Warringah and all of this area, Manly and Pittwater and so forth, is a very arty sort of place. I mean, when we have school functions and that, we get very famous musicians or very famous actors or very famous artists because there are lots of them around here. The place is full of them. Somebody gave me a statistic - but please do not ask me to back it up, of course I cannot - I think one in three people is involved in an artistic pursuit whereas 1 in 11 is probably involved in a sporting pursuit. We all know how many people go to the art gallery and how many go to sporting fixtures and so on. Notwithstanding, I am a great supporter of the local sporting group, especially the Manly Warringah Rugby League Football Club which no longer exists. We will not get on to that.

But you would not want to put yourself in that category of getting rid of a wonderful institution that everyone loves. I have not heard one person say, "Thank goodness for that. They are getting rid of Seaforth tech at last". Not one person has said that to me, and I know a lot of people. It is just a public tragedy as far as people are concerned and a terrible shock. Especially as we were told that it was not going to happen. I would have thought when I was on the committee, had it even been remotely suggested that this was going to happen we would have been given three or four years' notice, you know. I know Sue Holland, she seems to be a nice woman. I actually know Sivakumar very well. I am very surprised at Siva for not being more supportive of the people who have supported him, because he started off at Seaforth college. He was here many years ago; it must have been about ten years ago I suppose, and we thought he did a tremendous job. It seems that he is in some way - well, I will not say responsible for - but not supportive of the people who want to keep Seaforth TAFE the way it is.

The business about the Fine Arts, it is just going to be tragic. As it is, they display their art. Artists need to be seen - they are a bit like politicians, they need to be seen and heard and show off, I am here, that sort of thing - and if they cannot show their stuff, well, you know, what is the use of it? Just put it out the back. They have this terrific system at Seaforth at the moment of showing their artistic wares and so on, showing their pictures and sculptures, and it is a real tradition and that is going to go out the door.

The science staff is in despair because they just do not know how they are going to be able to teach science adequately in a normal classroom. I do not think it is possible. I mean, where is the clever country going? Where are our artists going? Keeping colleges like Seaforth, if there is another one like it, is the way we are going to be the clever country and the politically correct country. If we are going against all of these people whom we are supposed to help, a very good way to do it would be to axe Seaforth TAFE, and a very good way not to do it would be to keep it. I haven't got all those figures David Barr has got.

**CHAIR:** We will make good use of those figures. Any questions?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Councillor Sutton, one of the issues raised has been parking at Warringah in the area around the TAFE and in the mall itself. How often, you may not have the precise figures, how often would Warringah Mall's parking be full.

**Ms SUTTON:** Often. I have had discussions with people developing it. We had the big opening of stage 3 the other night and parking at Warringah Mall is at a premium. You know they are going to bring in paid parking, they say. One of the problems, there is no question about this, is that commuters park there and the TAFE people. I have parked there when I have gone to Brookvale TAFE and I have been at Brookvale TAFE many years.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** When you looked at the development application for the expansion of Warringah Mall put to the council, was parking an issue raised in the area?

**Ms SUTTON:** Yes, parking was raised a lot and we put very stringent conditions on the people who are developing it but they were not based on Brookvale TAFE. They were based on the number of people going to the mall. They did not bring Brookvale TAFE in.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** What were the conditions?

**Ms SUTTON:** No, they would be the normal conditions, per square metres of shopping space.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Would we be able to get that from the council?

**Ms SUTTON:** I might have a summary in my notes. I can get them for you easily. It would be an immense thing, it would be quite an extensive document.

**CHAIR:** Dr Wong?

**Mr WONG:** What is the difficulty in the public transport, or for that matter private transport, coming to Seaforth or going to Brookvale?

**Ms SUTTON:** I do not use the public transport system I am pleased to say, I did for many years. If I were going to Brookvale TAFE I suppose, I do not know how I would get the bus down there. Certainly the bus is the only thing you can get. The point about it is that people who do this now are saying that it would present difficulties to them. It is not just going to Brookvale because some of them can not go to Brookvale. Going to Seaforth and going from Brookvale is one thing, but some of them have to go to Meadowbank or North Sydney. Going to North Sydney, I think, you go to Neutral Bay and then you get a bus from there. If you go to Meadowbank, well, who knows, and to go to Hornsby is equally difficult.

I had to go to Hornsby as part of my things years ago and it was very very difficult. If everything from Seaforth were going to be transformed into perfect conditions at Brookvale, we would not be as upset as we are. If everything from Seaforth were going to be transferred to Brookvale, which it is not, it would not be as bad as this. What is happening is that it is not available at Brookvale, a lot of the HSC things are not available.

**CHAIR:** They are dismantling Seaforth.

**Ms SUTTON:** If they changed it over there that would be fine. We are not talking about the difficulty of getting to Seaforth versus Brookvale, it is Seaforth versus Meadowbank, North Sydney or wherever.

**CHAIR:** The departmental people today argued, we visited Brookvale today and Seaforth, that the accommodation for cars at Brookvale, on the site with the parking at the top -

**Ms SUTTON:** I know it well.

**CHAIR:** - is supposed to cater for 9,000 students and there are only 6,000 students. Do you have an explanation?

**Ms SUTTON:** The explanation I would have is those figures are wrong. I go there as an official guest and can not park.

**CHAIR:** Top section.

**Ms SUTTON:** I have reversed that top section many times hitting lots of people on the way through. They reckon there are 9,000 spots.

**CHAIR:** Mathematically it is enough for an institution of 9,000 students, so they claim.

**Ms SUTTON:** I always give the statistic that if my one year old granddaughter and I were trapped in a house there would be two people with an average age of 31, except she is one and I am 62. I have done statistics and I reckon you can make them add up, you could have five in a car or some go by bus. I think that statistic is rubbery to say the least.

**CHAIR:** Parking in the mall is by necessity, not by convenience.

**Ms SUTTON:** Absolutely. Have you actually been there on a normal day and tried to park? There is not anywhere to park.

**Mr WONG:** Is it true that parking is much worse at night?

**Ms SUTTON:** I do not know. I do not know. Most of the things I go to there - I have done some at night - I do not know the answer to that question but parking is a real problem at Brookvale for people who park in the mall.

**CHAIR:** Brookvale campus, not the mall.

**Ms SUTTON:** Brookvale campus and the mall, it is a very big problem. I spend a lot of my life talking about parking and people say there is no parking at Forestville shops, there is no parking at that shop. No matter how much parking you put there, people will fill it up but it is wrong to say I think there are no problems with Brookvale. To say that they cater for 9,000 people I think is fanciful.

**Mr WONG:** This morning when the committee went to Brookvale TAFE there were a

few parking spaces. I have been told because that is a final week, so many student do not turn up, finished, do not turn up today, would that be correct?

**Ms SUTTON:** Absolutely. We are involved in these parking things all the time. What you do is if there is development going in your street and you do not want to go in because it will cause parking problems, you get your four-wheel drives and you park them either side of the street. It is all arranged and we know that is true. They probably could not organise anything like that and they would be too honest, but it depends, when you go there the next day and there are no cars. If you go to an institution at this time of the year, you would have got plenty of parks at the schools yesterday, would you not? It is not a fair comparison. Try going there the week before the exams or in March or something like that and you will find it totally different.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I went for a drive along Old Pittwater Road to see what parking was like along there. There was not any.

**Ms SUTTON:** No.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It was full. It is obviously zoned for commercial, light industrial.

**Ms SUTTON:** That is right.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Are all of those small firms located in there required to have off-street parking?

**Ms SUTTON:** Absolutely. They are required to have a lot of off-street parking. I got my sandwich boards made for the last election at one of those little places. They are all jammed altogether, so I went to the place next door which was an industrial place and parked there. They have a certain amount of parking for each commercial and industrial place and we try to do it as fairly as we can. You can not cater for some times when the demand is bigger than others.

You know yourself if you take your car down to get fixed and you try to get into the smash repairers, if ever that happens to you, there is often nowhere to park except on the street, because although the council has allocated a certain amount of spots things happened differently and it depends on the time of day and time of year.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** The on-street parking that is there on Pittwater Road, there are no spaces this morning, is that an all day parking area or is that restricted?

**Ms SUTTON:** I think it is all day, I do not think it is restricted and I do not think you pay for it. Must get on to that.

**CHAIR:** Just to clarify something you said earlier about the expansion of population, is there multipurpose density in your council area, residential areas?

**Ms SUTTON:** In Warringah we have fought valiantly against the urban consolidation, but we do have some areas in the Dee Why and Harbord areas where there are what are called flat areas, and there were some buildings down in Collaroy many years ago which could be described roughly as high rise, and there have been a few developments approved in the Dee

Why area that are four or five storeys, but it is certainly not an area where you would have for example at Wollstonecraft or Artarmon where around the station there are lots of what you would call medium-rise buildings. We have not got an area like that. I would say that we do not really want one.

**CHAIR:** With those developments apparently there is one at Warriewood?

**Ms SUTTON:** That is in Pittwater.

**CHAIR:** 1,500 lots.

**Ms SUTTON:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** The population is not going to decrease?

**Ms SUTTON:** No, the population of Warringah has not increased a lot, but that is in the Pittwater area and that will make a tremendous difference to the traffic on Mona Vale Road. Those people have been waiting to develop those lots a long time. They have been waiting up to 50 years to develop.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** In terms of the council's response on urban consolidation, the requirements set by the Government, I do not think Warringah's is finalised?

**Ms SUTTON:** No, it is not.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Amongst the proposals for medium density requirements set by the Government is there any intention to increase the density in the Brookvale region.

**Ms SUTTON:** Yes, there has been quite a bit in the Brookvale region. A lot of Brookvale is light industrial and semi industrial and so on. There have been applications in there but not high rise.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** An increased density.

**Ms SUTTON:** An increased density, yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for appearing before the Committee. We appreciate your help.

**Ms SUTTON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** We now have a student from Seaforth TAFE, Tanya Lahey. Thank you for appearing before the Committee.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**TANYA MARELLE LAHEY**, student at Seaforth TAFE, 19 Brighton Street, Harbord, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Did you receive a summons issued under my hand in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Evidence Act, 1901?

**Ms LAHEY:** I did.

**CHAIR:** Are you conversant with the Terms of Reference of this inquiry? We are investigating the closure of Seaforth TAFE and so on?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Under the rules of these hearings, if you should consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request and resolve into confidential session. But I should warn you that the Parliament may override that decision at any time and make your evidence public.

Would you like to say a few words to us before we ask you questions?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes, I would. I have so much to say that I thought I would just write it on one page. TAFE is an institution orientated towards the community. One of the functions of education is imparting self-esteem and a feeling that one as personal agency, that one can communicate and contribute sensibly to the community. TAFE equips people with skills and beliefs at a time when electronic media is corroding many of the instincts of self reliance, imagination and self scrutiny.

Seaforth TAFE and northern beaches have been made victims of over-centralisation, a privileging of some over others. We hear a lot about community values, yet to close Seaforth TAFE without warning or real justifications is treating community as manipulable. In turn, it treats the individual as an unreal abstraction.

I am a disabled fine arts student at Seaforth TAFE. Since August 19 this whole issue has not only strengthened the fact that I am worth saving but that I see myself as a true artist. I emphasise the word true because I am speaking as an individual. However, education is the first step to validate someone as a true artist in society. Art salvages something that would otherwise have gone unnoticed or forgotten. It is about resistance. It is about ownership of a sensibility.

I have never before been put in a position where I have had to preach my disability. However, there has been no choice in regards to this matter. I have been fighting for who I am, what I believe in and what the ramifications of Seaforth's closure on me and my family's future, particularly in regards to my disability.

It was stated in regards to Seaforth TAFE, by Premier Bob Carr, on October 2 on radio 2GB, "No one will be missing out", with reference to providing human needs, not sacrificing that, expanding that. Steve Buckley, on 4 September on radio 2GB said, "I can assure Tanya that we will be able to provide a satisfactory arrangement to continue her studies". I wrote to both of them. My situation was not a simple case. Bob passed it on to John Aquilina, to Bob Puffet.

Steve passed it on to Kevin Harris, who passed it on to Brian Syms, to Peter Wilde, Tony Whittingham, to Margarete Heys, Laurie Walkley and to someone called Rick. Somewhere, Siva Kumar came into it. Somehow the responsibility now appears to lie with Matthew Tome, Greg Stretton and Karen Healey, those at the base of the ladder.

It has been ridiculous, what me and my family have been through, and are still being put through to continue my studies. It appears that I am not the only one suffering. These statements are still being addressed by the ever changing levels of the Department of Education. So far to no avail.

The answer is simple, and no different from what I have been saying since August 19, save Seaforth TAFE. And I just wanted to say that beforehand.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for making such a concise and meaningful statement. We appreciate that. That will now be in the record of the Committee's minutes. Any questions?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Tanya, you have had a look at the Brookvale site. What would it mean for you to have to be a student at Brookvale?

**Ms LAHEY:** I can not.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** You could not?

**Ms LAHEY:** No. It is on a hill, it is on a slope, I can not. Karen Healey --

**CHAIR:** Is anyone from the department - you have been writing to people - said come and we will show you around?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes, I was given a tour of Brookvale TAFE and I requested Karen Healey, she is the disabilities administrator at Brookvale TAFE, to write a letter in regards to access for me at Brookvale TAFE and it is not possible, I can not go there.

**CHAIR:** She is advising it is not possible?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes. She has written, I do not know --

**CHAIR:** Can we have a copy of the letter? Is that the only copy you have?

**Ms LAHEY:** No.

**CHAIR:** We keep that in reference. That is very helpful for us to have that, thank you.

**Ms LAHEY:** She has written about the access from each building that I have to do whatever subject. I had to look at the place to know I just cannot go there. I am not in a wheelchair all the time. I am only in a wheelchair when I am very unwell. When I am well I can not walk on slopes or hills. If I walk on a slope or a hill it means I come out of remission and I become unwell which means I would be in a wheelchair if I want to go anywhere. Normally I do not go anywhere, I stay home, I am in extreme pain. They are saying I have to be in a

wheelchair and they will get someone to push me around or they will get a car to take me from one building to the next. I can not even go to the canteen or the library and I am not going to put myself through that and I am not going to make myself be in a wheelchair when I do not have to be in a wheelchair, other than the fact I can not be in a wheelchair.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** The options being put to you in relation to Brookvale would be to provide a support staff member to assist you?

**Ms LAHEY:** It has been talked about. The last thing I have is that official letter written on paper by those people.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I am going to try to understand how the unit costs are going to be cheaper.

**Ms LAHEY:** They have spoken about having someone who will push me around in a wheelchair from classroom to classroom if need be and to the canteen and library and they have spoken - however Karen Healey has written that that is not possible. It is unsafe to have a wheelchair being pushed particularly between blocks. It is all written there.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** We saw it this morning. Are you aware of any other students being given similar advice who are currently at Seaforth?

**Ms LAHEY:** No. I am the only one they have seen because I took the matter to HEREOC.

**CHAIR:** How do you get to Seaforth at the moment?

**Ms LAHEY:** Well, week by week I have to organise someone to get me there and back again and it usually is either a student, another student, or my father-in-law. He is not actually someone to ask, I do not like asking him, he is quite old now.

**CHAIR:** Once you get there you can move around?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes, fine, it is flat, level. I have never had to use a wheelchair on Seaforth premises because I get dropped off outside the lift, I can catch the lift wherever I want to go. If it is all flat, I can hold on to things. It is catered to my situation. I have used a wheelchair once when we had a rally out the front and it was on a hill.

I have used a wheelchair for excursions for one particular subject and that was because we had to go to excursions in the city and I did not know the places, so it was to be safe and it was only once every two to three weeks. It was not like a regular thing, so I forced myself to go in a wheelchair so I could be there. Even though I did not have to, I could have researched the subject, but I very much enjoyed the lectures from the teacher. I did not want to miss out on it. I did miss a couple because I could not get there.

I do not need to be in a wheelchair and the only reason why people here today have seen me in a wheelchair is because I have had to fight for myself. Normally I would have been home recovering and making myself better. I would not normally be out.

**CHAIR:** I do not want to embarrass you. You do not have to answer this question, but it may help people who hear this evidence to know what your disability is.

**Ms LAHEY:** It is called psoriatic arthritis. It is very unpredictable. It does decide to come and go when it pleases. However there are things that I can do to manage it, so that it is less likely to come back when I am well. Then again, there are other times I have no idea why it has come back. You have all sorts of factors. Stress and diet and the whole bit. Basically, I have to be aware of everything I do physically and I am always very careful because I have two children so it is important. It is not just important for me to be well, but for my family.

**CHAIR:** So the controversy over Seaforth in no way assisted your health. It has probably harmed it.

**Ms LAHEY:** It has made me very unwell. In fact, I have been very unwell all year and I think the reason is because of the way that the subjects were structured I was only able to do a theory subject and none of the practical subjects, and I rely on the practical subjects to actually manage my disability. There are lots of things I cannot do and I am supposed to limit what I do, but the art actually helps because I also need to move. I have to daily go through a range of movements and with the theory subject, I was basically like this, sitting in a chair at a desk which is not good because I seize up and go back out of remission. So I have to sort of wriggle around a lot and try to remember, so that my body does not suffer from it.

I think because I have not done anything practical, this year has been my worst year physically. I was already unwell when this happened. The very day I found out about Seaforth closing was the day I had an appointment to ask for exemptions from the rest of the subjects in my first year because I was so unwell. I just could not continue first year because they kept adding subjects on every year. So the first year of the diploma just got longer and longer and I just wanted to get back into my practical subjects for my health and my wellbeing.

**CHAIR:** Which subjects are they?

**Ms LAHEY:** All the arty subjects like drawing, painting, photography and print making, all the subjects that you are not sitting at a desk.

**Mr WONG:** How many years is this course that you are doing? How many years altogether does it take?

**Ms LAHEY:** I think it has all changed now but while I have been at Seaforth it is normally a two year full-time course.

**Mr WONG:** Have you complained about your treatment to the Anti Discrimination Board?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** What did they say?

**Ms LAHEY:** I have been through the whole procedure. I have made two - I have put two - I do not know all the legal terms - something like orders for interim determination. The first was to stop the closure of Seaforth TAFE. The second was to stop the work being done at Brookvale until things were dealt with properly because no-one who was in the right position had actually been consulted before any of this went ahead. At the time I put forth those two things I was not aware of the premises at Brookvale. I had been told it was on a slope but I just had no idea. They would have to move mountains for me to be able to get there.

I lost the "Save Seaforth TAFE" because of three reasons. Those three reasons were --

**Mr WONG:** Do you mind tabling the reply from them to the Committee, or would you prefer to explain?

**Ms LAHEY:** What happened was I complained and the discrimination - I am not a legal person, I am a student. What happened was it was arranged for me. I complained about Steve Buckley's comment about providing me personally with a satisfactory result for me to be able to continue my studies because nobody approached me. I wrote to Steve Buckley twice. I wrote to Bob Carr twice saying, "Here I am. Approach me. You need to speak to me to find out what I need to continue my studies in relation to this whole thing". If they had answered me, maybe things would have been different. They would have known who I was, what I needed and things would have been dealt with properly and maybe, yes, I could have somehow continued. But they just would not reply or take note.

After I sent the application in and they received word from HEREOC they had to reply and they provided an appointment for me to meet with TAFE management.

**CHAIR:** Have you had official correspondence from the Anti Discrimination Board?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** That is a whole file?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes, there is more at home. This is the most of it. I might just take you through. First of all, I sent a letter of disability discrimination --

**CHAIR:** Perhaps rather than taking your whole file, you may have matters of privacy in that, before you leave today you could give us copies of one or more of the letters replying to you from those bodies. Do you mean that is for us or that is for your own information?

**Ms LAHEY:** This is from the Anti Discrimination. What happened was they kept postponing the appointment, then they changed who was meant to see me. I mentioned those matters in my opening statement. The arguments they had were lies, from the way - they were lies.

There were three things that I had to provide as evidence. I was not able to provide those things because I had to rely on the Department of Education to give me that evidence to be able to provide it. The day that I found out that I lost because I did not provide sufficient evidence, the day after those people sent me the evidence that I needed, the day after.

I was then told that I could go ahead with stopping the work that is being done at Brookvale, however I have now seen Brookvale campus and I cannot go there no matter what anyway. They are going to great extents to pretend to be arranging things so that I can. The fact is, it is on a hill, I cannot go.

**CHAIR:** It is the most hilly campus of any building in Australia.

**Ms LAHEY:** I saw it and I just went, "What!" I could not believe it. I really could not believe it. I could not believe it.

**Mr WONG:** Have you written to the Anti Discrimination Board objecting that they did not give you time to reply? Do you have any further correspondence with them?

**Ms LAHEY:** I did not actually expect it to finish the day it did. I thought I still had - I was waiting for these letters. One was from the Department of Education, one was from the disabilities section of the Department of Education, and the one other thing that I needed was evidence that I could not walk up a hill or a slope. Now, if I cannot do it, I cannot show them that I cannot do it. They were the three things.

**CHAIR:** During the break in a moment, if we could get copies of those letters, your correspondence and their replies, and even the --

**Ms LAHEY:** I have actually photocopied a fair bit for you to have, but there may be other things. I am not sure really what you want.

**CHAIR:** Whatever you hand us we can photocopy them and hand them back to you. I do not want to interfere with what you are actually doing. You may need that correspondence for your own purposes.

**Ms LAHEY:** I would like to keep the originals of everything.

**CHAIR:** We can photocopy them ourselves.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Tanya, beyond Seaforth TAFE is there any other option for you to complete the sort of course you are doing, if not exactly the same? Is there any other way you can get the qualifications you are seeking?

**Ms LAHEY:** No. What I need is my diploma. That is what I need. I know that through my life up until now, I need my diploma. Once I have my diploma I feel that I can move on, I can continue. It is very important for me to get my diploma.

**CHAIR:** Just so it gives us authority to use your letters, you have to ask me can you table those letters now.

**Ms LAHEY:** Can I table those letters now?

**CHAIR:** Yes, you can.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** So moved.

**CHAIR:** The Committee approves the movement of the table of letters. Just pull one letter out for the moment.

(Letters from the Department of Education)

**Ms LAHEY:** I can provide you - that was the one from the disabilities section, is that what you are referring to?

**CHAIR:** Just one for now and the clerk can check if there are any other letters that are important and we should have copies of them.

I note in the letter you gave to us earlier that Karen Healey, who is the consultant for students with a physical disability at TAFE, says:

"In my view, the provision of powered wheelchairs or an attended carer with a manual wheelchair user would pose a risk to safety."

**Ms LAHEY:** That is right.

**CHAIR:** Even some suggestions that we can assist you, she admits that actually it is so steep that a person could lose control of the wheelchair when they are pushing you.

**Ms LAHEY:** My leg is well enough today not to have the walking stick. It will probably take me about three more years to complete the diploma. I do not want to be made to be in a wheelchair every time I go to Brookvale - even though it is supposed to be unsafe - to be made to be in a wheelchair when I do not have to. One of the things that means so much to me when I go to college is I can be normal. I can feel like I am everybody else and that I do not look any different and so that I can be normal and I can do what I love to do and learn and be with everybody else.

**CHAIR:** She is admitting it is actually dangerous for you to be in a wheelchair.

**Ms LAHEY:** That is right, and that is one of the letters that I received the day after I lost the case because I did not have evidence about whether I can or not attend Brookvale TAFE.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned earlier you were speaking on behalf of yourself.

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** We know there are other students with disabilities. Has the group got together or have they not had the opportunity yet?

**Ms LAHEY:** Oh, yes.

**CHAIR:** In a way you are representing them, too. We will not be hearing from any other

students.

**Ms LAHEY:** I know I am. It is difficult because everybody is an individual and this is one of the things that we are trying to put across. I do not like to speak for particular people other than myself.

**CHAIR:** But those students, many of them would be as distressed as you are by what is happening?

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** And some of those, their health is suffering as well because of the stress?

**Ms LAHEY:** Not just health, family. Our families. My family have not had me since August 12th. I have two small children and, you know, a lot of us, a large amount of particularly fine arts students are women with children.

I am aware that this goes to the Ministers of Parliament, is that right, once it is all put together?

**CHAIR:** What we do is we prepare a report for Parliament and we make recommendations to the Parliament as to what should be done. Parliament has asked us to conduct this investigation and we report back to Parliament. We do not report back to the Minister, but the Minister will obviously be aware of the report. He will get a copy of the report.

**Ms LAHEY:** Because I did have a gift for Bob Carr. I just wanted him and John Aquilina please, please, take this student folder home for one night each and look at it before the final decision is made. This is called the Student Committee Folder and that is all I am asking from all the students from Seaforth TAFE is to take this home and look at it before they make the decision.

There is one thing that I would like to say just for myself --

**CHAIR:** You ask us to take that folder and - we can only ask Mr Carr and Mr Aquilina to look at it.

**Ms LAHEY:** I know.

**CHAIR:** We cannot order them.

**Ms LAHEY:** I am asking you to ask.

**CHAIR:** I think they would be very foolish if they ignored it. If you want to move that we accept that folder and we will request Mr Carr and Mr Aquilina to do what you said, take it and read it for at least one night. We can put that in our report that a student has requested that of us and we support that recommendation.

**Ms LAHEY:** Okay. From me, myself, as one of the students, I would like to make a

request from me personally to Bob Carr and John Aquilina. If the final decision is to close Seaforth TAFE, I know that it will be because of budget. Now, if that happens I can hold out myself to find out what the final decision is going to be. That is my next thing that I can see ahead of me is to wait for that decision. If the decision is to close Seaforth, I personally need something to be able to see beyond finding out what that decision is. I would like to make a request for Bob Carr and John Aquilina to just tell me that they are sorry and that a budget is a budget, and I would like to be able to read an essay next to a sculpture that I made. The sculpture has stood for me physically when I have been too unwell during this whole thing. It has been there for me at certain places. It was representing the students of Seaforth TAFE and one of the things I asked was for the sign to be removed that says "Save Seaforth TAFE" at the end of the result and I would like to be able to take that sign off myself after the decision has been made, and I would like to read my essay. I have included the essay in that folder so that they can read the essay beforehand, and I would like to do it in the Fountain Court at Old Parliament House.

This is my request because I need something so that I can see that I have got a future, because if that is the decision --

**CHAIR:** We will certainly include that. It is in your evidence now, your request. If we are able to keep Seaforth TAFE alive, if we recommend that it stay open, at least to allow the students who have enrolled to complete their courses, hopefully it might continue after that, how long would you need the college to stay open at Seaforth for you personally to finish your course?

**Ms LAHEY:** My guess would be three years. However, it depends on my health.

**CHAIR:** Minimum of three years.

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes. I would say four at the very most, I hope. Obviously I want to do it in as fast a time as possible.

**CHAIR:** We think that it is an important factor that students who have enrolled in good faith, believing that Seaforth TAFE was going to continue, have a justified right to conclude their courses at a particular college.

**Ms LAHEY:** Are you asking whether I might not finish?

**CHAIR:** No, we are just saying as to what would be a minimum period, if we were recommending the Government delay any closure, and hopefully they may review the whole thing in that time --

**Ms LAHEY:** It would be a good idea to put four years, just in case.

**CHAIR:** That would cover most of the students that have just started.

**Ms LAHEY:** Yes. Three is an exhibition that is opening tonight. I will not be able to go myself. However, there are invitations for everyone here.

*Inquiry into the proposed closure of Seaforth TAFE*

**CHAIR:** That is what the students have been arranging. We were at Seaforth today and they said they were setting up an exhibition down at Manly.

**Ms LAHEY:** It will be too much for me, and I am hoping that my sculpture will be there instead of me, I am not sure how it is going to get there, but this is enough for me today. I have to go home and take care of myself.

**CHAIR:** We really do appreciate you making the effort to come in and we appreciate you sharing with us from your heart what you feel. A true artist.

**Ms LAHEY:** Thank you for listening.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before the Committee, I appreciate your cooperation.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**LOLITA JEAN BARRATT**, NSW Teachers Federation, TAFE Organiser, 6 Marshall Avenue, Warrawee, sworn and examined:

**PENELOPE ANNE CAROSI**, TAFE organiser with the New South Wales Teachers Federation, 99 Terry Street, Tempe, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Did you receive a summons issued under my hand in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Evidence Act, 1901?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes, I did.

**CHAIR:** Are you conversant with the Terms of Reference of this inquiry?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Under the rules of these hearings, if you should consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request and resolve into confidential session. But I should warn you that the Parliament may override that decision at any time and make your evidence public.

**CHAIR:** Did you receive a summons issued under my hand in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Evidence Act, 1901?

**Ms CAROSI:** I did.

**CHAIR:** Are you conversant with the Terms of Reference of this inquiry?

**Ms CAROSI:** I am.

**CHAIR:** Under the rules of these hearings, if you should consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the Committee would be willing to accede to your request and resolve into confidential session. But I should warn you that the Parliament may override that decision at any time and make your evidence public.

Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Ms BARRETT:** Yes. On behalf of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, I will speak to the federation submission and expand on some of the issues in that submission. My colleague, Penny Carosi will speak to the funding issues contained in the submission from the Department of Education and Training.

Before I start, I wish to table a letter to the Committee. The letter is seeking the indulgence of the Committee to provide formal written response to the hundred page submission from the Department of Education and Training and this response will be provided to the Committee by 5 p.m. Monday 22 November. I have a letter here from the New South Wales General Secretary of the Teachers Federation.

**CHAIR:** Can we have a motion to table that?

(Letter from the New South Wales General Secretary of the Teachers Federation tabled)

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Yes. So moved. 22 November at 5 p.m. is getting ominous.

**CHAIR:** Is that a practical time?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Not much we can do about it.

**CHAIR:** Can we move a motion for their request?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

**Ms BARRATT:** They will be working all weekend now. I would like to make an opening statement about the process of the decision to the proposed closure of Seaforth TAFE. This process has been neither fair or open or transparent. Prior to the announcement there was no consultation with either the staff, students or the community of Seaforth. Nor has there been any consultation with any other college affected by this decision, that is including Brookvale, Meadowbank and Hornsby. There has been no consultation, I can tell you, whatsoever. It is in these colleges that staff, students and the courses would be accommodated.

There seems to be no discussion or consultation taking place or having taken place on the College Institute Council or the Institute Consultative Committee. These are committees and council that the TAFE commission have in each institute where any proposals that are up for discussion and recommendations can be made.

**CHAIR:** In other words you are suggesting that there has been a process that has been followed up to now except for this?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes. Where there are any developments of any sort the TAFE council, as Julie Sutton was on the council of the Seaforth college years ago, they would meet, discuss issues arising in the college or institute, it should have been discussed well before any decision was made. It appears to us the decision was made by Mr Siva Kumar, the director, the acting director of the institute.

The letter I would like to table is from one of the members of the institute council and also a member of the Northern Sydney Institute Consultative Committee. In this letter his reference is that the date of the last northern Sydney council meeting was Tuesday 3 August, that was before the decision was made and the date of the Northern Sydney Institute Consultative Committee was Thursday 5 August 1999. He has indicated to us that there has been no discussion about this proposed decision on any of these councils or the committee. I would like to table that. And there has been no discussion since. They have not met. Basically they have not met.

**CHAIR:** Will you move we table the document?

(Letter from a member of the Northern Sydney Institute Consultative Committee tabled)

**Ms FORSYTHE:** So moved.

**Ms BARRATT:** It is appalling the way teachers and the community found out about the decision. That was through the Teachers Federation, through myself basically and through the local newspaper, the Manly Daily. I was actually asked to keep the information confidential and I told the deputy director that was something I could not do.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** What date was that?

**Ms BARRATT:** I can look it up for you before the end of today.

**CHAIR:** You said you were not to make it public.

**Ms BARRATT:** He asked the PSA representative and myself, the human resources manager. We were at a meeting to do the redundancy and budget cuts, as part of the budget cuts. They were proposing to close Seaforth college and he wanted us to keep that confidential.

**CHAIR:** What date roughly?

**Ms BARRATT:** It was approximately, the decision, I think was made public I think 16 August and this was about 14 or 15 August because there was no way that I could keep that information confidential.

**CHAIR:** That would have been the first --

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes, Wednesday 18 August.

**CHAIR:** That is the first time.

**Ms BARRATT:** Wednesday 18 August is when the human resource manager rang me up with the institute director asking her to formally inform the federation. This was by phone call I might add to me. He said he was going to have a meeting the next day at Brookvale to inform the staff of the proposed closure of Seaforth college. Now, that was on Wednesday and I believe the meeting I went to was probably Monday or Tuesday before that Wednesday. As soon as they notified me over the phone, I then contacted the teachers at Seaforth.

**CHAIR:** The meeting you were going to was not about Seaforth. That was about the big issue?

**Ms BARRATT:** About budget cuts and the big issue of having to save \$4 million within the institute and this was part of what they were going to do to save part of that \$4 million.

Since hearing of that decision we have written to the Minister of Education, once on 31 August and a follow-up letter on 23 September. Like a lot of correspondence from the Teachers

Federation we have, to this day, no response from that correspondence. We had two meetings with the assistant director, Bob Puffett, and they were very unproductive and a waste of time, to be frank.

We asked Mr Puffett a number of times to provide documentation on the costings and savings that would have to be made and provide documentation on the justification to the Minister for Ministerial approval to close Seaforth campus. The documentation was never provided.

We believe there surely must be documents from the northern Sydney institute to the Department of Education and Training and to the Minister, and there must be responses if a decision has been made. If no documents exist, what does that say for the running of a Government department? Seaforth TAFE is a public asset and the public have a right to know what is happening and how Government makes decisions.

The federation is suggesting that the Committee should interview the people who are involved in making this decision, such as Mr Siva Kumar and Bob Puffett and the Minister. I have to comment that I do not believe there is one person from TAFE in this room today. I might be wrong, I do not believe there is one person in this room to hear this evidence.

The Committee, I believe, should also insist that all documents must be provided to the inquiry. It is ludicrous to think that a decision as serious as this is nowhere in writing. No one has seen any official documentation. The staff have received nothing. The students had a letter last week, or the week before, about what Brookvale would provide and that was all. There has not been any official documentation about the closure of the Seaforth college. It has all been verbal.

The decision itself has been made with undue haste. It was only this time last year when Mr Siva Kumar, who was standing as deputy director at northern Sydney institute, was quoted in the Manly Daily saying that there was no proposal for the closure of Seaforth. He also said if the Government is planning to sell off Seaforth, it would have to be three to five years in the planning so we could make alternative plans to accommodate students.

Last year, as David Barr has mentioned, they did close up the annex at Balgowlah boys high, that started the rumours that Seaforth was going to be closed. We had meetings with Susan Holland, the director of the institute, and they categorically denied that there was going to be any closure of Seaforth college. That is documented in our submission; the e-mail that Susan Holland sent to staff and also what Siva Kumar has said to the Manly Daily.

As David Barr did mention, it takes two years to close a Government school. There is consultation with the stakeholders involved and it is a whole process. Really the three to five year process should be starting now if that is the case. Should be starting now. So, we question the secrecy of this decision.

The other relevant factor that we wish to bring to the Committee's attention is that there has been a northern beaches review committee formed to look at the future of secondary education on the northern beaches. A consultative committee has been set up to facilitate the discussions and the input from teachers, parents, students and the community.

In the community discussion papers it identifies factors impacting on services in the northern beaches district and this includes transport and access issues. For example, travel time to tertiary providers and also one of the principal reasons for change in the secondary education in the district expressed in this discussion document is to provide the cancelling of tertiary providers, particularly TAFE and university.

Discussions are still going on around these issues, so it just seems a ludicrous decision that Seaforth TAFE, the decision to close Seaforth TAFE, pre-empts any recommendations from that Committee. You wonder if the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, quite frankly.

**CHAIR:** You could have recommended an upgrading of Seaforth in that inquiry.

**Ms BARRATT:** That is right. I have got the paper here if you do wish it. I will not table it unless you want it.

**Mr WONG:** Yes, I do.

**Ms BARRATT:** I would like to table that.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** That is a review paper?

**Ms BARRATT:** From the consultative paper.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Is that a discussion paper? That is not the final report?

**Ms BARRATT:** No, it is not, it is a discussion paper. As far as I am aware, there is no final paper at the moment.

(Community discussion papers tabled)

**CHAIR:** Table the document. Just to get that quote right, when you were at that early original meeting, what was the actual sentence you used, "to save 4 million in the institute", were they the words that were used, "by closing Seaforth"?

**Ms BARRATT:** No. It was an overall statement that by closing Seaforth they will save part of the \$4 million that they have to find.

**CHAIR:** Part of the \$4 million.

**Ms BARRATT:** It was not stipulated how much they would save by Seaforth. It was a general broad sort of context.

**CHAIR:** The North Sydney institute in order to save \$4 million, that is a cut in the budget.

**Ms BARRATT:** Each institute, arising from the state budget, each institute has to find a certain amount of dollar cuts. Northern Sydney institute has to find \$4 million to fund those cuts. So, there is a voluntary redundancy program taking place. They are looking at all the other ways, this is in every institute, 11 institutes. They are looking at ways of how they can save

money, efficiencies. There are 630 voluntary redundancies to go from the State. It is just outrageous.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Can I interrupt at this point and ask that prior to the announcement of the closure, had any staff at Seaforth received letters of redundancy?

**Ms BARRATT:** No.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Have they since then?

**Ms BARRATT:** There would be probably sections that have. I know at Brookvale they have. It is targeted sections.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I am aware of the process. I question the Minister at estimates; prior to the announcement of the closure no one at Seaforth had been targeted for redundancy?

**Ms BARRATT:** No, that all came later in the process.

Declining enrolments is a reason given to close Seaforth. We believe the only valid enrolment comparison is between 1998 and 1999 because to examine earlier figures is completely misleading. Before 1998 Balgowlah Boys High was used as an annex. I think David actually has mentioned this to you. You hear the same things a lot, I think. Part of the previous rationalisation was to transfer students from the annex to Brookvale and that was the management section that went down there and they took the student numbers with them, whereas previously before that they would be counted in the Seaforth enrolment figures. But, in fact, the enrolments have increased by 5.3 per cent since 1998 and they were 1697 and in 1999 they were 1787 and that is in the institute's own data.

The other reason given to close Seaforth is the age and condition of the building. This has been disputed by Mr Don Moller, who I believe is going to follow on from us. He has recently inspected the buildings and described them as being in good condition and I know that he is giving a submission to this inquiry.

The other thing about parking; I have to say I go to Brookvale for meetings and I can never find a parking spot either. I sometimes have to go over to the mall. Just on the issue of parking at Brookvale, it is a problem.

When the decision was first made there was not going to be any fine arts or HSC and they would not be offered on the northern beaches. I think we need to examine the question whether TAFE management has altered its original aim and that was to cut courses. Because there has been a lot of lobbying all of a sudden we have a fine arts and we have HSC but I will not talk a lot about the HSC because Terry Piggett and Kim Whyte did cover that comprehensively last Friday and we support their comments. What we are really concerned about is the access to science labs. That is a huge issue for those HSC students.

I would like to expand on the fine arts in the DET submission on page 15. It is implied there, and it refers to the proposal that the fine art teachers put forward in June 1999, that was well before any decision was made, which was in August, they did that at their own instigation arising from what Susan Holland had said in her e-mail about helping sections build up and

determine things and they put a proposal in that was a proposal for a fully operating arts section, print making, photography and the space they needed for that.

What now is being offered is a reduced fine arts presence and no print making or photography. One minute they are going to have a diploma course and the next minute they are not. It seems to me they are cobbling things up with the HSC and the fine arts to try and appease everyone. It is all being done on the run.

Just getting back to the course cutting. The other thing I would like to say too is if they are going to move sections holus bolus from Seaforth to Brookvale, then why are not the full complements of teachers going? It is because they are not the full courses that are going to run. I believe there will be only two art teachers going down to Brookvale. I understand, I will have to be corrected, that three HSC teachers will be going elsewhere, to northern Sydney, I know one of them is going to northern Sydney.

**CHAIR:** And the balance?

**Ms BARRATT:** The balance?

**CHAIR:** Does that cover all the teachers at Seaforth at the moment, what you said now?

**Ms BARRATT:** From memory, there are five fine arts, and I think only two will go down to Brookvale and the other three, I think one may be going to Hornsby and the other two to Meadowbank.

**CHAIR:** There are no voluntary redundancies?

**Ms BARRATT:** No, not in the arts and media. We believe there is going to be a second round next year. To be honest, I would not be surprised if they are not targeted sections in the next round.

The federation concurs with the teachers of fine arts and the HSC that the ad hoc proposals for arts and HSC at Brookvale, they are doomed to fail, and that management will eventually be able to eliminate these courses and achieve their original aim of cutting courses. We believe that is the aim.

The other issue we have got is that the federation wishes to draw to the Committee's attention that the management is now saying, Seaforth is a site not a campus. In all the official documents that I have looked at; the handbook, the telephone directory and even the latest letter sent out from northern beaches has Seaforth down as a campus.

**CHAIR:** The map they gave the Committee today has it on it too.

**Ms BARRATT:** I tell you the reason that they are saying that is that the federation received a fax from the Treasurer's department, and you will find that in your papers, where it is a briefing out of the budget, and the last dot point is that no campus will be closed. So what is happening is TAFE is saying it is not a campus, it is a site.

I would like to table a supporting document to the fax document that is in our submission.

This is from John Hennessy, the general secretary of the teachers federation, and it goes on to say: "Following a recent discussion with the Premier's Department, the following information has been made available by the Treasurer". This arose out of a briefing session that top union officials had with the Premier's Department and the general secretary wanted to get information about the effects on TAFE and the last dot point is "no campus will be closed". That arose from a briefing session with the Premier's department and the information has been made available by the Treasurer.

**Mr WONG:** Where was that?

**Ms BARRATT:** This e-mail was on 20 July 1999. After the budget had been handed down, they had briefing sessions.

**CHAIR:** That is why this campus has become such an important issue.

**Ms BARRATT:** That is right. It is not a campus any more. We might have to get hard hats.

**CHAIR:** So they have broken a promise, and they are trying to conceal the broken promise so the government can protect itself. We did not know why this was such a big issue.

**Ms BARRATT:** Also it was brought up, a reporter asked the Treasurer's office, and this is a report in the Manly Daily and it says:

"Last week Mr Egan moved to distance himself from the document. His spokeswoman said: It was sent from a staff member and did not reflect the views of the Minister. It came from a staff member who was using the best available information at the time."

**Ms FORSYTHE:** What dated Manly Daily is that?

**Ms BARRATT:** 8/11/99.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** And the document which the Manly Daily refers to is the --

**Ms BARRATT:** The FACS one that is in your papers.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It is in the papers, is it?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes. I thought I wrote down where it was.

**CHAIR:** Let us get clear now which one you are referring to.

**Ms BARRATT:** The stories about the FACS document.

**CHAIR:** That is the one that said it was not going to be closed. It is referring to that one?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** So they are disowning that particular document.

**Ms BARRATT:** What they are saying is that a staff member in the Treasurer's department really did not know what they were sending out.

**CHAIR:** That is not the one we are referring to.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Do we know where in our documents that is?

**CHAIR:** There was one from the TAFE saying they were not going to close it. We are aware of that one. Is this another one? Is that in your submission?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes, it is attached to our submissions, but I have not put down which number it is.

**Ms CAROSI:** It is the final attachment.

**Ms BARRATT:** That is the one that the reporter used to ring up the TAFE commissioner to find out what - because they were saying it was a site.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Given it is page 2 of a document, because it says page 2 on the FACS item, page 1 presumably has a coversheet.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes.

**Ms BARRATT:** I think the coversheet might be the FACS bit on the front.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** That is what we need to see, to see who sent it.

**Ms CAROSI:** You mean the front page is missing?

**Ms BARRATT:** There is a front page.

**CHAIR:** That page there.

**Ms CAROSI:** There is a cover page that should have been there.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** If we would be able to have that sent next week.

**CHAIR:** That came to Mr Egan's own office?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** But you are saying it was not with his authority.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I would like the coversheet.

**Ms CAROSI:** We definitely have the cover page. It should have been in your papers, I am sorry. It is double-sided so perhaps that is why.

**CHAIR:** As a result of that meeting, you said earlier your senior staff and the Premier and others talked about what the cuts meant. Is that when that was handed out at that meeting?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It is apparently here.

**CHAIR:** Was Mr Egan present himself at that meeting?

**Ms BARRATT:** I would have to find that out.

**CHAIR:** Mr Hennessy was there, was he?

**Ms BARRATT:** Mr Hennessy was being briefed at the Premier's department, the budget briefing, and obviously asked questions about the effects on TAFE and Michael Egan, the Treasurer, said "I will send you a briefing". This is the briefing paper.

**CHAIR:** Was he present at the meeting, too?

**Ms BARRATT:** I would have to find that out.

**CHAIR:** It would be interesting for us to know as to how authoritative this document is. It appears to be authoritative.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** You are going to table for us the front page.

**Ms CAROSI:** I request that we table the cover page.

(Cover page of briefing paper tabled)

**Mr WONG:** We also want to know who else was present.

**Ms BARRATT:** At the meeting?

**Mr WONG:** Yes, everyone. Whoever.

**CHAIR:** The cover page is to John Hennessy. Message: John as discussed Michael. So you cannot get it much --

**Ms CAROSI:** It is a different Michael.

**CHAIR:** It is not Michael Egan?

**Ms BARRATT:** No.

**CHAIR:** Michael Coutts-Trotter.

**Ms BARRATT:** They first of all said they did not know anything about the document, and then when it was faxed over they said, yes, a staff member sent that out.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** One presumes that was a briefing note as a result of the discussions at the meeting?

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** I think we need to know who was present at that briefing. I think we need to see who was aware Michael Egan is aware of it. Whether he was involved or --

**CHAIR:** And whether at the meeting it was said no campus would be closed.

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** Also we want to know exactly what Michael Egan said.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Just before we leave that issue, I interpret that to be a briefing note as a result of a meeting that involved, amongst other people, Mr Hennessy and representatives of Treasury or Treasury staff.

**Ms BARRATT:** Yes.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Did Mr Hennessy keep notes of the meeting?

**Ms BARRATT:** I would have to ask him that. He made the memo, I would think, from his notes.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** If he has actual meeting notes of his own, if they were available I would ask if you could take that on notice and, if they were available, if they could be provided to us as well.

**Ms BARRATT:** Okay. I have nearly finished. What I would like to say is that this issue is not only a Seaforth issue but it is a State-wide issue. We have members that are very concerned. They are ringing us up. They work in smaller campuses, they work in country colleges like Macksville and Coonabarabran and they feel if this decision goes ahead, that that sets a precedent for each institute to use the closing of colleges as a cost-cutting measure.

In conclusion, Seaforth campus has been a major provider of post school education and training in the Manly Warringah area for decades. Seaforth TAFE has not only catered for students undertaking mainstream courses such as diploma and certificate level, but also second chance education and students with disabilities. It seems ironic that given the State Government's emphasis on the TAFE school's links that the Government is proposing to close Seaforth college.

Not only the members in the community of Warringah and Manly are distressed and astonished at this proposal. The Federation hopes that this Committee will recommend the retention of Seaforth TAFE. I will finish up there and let my colleague speak.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for that information.

**Ms CAROSI:** I would like to raise a few matters in relation to the DET submission from the Managing Director of TAFE in regard to funding issues.

The DET submission clearly blames the Federal Government for its having to make these budget cuts. However, it also clearly states in the tables that are included in that document that there is in fact no reduction in Federal funding. In fact, the Federal funding is being and will be maintained in real terms at current levels. What the submission indicates is they interpret the removal of growth funding as a cut but it is not. The Federal Government funding has been maintained. Yet the State has decided to cut \$35 million this financial year from the TAFE budget. I do not know where that \$35 million has gone, so I would be interested to find out what is going to happen to it.

It is the unit cost or the per student cost that comes out strongly also in the DET submission. It says it has to reduce that and according to the ANTA agreement, yes, it does.

Another way to do that, apart from closing Seaforth college, would be by minimising administration costs as David Barr alluded to earlier and ensuring that maximum, but of course educationally sound, class sizes are achieved. In other words, getting as many students enrolling as you possibly can in a particular course, so that you get efficiencies in that regard.

Now the State Government has indicated that it will cut \$35 million this financial year. However, it made it clear to TAFE management that - or it may be after discussions with TAFE management it became clear to them - that because the budget came down on 22 June this year, I think, that savings realistically could not be made between July this year and December this year. In other words, the \$35 million in savings, institutes have been asked to save that between January 2000 and the end of June 2000. So that that \$35 million cut, if institutes make ongoing savings - and they will because most of the savings will be made through the voluntary redundancy process - those savings will be ongoing. That reflects a \$70 million cut per annum, because next year \$35 million will be saved in the next six months, and that will be on-going. Another \$35 million will be saved between July and December that year and that will go on.

There has been a bit of discussion about Northern Sydney Institute's proportion of that. At the first we heard it was \$4 million in the submission, they say \$2.95 million. If Northern Sydney Institute saves \$2.95 million as they indicate here between January and June next year, they will end up making next year a saving of \$5.9 million.

As I just said, all the TAFE institutes are engaged in this process and it is the voluntary redundancy program that is reaping most of the savings there. I am the organiser normally for Sydney Institute of TAFE and they have been asked to make an \$8 million saving in the first half of this year which reflects to be a \$16 million saving for the year.

It is my understanding that if Seaforth college were closed here that the funds that are in the DET submission report that could be reaped from selling the site, that is the \$5 million, that that

would not remain with the institute. The reason I say that, and I say it is my understanding rather than absolute fact, I do know that Sydney Institute certainly, if they sell a building, are not allowed to keep the money. The money will either go, I am not sure if it is to DET generally or whether it goes into Treasury.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It is 50/50, I think.

**Ms CAROSI:** Thank you. Now on to some of the figures to do with Seaforth college itself. The report says that it is projected that \$400,000 will need to be spent on a new roof and ventilation. I am informed by the teachers here that the roof was successfully repaired. There had been leaks last year. It was successfully repaired in December 1998. Ventilation was also fixed and repaired at the beginning of this year. It seems strange that Northern Beaches or Northern Sydney Institute would project that it needs to replace a roof that it had repaired less than 12 months ago.

Also the figures relating to the maintenance costs in terms of Seaforth TAFE. One of the regular ongoing costs they quote is \$98,000 for cleaning of the Seaforth college. There is one building at Seaforth. The 14 buildings at Brookvale, the current cost for cleaning is \$220,000. The figures seem curious, that is all, to have one building costing nearly \$100,000 and 14 buildings costing \$200,000. Related to that particular comment, federation has reviewed the analysis provided by Centennial Consultancy that was tabled by Mr David Barr earlier this afternoon and we certainly support that analysis.

Federation is concerned that the State Government is decreasing funding to TAFE while Federal recurrent funding is being maintained. The State is blaming the Commonwealth for its cuts. Federation is concerned that by closing Seaforth campus that Northern Sydney Institute is reducing access by students and it will; if you close a delivery point there will be a reduction of access. You will lose some students.

It is precisely at a time when, according to the Commonwealth and ANTA agreements, they need more students in order to reduce their unit costs. As we have heard before, some fine arts and HSC students will not be able to, for one reason or another, continue their studies at all. The report from the DET suggests it is probably at the moment only 20 or so. I would certainly question that number, but even that number we can see the effect it can have on people's lives.

An unknown number, of course therefore, will not enrol in the future because of the reduced offerings of a range of courses at Brookvale. Federation believes that more time, more thought and much more information needs to be disseminated before decisions like this one are made.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** In the submission that we received under the hand of John Hennessy, page 3 refers to the fact that:

"Many students are enrolled in Seaforth campus science classes because their local high school cannot accommodate them. These schools are Forest High, Beacon Hill High, North Sydney Boys' High, Pittwater High and St Pauls."

When it says they cannot accommodate them, does that mean there are too many students doing science at those schools and the overflow comes to Seaforth or they do not have appropriate science laboratories? How is it that a school cannot accommodate a science student?

**Ms BARRATT:** My understanding is that it is the programming of certain subjects in that they access the TAFE science labs. That is my understanding from my discussions with the teachers.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Are you aware whether any discussions have been held with the schools affected as to what alternatives they have in mind for next year?

**Ms BARRATT:** I am not aware of any discussions but Mr Bob Puffett has suggested that the students go to Freshwater High to access the science labs. I would take a guess and say that Freshwater High may not know anything about that.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** But North Sydney Boys' High School is not in the immediate area, of course, to Freshwater.

**Ms BARRATT:** No.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** In terms of transport, do you know if it is one because or two buses to access?

**Ms BARRATT:** From North Sydney to Seaforth?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Yes.

**Ms BARRATT:** I would think it would be two buses. I do not live over this way, but I would say a bus to St Leonards and then down to North Sydney.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** You referred to the Northern Beaches review of secondary education and the discussion paper. Do you know how long that review has been underway?

**Ms BARRATT:** I think it has been underway for the last 12 months. I have not been involved in it but another organiser from the school has been involved in it.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** You do not know under whose authority - who is the person within the department that has carriage of that?

**Ms BARRATT:** Carol Carrigan.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It is approximately 12 months that that has been underway?

**Ms BARRATT:** I think so. I would have to find out the details. It has been going on for quite a while to my knowledge. Within the last 12 months, I believe.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** It is of interest to me because in the southern region of Sydney they

managed to do the review of education needs in a month when they had another imperative.

**CHAIR:** Just to clarify something you said earlier. In their submission, that evidence from the Department of Education and Training, they justified the decision to close Seaforth in the terms of the need to meet the needs for TAFE New South Wales to achieve efficiency savings in order that New South Wales would receive that special grant from ANTA Federal body. In your evidence, you are saying that the decision to cut \$35 million was not for that reason at all. They are trying to justify the cut by pointing to the Federal Government.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes, the Commonwealth does, I believe, require efficiencies but it does not require cuts. It is providing the same amount of money, yet the State Government is providing TAFE with \$35 million less or \$70 million less over a full 12 month period than previously.

**CHAIR:** They are really using this ANTA as an excuse. It is a smokescreen.

**Ms CAROSI:** I think so. It seems to be designed in a sense to confuse. They have got to improve their unit costs, but you do not improve unit costs by taking money away. Your unit cost might stay precisely the same.

**Mr WONG:** I think the argument was in the last hearing that by taking away \$35 million, by wages or administration whatever they may be, you are cutting down the salary from that administrative component, therefore it would become more efficient. Is that a logical explanation?

**Ms CAROSI:** That is part of the logic of the offering of the voluntary redundancies because in some areas of TAFE there is a - because of the changing nature of work in some apprenticeship areas - there is a reduction in need and some staff are what we call under-programmed. Therefore, if you do not need as many teachers - so therefore that would improve the per unit cost by taking away those extra staff that you do not need. What is happening here is they are taking away a service delivery point.

**Mr WONG:** So you are also implying then by closing Seaforth in reality you are decreasing numbers of students, at least in fine arts and HSC, and the end result is you are increasing the unit cost.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes, that would be my feeling. I cannot prove that yet, but theoretically that would be the case.

**CHAIR:** You would be opposed to the cut of \$35 million?

**Ms CAROSI:** Absolutely.

**CHAIR:** Has the federation any policy on if the cuts were essential, where would you see the department should try to make the savings? Voluntary redundancies? Where?

**Ms CAROSI:** No, we are not in favour of voluntary redundancies, except in those areas where TAFE can demonstrate that there is surplus capacity. In other words, if there is work for four teachers in a section but there happen to be five, we would see that they can reduce that

section by one. I do not know the latest figures, but out of the 630 that the State budget directed TAFE to reduce its staffing by, I believe about half that number has been achieved through the voluntary redundancy program.

In the main, it is where there is surplus capacity. The union has struggled hard and been in long and frequent negotiations at each institute level to make sure, to try to make sure, that only surplus capacity is being cut.

**CHAIR:** Is that the main way then that you feel the Government could make those savings? Do you have any other federation policy?

**Ms CAROSI:** Oh, yes. Certainly the Sydney Institute of TAFE, which I am more familiar with, it will achieve a good proportion. It would be somewhere between half and two thirds of the savings that they have been asked to make via that process. So, I would imagine it would be a similar pattern across the state.

**Ms BARRATT:** Are you asking what other ways?

**CHAIR:** What is the federation policy? Do you have any other suggestions? Those are apparently under review. There is more face-to-face teaching by TAFE teachers. You would need less staff.

**Ms CAROSI:** I do not know that would be our policy.

**CHAIR:** That is what the Government is proposing. There is another method where they could make staff surplus. It is mainly in the teaching staff area.

**Ms BARRATT:** I would like to make a comment. I think one of the big problems is the 11 institutes that are operating, they are duplicating everywhere. I think we could go back to a centralised system. My view is that is where there could be some savings.

**CHAIR:** The bureaucracy.

**Ms CAROSI:** The bureaucracy is duplicated.

**CHAIR:** Bureaucracy getting bigger with less students.

**Ms BARRATT:** As an organiser you have got 11 institutes to deal with. It is an impossible situation. I do believe, and the federation believes, that efficiencies and savings could be made by centralising some of those functions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, that is a good idea.

**Mr WONG:** I have a question. Why is it the federation went to see Michael Egan but not Aquilina at that time?

**Ms CAROSI:** Soon after the state budget was handed down the Premier's Department invited senior union officials to come to a briefing session about the budget. It was organised by

the Premier's Department and the labour council would have been there and senior people from each of the unions and they were briefed, we are not sure by whom, but we have undertaken to see if we can find that out. Michael Egan presumably was there and that is presumably why his department sent the follow up fax to our general secretary specifically in terms of the TAFE budget cuts.

**CHAIR:** There may not have been, Mr Aquilina may not have been present or senior education department people?

**Ms CAROSI:** He may not have been there. We will endeavour to find out.

**Mr WONG:** In between 2 July in which you received the letter from the Treasurer and until the date when you met, when were notified of the closing of Seaforth, which is around 16 August 1999? There was a six weeks period where everything changed, obviously. There is a 180 degree change within the philosophies within that six weeks period.

**Ms CAROSI:** Between receipt of the letter --

**Mr WONG:** Which is 2 July, you were told by Aquilina on 16 August.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** In the period of about six weeks.

**Ms CAROSI:** A complete turn, yes.

**CHAIR:** We have run out of time. I would ask this last question quickly. In that fax that came from Mr Egan but may have been from one of his staff, the fourth point is Commonwealth cuts, the vocational education and training of more than \$78 million. That is in that fax, so your remarks are as if you are questioning that saying that is not correct?

**Ms CAROSI:** I am sorry?

**CHAIR:** The heading, the one you just gave us, TAFE staff, the fourth point from Mr Egan's office is Commonwealth cuts the vocation education and training, 97/98, 2001/2002 are more than 78 million. You were saying earlier you do not believe them.

**Ms CAROSI:** That 78 million is what they have lost in terms of not getting their growth funds.

**CHAIR:** It is growth funds?

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes, growth funds missing.

**CHAIR:** What were the growth funds.

**Ms CAROSI:** They seem to have summarised it here as cuts.

**CHAIR:** Is that for establishing new capital improvements?

**Ms CAROSI:** No, it was to encourage extra enrolments and therefore --

**CHAIR:** Expand TAFE.

**Ms CAROSI:** More students in TAFE and presumably off the employment queue.

**CHAIR:** Higher quality of education.

**Ms CAROSI:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** It should not mean closing down of Seaforth.

**Ms CAROSI:** It should not.

**CHAIR:** Not an argument for closing down Seaforth at all.

**Ms CAROSI:** I believe, yes.

**CHAIR:** It is misleading.

**Ms CAROSI:** I believe it is.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for appearing before us today and meeting with us. I am not sure where you live, but I am glad you came here and provided that information and it is interesting, of course, to see the federation. I know you are taking a lead in education issues, but in this case you are on a collision course with the Government.

The next witness is Mr Don Moller, the architect. Thank you, Mr Moller, for appearing before our Committee.

**(The witnesses withdrew)**

**DONALD GARTH MOLLER**, architect, 6 Koobilya Street, Seaforth, sworn and examined:

**CHAIR:** Did you receive a summons issued under my hand pursuant to the Parliamentary Evidence Act, 1901?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Are you conversant with the terms of reference of this inquiry?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You know that if at any time, under the rules of these hearings, if you should consider at any stage during your evidence that, in the public interest, certain evidence or documents you may wish to present should be heard or seen only by the Committee, the

Committee would be willing to accede to your request and resolve into confidential session. But I should warn you that the Parliament may override that decision at any time and make your evidence public.

Have you a brief statement you could like to make at the meeting?

**Mr MOLLER:** I have made a statement in writing. It is addressed to the Chairman Standing Committee.

**CHAIR:** Anything to add?

**Mr MOLLER:** My position is not a formal position. I read in the Manly Daily about closing Seaforth TAFE and it was mentioned in that article that it was closing due to the old buildings, deteriorating materials, and I happened to be the project architect for it in 1985 and it was not so long ago and I was very surprised at that.

**CHAIR:** You are the project architect for the Seaforth --

**Mr MOLLER:** I was employed by the New South Wales Government as the project architect within the tertiary section of the New South Wales Government Architects Branch.

**CHAIR:** That involved you specifically in having dealings with TAFE.

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, I prepared the contract documents and I was involved in the contract administration and the major refurbishment of the TAFE between 1984 and 85.

**CHAIR:** You were not involved obviously with the construction?

**Mr MOLLER:** No, I was in the capacity of supervising, I was the project architect for that work.

**CHAIR:** The refurbishment.

**Mr MOLLER:** It was more than that. It was in three stages because the TAFE had to be kept functioning while the work went on and there was a new building added to the other building.

**CHAIR:** That was the centre.

**Mr MOLLER:** That was the centre, yes. And then it came about because the motor trades were vacating the building. They went to Brookvale, and that left a lot of space available for accommodation and the accommodation that was done at that stage was a new cafeteria, new laboratories, new building, the library was done and there were new classrooms because the motor trades had vacated the premises.

**CHAIR:** The roof has been one of the main issues of controversy. That would be part of that new section you supervised.

**Mr MOLLER:** No, the roof, I think now we added some air-conditioning on the roof over the office block. I think it is an original roof. It is a metal deck. It seems to be in good condition. There is nothing wrong with it. If there was, I would say so. The other roofs are membrane on concrete. I have not have been able to look at those. I have looked a couple of times at the metal deck roof. It is not leaking now and I think there were some leaks because there is evidence of patching and tar. It is not rusty. You can guarantee on that metal deck there is at least 20 years. The cost of replacing it is about \$30 a square metre. They refer to 450 square metres at \$30 is about \$13,500.

**CHAIR:** 13,500.

**Mr MOLLER:** Because you have to remove the old metal deck and take it away. I think \$20,000 would do it.

**CHAIR:** People claim the air-conditioning units now made it a major sort of construction job.

**Mr MOLLER:** I do not think so. They could be demounted and taken away and temporarily put aside and new metal roof put back.

**CHAIR:** Would that be included within the price?

**Mr MOLLER:** I think 20,000 would recover it because you have to take away the old materials. I can not see it costing any more than that.

**CHAIR:** You think they are exaggerating.

**Mr MOLLER:** Out of all proportion. It has not reached that stage yet. If there is any leak, if you find a leak in a metal deck roof you can put a little bit of silicon on it.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** One of the arguments is that there is a fundamental design fault. It is too large to be a flat roof as such and the box gutters are not adequate to contain the amount of water, therefore, it was I think perhaps more implied than specifically stated that the cost would be replacing that roof and putting on something perhaps more of a sloping roof. In other words, a complete change of the pitch.

**Mr MOLLER:** It was the original roof finished in 1963. It has been there all this time and the box gutters have been there all the time. We did not touch the roof other than to put plant on it. I would not put a pitch on it. It is waiting to put another storey on it. You could add another level.

**CHAIR:** It does not need a pitch roof? It seems to be almost flat, the roof.

**Mr MOLLER:** It is a fall of about one degree or two degrees. That is normal for metal deck roofs. There are hundreds, thousands of roofs in Sydney with a flat appearance like that.

**Mr WONG:** Number one, I also was informed that the metal deck roof is not something unusual within the education system. A lot of old buildings do have metal deck roofs.

**Mr MOLLER:** A lot of new buildings have metal deck roofs too.

**Mr WONG:** My understanding was for the last 15 years they do not do that. Since you say they do, I will take your word for that.

**Mr MOLLER:** BHP Colorbond, it was very well known.

**Mr WONG:** The second question was that we have been told that because of the metal deck roof, because of the two degree fall, the water did leak into the main building. Is that true?

**Mr MOLLER:** No, I do not think so. If it has had any leaks, it comes from the metal deck being punctured, that is where you can see the tar that has been put on. There are adequate flashings and gutters and things like that. It was done right back in 1963 and it has served its job since then and I think they have had good value out of it.

**Mr WONG:** They took us into an area that you can see the roof and there seems to be some sunlight getting through. Does that indicate it might leak on a rainy day?

**Mr MOLLER:** In the library?

**CHAIR:** In the storeroom. When you looked up you could see the light shining through, as if the metal roof, there is a gap between it and the brick wall.

**Mr MOLLER:** It is possible.

**CHAIR:** That could be repaired.

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, you repair it with some metal sheeting.

**CHAIR:** Were there punctures in the metal? I could not see any rust. It looked in good condition, but there must be some holes.

**Mr MOLLER:** Somebody has been on the roof with tools and been careless and dropped something.

**CHAIR:** It is not just wear and tear.

**Mr MOLLER:** Metal deck is vulnerable. It could have been done. Who knows?

**CHAIR:** When the ventilation was being put on.

**Mr MOLLER:** When someone was up there cleaning out the gutters and they could have punctured it.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I appreciate that you are here as an architect, not as a builder. Given the nature of the work, would it be feasible for last year building students, for example, to be able to work on replacing a roof such as that?

**Mr MOLLER:** No, I think it would be more trouble than they are worth. The roof has to be off and you have to pick some fine weather to have it off and a week and a specialist firm would have to do it within a week. If it rained with the roof off you would have trouble like Randwick.

**CHAIR:** It could be done in a week?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** If it had to be replaced with BHP Colorbond, how much would that cost?

**Mr MOLLER:** That is \$30 a square metre.

**Mr WONG:** BHP Colorbond.

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, it is a composite price that covers the cost of material and labour.

**CHAIR:** Brand new roof for that price?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**Mr WONG:** Would you get a guarantee it will not leak?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, 20 years.

**Mr WONG:** We have been informed in the printing and photographic rooms, and a few other rooms upstairs, there is virtually no ventilation. Is this true?

**Mr MOLLER:** Well, there was ventilation done in 1985 for those photography laboratories and they were left in good order and TAFE were pleased with them and the teachers were pleased with them. There are vents up the outside. There is ventilation in there now. I do not know whether someone means it is not adequate.

**Mr WONG:** We have been told that if work has inadequate ventilation, it would be breaching all types of regulations. Is that your understanding?

**Mr MOLLER:** No, I do not think so. I think that is not true. I think that there was no photography unit there in 1985. The only one that was located was at Meadowbank and Meadowbank was copied for the Seaforth one.

**Mr WONG:** The printing room.

**Mr MOLLER:** I think the mechanical engineer will soon tell you whether the ventilation is adequate or not. There is ventilation there now.

**Mr WONG:** In the event you need some ventilation, it does not cost a fortune.

**Mr MOLLER:** It is on the outside wall, put one on the outside, take the air out or in - I am not a mechanical engineer.

**Mr WONG:** How much would a standard classroom cost to have a ventilation system installed, as you mentioned, and you mention the exhaust?

**CHAIR:** Especially the print room.

**Mr MOLLER:** I do not know. I have spoken to the occupational health and safety chairman and he made the statement that they have spent some money on the air-conditioning in one of the laboratories this year but he has no other complaints about anything else and they have not put that - I table that - there were complaints about the air temperature in the laboratories. I think the sun was coming in the northern windows and there is no cross-ventilation and some of the hot days it was getting hot. They put an air-conditioning unit in one of the laboratories and also put a vent and a duct for one of the chemical stores and did some other work and I think that was \$44,000. That was done, but they have had no other complaints or any other need to do anything else.

**CHAIR:** Done in June this year?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You think if somebody was installing \$40,000 worth of ventilation equipment in June this year they were intending to get rid of it in December?

**Mr MOLLER:** I would be surprised. If they were doing that in the laboratory they would also have done it in a photography laboratory, put a fan in the photography laboratory too.

**Mr WONG:** Mr Moller, in your experience Seaforth TAFE is it average, compared with other Government buildings?

**Mr MOLLER:** It is a fairly young building. It is in good order I have looked extensively all around the place. I think it is in fine repair.

**CHAIR:** There are a lot of old buildings used in the education department, some nearly a hundred years old.

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes. Ultimo; it was done entirely within the Government architects' branch and to the Government architects' standards. Mr Farmer was the Government architect at the time and he was one of the best Government architects we have ever had. These extensions were done under Ian Thompson and the strict codes that were complied with all the way down; the best building materials and best specifications and it was all designed to use materials which would minimise maintenance. That is why bricks and concrete were used.

**CHAIR:** Long-lasting.

**Mr MOLLER:** Non-maintenance materials. There has been some work in the past by the concrete of the first stage that the buildings were erected in 1963. The precast concrete mullions

did show signs of concrete cancer and they were painted. They were just bare concrete. Most of the flats from here to Palm Beach have got concrete cancer. The work was done on those mullions. They were cut back and filled with epoxy and painted. The new building has not been painted at all. Because as soon as you have painted something you have to repaint it. The mullions at the TAFE were painted. They were painted with a very durable paint and they will last a long time yet.

**CHAIR:** If someone did purchase that site, it would be very unlikely they would demolish the buildings. They would use it for similar purposes, education purposes?

**Mr MOLLER:** If they were an educational purchaser and it had to do with that, well, they would have a first-class building. It did not have a lift. It was put in at that stage. The laboratories were installed at enormous expense because they had to have special drains put in and fume cupboards. But the drainage, the floor had to be torn up on the ground floor to put in special drains and they can not be duplicated somewhere down the road.

**Mr WONG:** Mr Moller, just in case the Government decided to be generous and build the same laboratories in Brookvale, how much each would they cost?

**Mr MOLLER:** Well, they are the same size as a classroom, I do not know what the costs are today. I think you are looking at the most expensive form of classroom there is, because you have fixed benches, you have drainage, you have fume cupboards, you have services. They will not come any more complicated. You are looking at hospital costs.

**Mr WONG:** Mr Moller, as an architect looking at the Brookvale site, I am thinking about for disabled people, would you would you have chosen such a site?

**Mr MOLLER:** Such as where?

**Mr WONG:** Brookvale, for disabled people, is it a suitable site?

**Mr MOLLER:** I have been down there a couple of years ago. It is on the side of a hill and I have no idea. I would have to look at what was there before I answer that question. It was mandatory with the code that all TAFEs had to be designed for handicapped people and that is why the extensive alterations and refurbishment were done to bring Seaforth TAFE up to those standards; which meant the lift, which meant handicapped toilets, which meant ramps, which meant parking, all the standards. As to whether Brookvale complies with handicapped standards, I do not know. I imagine it would be.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Given you were project architect in the mid-80s, I presume you would have also been project architect on other buildings at approximately the same period, either TAFE or schools?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Are there many examples of buildings with a similar style flat roof, metal construction?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, I think so. I was involved in project architect for Bega tech and I worked on stage four of Ultimo, which was a multi-storey addition.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** I am interested in looking for some similar examples, because the department has singled out Seaforth.

**Mr MOLLER:** It has a flat roof?

**Ms FORSYTHE:** Yes, as a reason to be closed down.

**Mr MOLLER:** There is any number of flat roofed buildings down at Warringah Mall; they are new.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** My memory of Government architecture is it goes in cycles. Are there other buildings of a similar type?

**Mr MOLLER:** There are many many TAFE colleges and schools which have flat roofs and metal deck roofs.

**Ms FORSYTHE:** We might pursue that.

**Mr MOLLER:** If they have gutters in a valley, when they get blocked they cause trouble. Those gutters are on the outside, so if they fill, they will spill over the edge.

**CHAIR:** You were saying before that it is possible to put another level on Seaforth. Is it physically able to take another level?

**Mr MOLLER:** Yes, you would take columns down to the ground floor. They would go through like pins.

**CHAIR:** Close Brookvale and move it to Seaforth.

**Mr MOLLER:** You could do that, yes.

**Mr WONG:** Maybe I repeat it again, but we seem to have been given the impression that metal deck roof is not an acceptable architectural design in an educational building for the last 15 years.

**Mr MOLLER:** I take exception to that. No, I do not think so. That would be putting it in like a fad. I am an architect. I would not hesitate to use a metal deck roof. After the hail through Randwick, I can not understand why they are replacing those roofs with tiles. I would urge to use a metal deck roof instead of tiles. Some of the councils and that, Mosman Council in particular, require you to use tiles instead of metal deck because of the heritage aspect. They are saying we want them to match the tiles. I have seen many instances of BHP Colour Bond in association with tiles. I do not find anything aesthetically derogatory about it.

**CHAIR:** We thank you very much for appearing before the Committee and for giving us some of those details. I am just thinking that perhaps the Committee will have to get an actual

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quote from a local builder or someone just to confirm - I am not questioning your figures - but the department does seem to have some other method of establishing these huge amounts.

**Mr MOLLER:** I do not have any sympathy at all, but the roof seems to be fine. It is not leaking and, you know, if it is not broke do not fix it. Maybe in ten years' time it may need replacing, but at the moment there is no need to spend any money on it at all.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, again, for appearing before the Committee. You had no other documents you wanted to give to us?

**Mr MOLLER:** There is my background at the time. It is a reference about me, if you like. This is a black and white perspective that was done. There is something from the Manly Daily about the renovations that were mentioned at the time, and then there is the Public Works Tender.

(Reference of Mr Moller, document from the Manly Daily and Public Works tender document tabled)

**(The witness withdrew)**

**(The Committee adjourned)**