REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

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INQUIRY INTO MEASUREMENT AND OUTCOME-BASED FUNDING IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Thursday 10 October 2019

The Committee met at 11:15

PRESENT

The Hon. Mark Latham (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam
The Hon. Scott Farlow
The Hon. Courtney Houssos
The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox (Deputy Chair)
Mr David Shoebridge

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The CHAIR: Welcome to the second hearing of Portfolio Committee No. 3—Education, which I declare open. It is our inquiry into measurement and outcome based funding in New South Wales schools. The inquiry is examining the existing state of measurement in New South Wales education, and the consequences of introducing outcome based budgeting for schools. Before I commence with the detail about the hearing, it is the custom of this Parliament to acknowledge the traditional inhabitants of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I do that with all due respect, as well as acknowledging other important contributors to the history of this site—those who constructed the Parliament House building, very often working in a dangerous industry, and our wonderful parliamentary staff who, over many decades, have supported members of Parliament and made our work and representative role possible. We acknowledge and thank them all.

Today is the second day of the hearing, having had a very successful day on Tuesday. We will hear today from representatives of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, academic Professor James Ladwig from the University of Newcastle, the Association of Independent Schools and representatives from NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA]. The day will conclude with representatives from the Aboriginal Education Council of New South Wales and the very important Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales.

Before we commence I would like to make some brief comments about the procedures that underpin the hearing. Today's hearing is open to the public and is being broadcast live via the Parliament's website. A transcript of today's hearing will be placed on the Committee's website when it becomes available. Anyone wanting to look at Tuesday's deliberations should be able to find them there now. In accordance with the broadcasting guidelines, while members of the media may film or record Committee members and witnesses, people in the public gallery should not be the primary focus of any filming or photography. I should also remind media representatives that they must take responsibility for what they publish about the Committee's proceedings. It is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to what witnesses may say outside their evidence to the hearing. I also urge witnesses to be careful about any comments they make to the media or other after they complete their evidence as such comments are not protected by parliamentary privilege. The guidelines for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

Regarding questions on notice, there may be some questions that a witness could only answer if they had more time or certain documents available to them. In these circumstances witnesses are advised—indeed encouraged—to take questions on notice and provide answers within 21 days. I think generally if the answer is not clear and available, witnesses are better off taking questions on notice rather than guessing or possibly doing something even worse in the eyes of the Committee in terms of accuracy. I remind everyone here today that committee hearings are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of parliamentary privilege. I therefore request that witnesses focus on the issues raised by the inquiry's terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily.

Witnesses are advised that any messages should be delivered to Committee members through the Committee staff. To aid the audibility of this hearing I remind both Committee members and witnesses to speak into the microphones. The room is fitting with hearing enhancement devices, and there is a spot in the public gallery for those who have hearing difficulties. We do not have anyone in the gallery so no-one is availing themselves of any of those services. Finally, could everyone please turn their mobile phones to silent for the duration of the hearing.

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ALAN GARDINER, Secretary, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, affirmed and examined

PATRICK DOUMANI, Member Support/Communications Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Patrick and Alan, for your participation today. I will give a bit of background and then ask if you want to make a short responding statement. Our inquiry heard on Tuesday that outcome based budgeting is different to outcome based funding. The New South Wales Government said, in its initial submission, that it is engaged in outcome based budgeting that would not have impact on any school funding in New South Wales. As we dug deeper into this—it is a work in progress at Government level—it was acknowledged that in the rigour of outcome measurement, performance standards and evidence based data it would be possible that, out of this new system, disadvantaged schools or schools that are not getting the best results would be subject to extra funding. As a Committee, we are interested in the conditions and the potential around that in the future.

Generally, our inquiry is looking at the way in which outcome based budgeting—and whatever funding consequences that might have for schools—might be a catalyst for new forms of rigour, measurement and evidence in the system that brings New South Wales to a higher level in recognition of how some of our results in recent decades have been disappointing or have even gone backwards. So we are not necessarily focused on a whole new school funding model, but rather some of the ways in which we could scale up school excellence and achievement on an average base. We know of schools that are going fantastically well. Before we started the hearing we were talking about one in particular. That is a focus of ours.

Because this is a work in progress at Government level, our deliberations as a Committee have evolved somewhat through the course of our first day hearing. I think that that needs to be understood to put the deliberations in their proper context. I thank you again, for your involvement and the wonderful you do as a P&C representing parents around the State. Obviously, in the managerial language, they are the main stakeholders other than students in school education. Would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr GARDINER: Yes, quite briefly. I thank you for inviting us here and for giving us the opportunity to assist you with your inquiry. We are happy to try and answer any questions you might have. The only other opening statement I would care to make is that since lodging our submission we have had the time to reflect further on the topic in general. I think you made a very interesting comment about drawing a distinction between outcome based funding and budgeting, which I am still trying to process—as to what that actually means.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You are not on an island, Mr Gardiner.

Mr GARDINER: Okay; just checking. I have also had a chance to look at all the submissions which have come in. It is an interesting collection. One thing that I thought none of the submissions addressed—admittedly it was not called for in the terms of reference—was the high-level issues, conceptually and practically, that might be associated with any kind of outcome based funding. If you wish I can do my five-minute version of what I think some of those conceptual and practical issues might be. That is up to you. Otherwise we are happy to sit here and take questions from you.

The CHAIR: Are those in addition to your submission? Are they the concerns mentioned in the submission?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it more reflective of what you have read, as well?

Mr GARDINER: Yes, and the topic in general. I think our submission is more focused. It has some more detailed points, which is also true of a lot of the other submissions, but this is a stepping back. I was reflecting after reading all of those submissions and saying, "What are we missing here?"

The CHAIR: It would be very useful for us to hear, at the beginning, your overview, having read the submissions. That would be helpful to us.

Mr GARDINER: My overview of the topic itself. If it helps that is great, but we will see how we go. You can give me a mark out of 10 at the end.

The CHAIR: Away you go.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Your time starts now.

CORRECTED

Mr GARDINER: In my view in general, the concept of outcomes based funding—I think budgeting is probably the same—is most applicable in services where the outcome is commodity like in nature, and where the production processes are at least largely in the control of the provider that does the delivering of the outcome. For example, Services NSW, among other activities, does renewal of drivers' licences. It does not take too much accounting wizardry for it to figure out the cost of doing that. It is a process that it largely controls so it is quite open for it to say to the Government, "Services NSW knows how much it costs it to do this. The agency can get the total funding for the service, which is the cost times the total number." In terms of an outcomes based funding and budgeting process that would seem to be reasonably straightforward and clear cut. It is actually similar to some work that I think the New Zealand Government did about 30 years ago, when I happened to be working in Wellington in my professional life, and had some contact with it.

The problem I see with educational services is that they do not fit that model in a couple of ways. Firstly there is a problem with defining outcomes so either the outcomes are, in my view, too conceptually broad to be measurable and/or attributable to a single organisational unit over a useful time period. For example, one of the department's objective is to "prepare a young a person for a rewarding life as an engaged citizen in a complex and dynamic society" which is admirable and it is a great outcome but it is one that I would struggle to figure out a good measure for and, in particular, to come up with a measurement, a process which can drive an annual funding strategy.

The consequence of having to deal with that is to drop down to get to potentially measurable and attributable outcomes. There will be an extremely large number of outcomes that will need to be defined to cater for all students in all the diversity over each of the many years that they are going to be in school and across multiple domains, including those beyond individual academic subjects, yes, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, et cetera. In practical terms I do not believe that that can actually be done in any real way and that we could talk about further but anything less than that detailed specification will not, I think, get you to an outcome based funding model.

Secondly, the outcomes, even if we can adequately define what they are, are not achieved solely by the actions of teachers, schools and school systems. Apart from obvious external influences which have potential impact on students' outcomes such as their family circumstances, academic coaching they might receive from external sources, the achievement in educational outcome or the degree to which they are achieved, is heavily influenced by the desire and willingness of the students themselves to achieve particular outcomes. Clearly that differs from a Service NSW kind of example where the organisation has control over the delivery of the outcome.

But, let us assume that that can all be addressed—those conceptual and practical problems—the next issue is measurement which needs to be applied objectively, consistently and repeatedly tracking achievement in respect of every outcome and do this with high integrity, given that there is some link to funding, and low cost in terms of time, money and the disruption to learning. Again, in practice, I find that would be a very challenging thing to achieve. Then there is a question of attribution of the measured results. In my view it is impossible to separate the contribution of a school, let alone a teacher, to a student outcome from, on the other hand, learning assistance they might have received from parents, siblings, friends, YouTube or whatever it might be—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Coaching.

Mr GARDINER: Coaching in there if you think coaching actually contributes to a result, which is a different debate.

The CHAIR: Try getting into a selective school without it.

Mr GARDINER: My son did.

The CHAIR: He is the 1 per cent. He must be a very, very bright young man.

Mr GARDINER: It is a little unusual, I agree. If there is a connection from measured outcomes to funding there is an obvious risk that the funding will be skewed by socio-economic educational advantage from which the child comes and that difference applies in my opinion as much to achievement gain as it does to absolute achievement. The next issue that would have to be addressed in determining the cost or price of each of the necessary outcomes. I think in practice that would prove unachievable.

There is unlikely to be sufficient financial data and sufficiently fine grained financial data to be able to drive out the necessary costs for each of those outcomes. A further issue, assuming you have managed to deal with all of those issues, is trying to deal with any unwanted and detrimental changes in individual institutional behaviour which arises from financial incentives which are put in place. Now that is to deny that there are not

CORRECTED

perverse incentives which arise from input based funding but, in my view, I think they can be more easily addressed and what I suspect could be the case in output based funding.

Even if we assume away all of those challenges, and we have got all the processes and arrangements in place for outcomes based funding my question is: then what? If applied at a school level, and the school out performs, do we give it more funds? The school clearly does not need more funds to achieve the result it has. If it were in the private sector it would not be an issue, the extra funding would go to profits to be distributed among shareholders or senior management, or whatever, but schools are not in that category. Alternatively, do we cut funding to the school which over performs? That makes no sense either. That would be a clear disincentive for the work that it is actually achieving. What if the school under performs? Do we give them more or less funding? The more appropriate answer is neither but to go in and work out what is going wrong, what needs to change and if there is a consequent need for funding change then that is a secondary question to be addressed at that time.

In summary, for me, outcomes based funding for educational services has some fundamental conceptual and practical difficulties and, even if could be done, I am not sure how it then gives a better managerial result than what we would achieve under an input based funding scheme. My final thought on this topic is: what does the market say? I have children who have either just gone through, are going through or about to go through the whole issue of getting a driver's licence so I thought of driving schools. What do they do?

They are for-profit providers in a competitive market and they have the advantage, unlike most educational services, of having a pretty clearly defined objective: getting a learner driver to a licence. They have the option, if they wish, to charge their clients a flat fee to get them from start to getting a licence but as far as I have been able to find no one does that. The model they use is to charge for the service they provide in terms of the input by lesson. As far as I can think of any other educational type service has the same model be it a private music teacher or anything of that nature. I am happy to take any questions on that or our submission.

The CHAIR: Is it your submission to the Committee that nothing can be measured in the education system because every parent at the school gate of an afternoon in an informal way talks about outcomes relevant to their child in the school. That is a part of parental love and common sense in reality. Surely it must be possible then in the education system to systemise the measurement of school performance. There is a whole range of indicators such as the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR], the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN], Scout results, progressive achievement tests, classroom observations every day and then other things that matter in terms of that starting objection you mentioned, good successful citizenship that they get a job when they leave school.

Do they go on to higher qualifications through university or vocational education? If measurement is possible, is measurement going to be the great driver of knowing what is happening in the system and potentially turning around the results that have been so either disappointing or dismal in New South Wales in recent decades?

Mr GARDINER: Yes. There is a lot in your question, let me try to go through it. Measurement is very important and, yes, you can definitely do valid measurements in many aspects of education. As you are probably well aware, one of the challenges of measurement is to make sure that everything that you wish to drive out as an outcome is properly and validly measured—a challenge in itself. But, yes, measurement is definitely a critical part. There is also a question of what any particular measurement is actually geared to doing and one of the issues with testing, for example, is trying to achieve multiple objectives with the one test. I talk about NAPLAN as an example of that. It is currently fallen between a couple of different schools which then limit its usefulness for almost any of them, as an example.

Again, moving on from if we solve any kind of measurement issue there is then the link from that measurement of the outcome to what you do with it in terms of, say, funding or not and incentives can arise in different ways. Depending on the consequences of any test will drive to varying degrees the kind of results you get and the gaining which is possible from that and that also depends on the consequences. Again we can talk about NAPLAN as an example, if you wish.

The CHAIR: Further to the question of measurement and evidence, does the association acknowledge that internationally just about everything has been measured, analysed, studied in the school education field? The Australian New Zealand academic John Hattie has systemised it in a remarkable three or four page document. It has a high effect measure, low effect and that they raised the great paradox as to if it has all been measured, and we know what works and does not work in the classroom, why is not every classroom teaching the things that actually work to get high-value added results for their school?

Mr GARDINER: Yes, I am profoundly frustrated every day of my life with the education system on that kind of point particularly.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: On that front, okay, we are a growing club.

Mr GARDINER: We are a growing club. My quick answer to the question is, the degree of institutional inertia within education is overwhelming. Obviously, my experience is mostly with the government sector, which has probably got that institutional inertia in spades. We do what we can to prod the Department of Education to make the changes that we think are necessary but there is a lot of inertia in the system.

The CHAIR: Can you elaborate on that as an association because this is a parental frustration and complaint that I find just in my community and as a parent that the education department, perhaps because it is so big and at times bureaucratic, is very defensive about just about everything in the system. A school complaint goes up to the regional office, goes further and at the end of it all nothing ever went wrong.

Mr GARDINER: Yes, I think this is a join-the-club situation. I am not sure what I should add to that.

The CHAIR: Perhaps a suggested remedy for this defensiveness so it is more responsive to the parental input.

Mr GARDINER: Yes, all those objectives are great and I agree with them, but actually getting there has been the challenge and continues to be the challenge. There are so many stakeholders which have a very strong vested interest in the way things currently work and the way they might change in the future but it is very hard to push some of those changes through. You may be aware at the moment that for some time now the Department of Education has embarked on a major review of the staffing entitlement process. There are some early indications that they were going to make some very, very bold moves. I think that is being wound back from some of the involvement that I have had since then, which I find disappointing and I can see the influence of stakeholders coming through in that.

You might know that at least early on in the process the Teachers Federation, as an example, put a letter in to I think it was either the Minister or the secretary, I cannot remember which, or possibly both, saying that "This is actually nothing to do with our external stakeholders", that it was purely an industrial matter. We saw that and took a very strong message back to the Minister and the secretary saying that we, very politely, disagreed with that, that it was far beyond just an industrial matter. We, as a stakeholder, wanted to have a say in what was going on with some of their review and change in that area. But it would still have a long lead time, I suspect, when they get there. There are some very complex issues with staffing, as an example.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I wanted to pick up your frustration a little and the inertia that you mentioned about the education department and put a few things to you and get your response to them. Obviously, part of the rationale for this inquiry is can we do things better? How do we drive better outcomes? Is the status quo working well enough for our students and for the sector as a whole? Part of that discovery of this journey we are on is looking at how budgeting exists at the moment in the education department and it has really been a case of block funding, which is incrementally increased each year, which is on a needs basis through the Gonski model, which you are all familiar with.

Part of the focus is to look at can we drive better outcomes by looking to take perhaps a component of that and drive it towards best practice outcomes that have been evidence-based in a range of schools that we can perhaps apply more broadly across the system? Can I ask you about best practice first of all? In relation to your experience with the public education system, obviously there are a range of things happening at different schools. In terms of how the system works can you perhaps reflect upon how you have seen in your experience best practice move from one school to another in the education system and is there a better way of doing that?

Mr GARDINER: Firstly, I should hedge my comments and say do not overestimate our organisational ability to delve into the depths of educational change and theory. In terms of answering that question, I do not know if Mr Doumani wants to contribute anything, but at best it would be at a more anecdotal level from me.

Mr DOUMANI: It would be the same for us, yes. I am not aware of very much empirical evidence about that that could contribute to a very meaningful answer.

Mr GARDINER: A lot depends on individual schools and the leadership of individual schools. In my view there is far too much variability at that level, and in teachers when you get down to it for that matter, and the Department of Education in particular, in my view and in my external experience, is not very good at rolling out change of any kind across the board and it is something that they should be working on. In fact—and, again, this is my personal view—I do not believe the education department knows how bad it is at doing that; I think they have a much higher view of their ability than I would on that particular topic.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is a remarkably difficult task though.

CORRECTED

Mr GARDINER: I grant you that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Eight hundred thousand students, thousands and thousands of schools, regional, urban. It is a very challenging task.

Mr GARDINER: It is a very difficult task, which, in my view, should actually elevate the priority within the department to focus on how this can be done much better and what other organisations do. One of my general frustrations, having not personally ever worked within the education bubble, as I would call it, is the unwillingness or the inability of the education sector to look at what goes on outside education and see what other people have done and if they did that in this particular area of changed management I think they would be much better off and maybe have a much better understanding of what it is that they could do better. Your point about the sheer challenge of implementing change in the education department, yes, this is a very difficult, complex, large organisation and that does increase the degree of difficulty enormously.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Which brings me to my next question. There is a cultural issue here that I think you are identifying. In your view, would it be useful to look at perhaps bringing in an independent enabler or organisation or body which has teaching expertise, which has perhaps some other expertise relating to budgeting and the like and perhaps even an internal audit function, looking at best practice, looking at being able to bring in the new ideas, the innovation, to help drive change in the education sector?

Mr GARDINER: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I think it is referred to overseas and in the United Kingdom as an inspectorate type approach. It is an independent sort of body which enhances accountability and drives best practice and outcomes.

Mr GARDINER: Yes, a couple of things. Just on the UK inspectorate, I have seen that model without delving into it deeply. I do not know as an organisation that we ever actually looked at it and formed an opinion at an organisational level.

Mr DOUMANI: Not at an organisational level.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do not let that colour it too much. It is an independent body that could oversight driving change, focus on best practice, accountability et cetera.

Mr GARDINER: Let me draw a distinction between two aspects that you are alluding to, I think, in your question. Firstly, I should disclose that I spent most of my professional life working for a large professional services firm whose function in life was to go to our clients and take an idea they have and move it forward into actual reality; so I may be a little biased in my answer. But in terms of actually driving out this kind of change and implementing the complex organisations, yes I would see, certainly from my personal experience, there is enormous value in getting competent external organisations to help drive that process through. Obviously, it has to be the right organisation with the right skills.

The other aspect which you got into is the inspectorate kind of activity, which I see as somewhat separate to driving the change through. Yes, it helps reinforce it and embed it and make it operational on an ongoing basis. Yes, I think that is an important aspect as well. That is something which could be done better but it is not, I must admit, something that I have given a huge amount of thought to at this point.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In your submission and in your evidence today you said that in standardised testing you are often trying to get multiple outcomes from a single test. I think part of the reason that we fall back on NAPLAN as an indicator or a standardised test is a lack of other options. If we are looking at measuring outcomes, I note your point at the beginning that it is difficult, what are the other things that we can look for, in your experience, in a school that shows that things are going well?

Mr GARDINER: Yes—

Mr DOUMANI: One might be—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You can take it on notice if you like.

Mr GARDINER: I was just thinking how to put the answer together.

Mr DOUMANI: I suppose one point would be what do the people who graduate from the school go on to do after they graduate. Do they go on to become productive citizens or not? Even if they get a high academic result does that necessarily lead on to becoming a productive citizen, for example. That is one.

CORRECTED

Mr GARDINER: There are multiple feedbacks. Obviously the opinion of your stakeholders in the community—the parents et cetera—make a difference and count, or should do and the students themselves. Even just talking to my elder son who has actually been completely through the school and university systems had some very interesting reflections on his experience at school, I discovered, when he finished. Some of those things are difficult to measure, some of them are hard to attribute to the contribution the particular school makes. It is very complex. There is certainly scope for plenty of different measures which come in. One of the challenges, as you no doubt would be aware, is the ability to measure all the things which are relevant as opposed to a very nebulous idea of, yes, we are doing a good job or, no we are not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I hesitate to say in a Committee but I think we all come from the position that we acknowledge that the learning just does not start at the school gate. As parents we are clear partners in that and you are only measuring a part of that and any element of measuring is going to be taken into account. Certainly from my perspective I am interested in tracking the improvement level. Let us not look at raw outcomes, let us look at improvement models. I am interested in what other things we can be measuring in schools. What do you see in schools? What is the feedback from parents and stakeholders that says this is what we want to see in our schools? Is it great communication from the teachers to the P&Cs? Is it some kind of wellbeing program? I am going to get back on my breakfast club bandwagon—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You are a "cereal" offender?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: She loved the movie; that is the whole thing.

Mr GARDINER: Firstly, most of the feedback we get is more focused around—

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Breakfast program, I should say.

Mr GARDINER: Most of the feedback we get is more about P&Cs themselves and their operational issues. We get more anecdotal evidence about the kinds of things you are asking about here. I am not sure there is a lot I can add off the cuff on this.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is fine. You may have overheard us talking about the announcement the Victoria Government made yesterday that it is going to implement a new program that will give teachers $50,000 to go into the most disadvantaged urban schools, not just regional schools, and a range of other improvement programs. Does the P&C have a view on programs like that?

Mr GARDINER: Again, I do not know if we have got an institutional view that we have discussed.

Mr DOUMANI: No, not to my knowledge we do not.

Mr GARDINER: My personal view—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You can take it on notice.

Mr GARDINER: It would take a while for us to agree on a position on that, I think.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Give us your personal view.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Ask for forgiveness later.

Mr GARDINER: That is right. So with a caveat this is a very personal view, increased pay is an element, I think, that needs to come in for teachers related to their abilities. Coming back to your earlier point that is very challenging to get right, and one of the key requirements, is to make sure that it does not drive bad behaviour in terms of competition between teachers, given that I think teaching to be done effectively is a cooperative activity but it is an element. In particular, it is difficult to staff schools and it is an element but it is only one of the elements which I think can be applied. I mentioned earlier the department was doing a staffing review. At least at the early point when they were setting scope one of the elements did include the ability to staff schools and what levers they should have available to pull. There were some things they were doing at that time. I commend them for doing that.

Historically one of the main tools the Department of Education has used is a point system that you can get by serving in remote schools you get some advantage or preference in then going to a school of your preference in the metropolitan area on the coast. I think to the extent that that was ever a good model, I think that has now long passed its used by date and that there are other techniques which should be used to make sure that the difficult to staff schools are correctly staffed. Anecdotally my opinion seems to be that the schools with, arguably, the least need in the higher socio economic areas are the easiest to staff and, therefore, are the preferred schools of many

CORRECTED

of the best teachers which is great for me, because I live in northern Sydney, but from an equity statewide point of view, I do not think that is necessarily the right outcome.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think that is a fair point. I have one last question which you have brought me to. In your submission you talk about the importance of teacher equality and you say "the likeliest reason for problems in teaching lies in the training and accreditation process of teachers and the failure of government in providing high-quality subject specialist teachers". In light of that do you have a view on the current system in Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER] literacy and numeracy testing that graduates are now required to undertake? Does that address that?

Mr GARDINER: For initial teacher education?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes.

Mr GARDINER: I think that is very blunt and minor instrument, given the nature of what is going on there.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not unhelpful.

Mr GARDINER: It is not unhelpful, yes, okay we will go with that. I have certainly come across teachers of my own children whose knowledge of the primary school level, in particular I am thinking, of mathematics and their ability to teach it was very poor and reflects a lack of comfort themselves with mathematics as a subject, and I suspect a dislike of it. This comes back to the kind of cultural issues we were talking about earlier, I believe from what I have seen that some of those teachers effectively passed on their own attitudes to maths to the students that they were teaching at the primary school level to the long-term detriment of those students when they pursued their education further and, de facto, closed off many career paths to them as a result, and I think that is very unfortunate as an outcome.

One comment I would like to make that related to the question you have raised, and I am not sure how close this is to the actual terms of reference of the inquiry—again, this is a personal opinion rather than an institutional opinion—I am continually surprised of the difference between teaching as a profession and all the other professions with which I am familiar in terms of how people come out of their initial education, usually a degree, and the degree in teaching to which those new graduates are given unsupervised, deep responsibility to an extent which is, in my experience, unknown in any other profession.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It happens in engineering as well, which should make you frightened.

Mr GARDINER: That surprises me more. I am not an engineer but my father and brother are engineers and that was not the way I perceived their careers. A newly qualify teacher is put in front of a class with essentially very limited to no supervision. If I compare that to what goes on in the accounting world, in law firms and to some degree I had some contact with architects, it just does not happen that way. This is not just initially but for the entire period that they are teachers there is, compared to any other profession, very little oversight.

The CHAIR: Instructional leaders are changing that a bit, but to what degree? The jury is still out.

Mr GARDINER: Exactly. One way of potentially addressing it to a degree which then would make teaching more analogous to some of those other professions is team teaching approaches where there is a mix of teacher of school levels in the one classroom at the one time provides for more effective oversight of teachers as they develop their skills. We are in the very early stage of that kind of thing. There are plenty of things to go wrong in introducing those kind of activities as well.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I am interested in your points with respect to the bureaucracy of education and being able to change it and the interaction then of Local Schools, Local Decisions. You commented in your submission about the lack of specialist teachers, for instances. Have you found that school P&Cs advocating through their own devolved school base have been able to get some specialist teachers into schools through Local Schools, Local Decisions?

Mr DOUMANI: Speaking anecdotally, no.

Mr GARDINER: Yes, to a very little extent. Anecdotally, to a limited extent P&Cs can advocate and kick up a stink—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is what I am thinking effectively.

Mr GARDINER: That is about the limit and the degree to which that has much of an impact is a bit debateable.

CORRECTED

Mr DOUMANI: And to the extent to which they do it is also not very clear.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Generally in terms of Local Schools, Local Decisions do you find that P&Cs have more ability to influence local schools in their decision making?

Mr GARDINER: Without actually surveying them, no.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: The frustration is still coming up to you?

Mr GARDINER: Yes.

Mr DOUMANI: Speaking anecdotally, yes, it is very mixed. The thing with Local Schools, Local Decisions is that it seems largely up to the principal how much they consult with the parent community and wider school community.

The CHAIR: Is that variable?

Mr GARDINER: Very variable, yes. The degree to which principals consult with their parent community is very variable.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Should there be a mandatory obligation on principals to consult with their school community and if there is a functioning P&C make that the P&C on their proposal for the spending under Local Schools, Local Decisions?

Mr GARDINER: As the forum, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Why should that not be mandatory?

Mr GARDINER: Good question. I think there needs to be more discussion. My personal experience is that the degree to which the principal and school leadership consults with parents in any form on spending questions is very variable.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Well why shouldn't there be a mandatory requirement to consult?

Mr GARDINER: I think that that would be a commendable idea.

The CHAIR: Great idea. I can tell you a story about that, but not in this forum.

Mr GARDINER: No-one is going to push back.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think if you push back you would get rolled at the next annual general meeting, Mr Gardiner.

Mr GARDINER: We had a debate about how effective it might be having that involvement of the P&C but it would depend on the community. I can imagine that some communities would be right in there and others would be very standoffish but the opportunity should be there.

The CHAIR: The problem is that not all principals are right in there. That is the stumbling block.

Mr GARDINER: I think that is where we start.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: At a minimum there should be an obligation to consult.

Mr GARDINER: I think so.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How that plays out in different school communities will depend on the strength of the school community and the good faith of the principal.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I would like to tease out, a little bit, your criticisms of the outcomes based budgeting. It is very difficult. You spoke about Service NSW. One of the things that was outlined to the Committee the other day was that it is, very much, trying to get beyond the input based model You are quite right—it is difficult what to do when assessing education and education standards.

The focus in the past has been on inputs—we are teaching this many students, doing this program—but this is about how you get to a more holistic base of looking at it. I agree it is quite nebulous in terms of what you assess and those inputs. Do you think that perhaps there could be benefits in the move from the input where it is just about activity, and looking at budgeting that is based on activity, to something that is more holistic?

Mr GARDINER: What I would really like to see if we move in this direction is an actual concrete proposal which we can evaluate. Until then I think it is very hard to express a solid opinion. I have expressed a lot of opinions about what I think are some of the challenges of implementing it. If you can overcome that, that

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would be great and we could look at it. In terms of where we are at the moment, you would be well aware that an input based funding model is far easier to work with and it is very traditional, particularly in an area like education with difficult to define outcomes. With that model of input-based funding, that does not preclude having proper measurement of the results that are achieved and systems in place to reward or sanction people who are not doing a good job. But that is potentially quite easily a separate process to funding overall. I do not know if that is a good answer to your question.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It is all vague, so—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We were talking about strategies to get high-performing teachers into challenging schools.

Mr GARDINER: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You pointed out that there is not a problem getting high-performing teachers in high-performing schools. In fact, they tend to be magnets. What is your thought in terms of that stickiness of good teachers in good schools? Once someone is in a good school they want to spend their entire career in that one school. That can sometimes be problematic, as well. Does the P&C have any views about that?

Mr GARDINER: Again, it is not something that we have delved into institutionally. I would be expressing a personal opinion. On the attractive school question, an issue that has emerged on the North Shore, and I think on the northern beaches, is that, yes, teachers are attracted there, but we are losing teachers because of the commute problems and the cost of housing in Sydney. In my children's high school we have lost a lot of teachers who had originally come from the country. They are moving back up to the North Coast where they came from originally as soon as they get the chance. So there is a slight qualifier on that one. What was the second part of the question?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You have probably partly answered it—whether or not you think that issue about the stickiness of good teachers in good schools has good and bad aspects to it.

Mr GARDINER: Definitely. I have had personal experience with some of my own children about teachers who have, frankly, outstayed their usefulness at a school. I should not go into too much detail about the actual experience but they really should not be in front of a classroom.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Somewhat stale?

Mr GARDINER: "Stale" would be the polite way of putting it and maybe not quite adequate.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There are two other thing I want to raise but I am more than happy if you want to finish that. I did not want to chop you off.

Mr GARDINER: You have got to the point. Stickiness is potentially good and potentially bad. It needs to be managed. In terms of driving stickiness, I know there are some schools where the turnover is far too high. That, again, is something which could be better managed with the right incentives in place. Again, that is not tied specifically to whether we have input our output based funding.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But it is at both ends of the spectrum where it can become problematic.

Mr GARDINER: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Excessive turnover and lack of turnover can both be—

Mr GARDINER: Yes, definitely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You were talking particularly about teachers when they first graduate. They do their three months or so in a class as student teachers and then they are literally thrown out and become solely responsible for 25 to 30 kids. One of the programs that the Government has rolled out is this highly accomplished and lead teachers program. But if you read the Auditor General's report that is a program in search of a mission. Do you think, from the P&C's perspective that part of the mission of that should be directly assisting those recently graduated teachers?

Mr GARDINER: My personal opinion is that I do not think that that is the right path down which to go. There is nothing wrong with it in itself, but it is not the model that I am familiar with in other professions, and it is not hitting that path.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: All right.

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Mr GARDINER: I have not really seen those teachers being used that way in a school. They get the extra accreditation, and I have not seen any practical consequence within the school of the fact that those teachers have that extra accreditation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is exactly what the Auditor General said.

Mr GARDINER: I may have said that to the Auditor General, as well, anecdotally at my level.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am glad we closed the loop. The last thing I will ask you about is this issue about testing and standardised testing. It can be criticised as having this observer effect that is known in physics. The fact of measuring something changes it.

Mr GARDINER: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed, if you look at the fact of the measuring that has been happening since NAPLAN was rolled out in 2008, you can pretty much map the roll out of NAPLAN with the reduction in outcomes on international standings in New South Wales.

Mr GARDINER: Yes, I have heard that suggestion.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you have any concerns about more educational resources being devoted to measurement as opposed to teaching?

Mr GARDINER: Yes, and it comes back to the purpose of the testing. If the testing is part of the teaching process then that makes sense in terms of driving good outcomes. To the extent that it is not, then that is potentially detrimental to the educational process.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So is it the P&C's view that testing should be focused on educational outcomes not generating data?

Mr GARDINER: Is that a—

Mr DOUMANI: I think that that is a fair statement.

Mr GARDINER: I think we have a statement on the topic of testing, and I think that would be a paraphrase of what we would say.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think I have read your statement.

Mr GARDINER: That may have influenced you.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I want to touch further on some issues that were canvassed by the Hon. David Shoebridge.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I just get David Shoebridge.

The CHAIR: He chooses not to be honourable.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Sorry, Mr David Shoebridge. In terms of parent engagement in how funds are spent in schools under Local Schools, Local Decisions there is a mechanism. Each school is required to have a school plan. Can you provide some comment around what kind of support we might be able to provide to parents to participate in that planning process?

Mr GARDINER: The first is the desire to be engaged in it in the first place. I think that most parents have limited time, desire and, maybe, ability to be heavily involved in that kind of process. My experience—remembering that I am probably one of the more readily engaged parents—is that it is still a very minimal kind of engagement. In my own children's high school there is some surveying of parents about their preferences and desires, which was input to the school executive developing the plan. The school plan was run by the P&C and probably more generally to get some feedback, but the actual involvement and feedback in that process was, in practice, minimal.

And this is a high school in northern Sydney. It is a fairly engaged parent community and capable and willing. And even there, there is not a high degree of engagement. People are busy, if nothing else, and there are some cultural issues as well, in other places.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are there any interventions that the State could make that could facilitate or assist? I know that in some schools they have put in place community liaison officers who actively work to build the P&C and its capacity. Do you have any views about that approach?

CORRECTED

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: You could take the smart phones off parents for a month.

Mr GARDINER: Right. We could try the students, first. All those things help. There are certainly schools where having the community liaison officers have made a huge improvement in community engagement and, in turn, having student engagement and attendance at school. So they are good activities. Whether they get you all the way there and whether they work effectively or cost effectively in all schools I am open to doubt.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How are they funded? I have not been able to establish how the community liaison officers actually—

Mr GARDINER: I cannot remember how the department does it. It would be preferable to direct that question to the department itself. Like any of these funding questions in the department there has usually been a huge history which resulted in the situation today and uncovering what the actual process is usually takes time and ends up being an extremely convoluted process. Again, coming back to the staffing entitlement process underway, as part of that the department has had someone go through all of the decisions which have accreted over time and, from memory, they come up with now one document which explains exactly how all the different kinds of staffing—obviously, there are a couple of hundred—are allocated to schools, and I think it is over a couple of dozen pages of pretty close typing. In practice it is extremely complicated and I would not be surprised if funding for some of the community liaison officers has already reached that level.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Earlier in your evidence you talked about the departmental inertia. I wanted to ask you what your views are on that echelon of departmental leadership above the principal level. I think there are—

Mr GARDINER: Directors, executive directors, deputy secretaries.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: From what I can gather, that first layer above principals tends to be almost universally drawn from principals.

Mr GARDINER: Mostly principals, yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: So there is no influx of different ideas other than people who are already immersed in the system.

Mr GARDINER: Very limited, yes.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you think that is the source of the key inertia in the department?

Mr GARDINER: No. Again, a personal opinion: I think if there was an influx of people from outside I do not think that solves the problem. I think ultimately this is a leadership and a will problem.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: At the top?

Mr GARDINER: I do not want to point directly to Mark Scott, of whom I have quite a degree of confidence, it is not just a one-person thing; obviously it would need political backing as well. If you go back into the history of major educational changes in this State over the last 100-plus years, each of them has had a very long gestation period with an enormous amount of pressure having to be applied from different sources and including political backing in order to make the changes. In my view, quite a lot of the changes which are probably needed are substantial in nature, have a high risk and are a big ask for anyone involved, including political backers of them. So I do not underestimate some of the challenges of moving the education system to a state that I would find more attractive.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What would be the one change that you would—

Mr GARDINER: The things that are on foot or potentially on foot at the moment, I think one thing that does have a potential for a significant positive impact is changing the way, at least with public schools, the department works out what staff a school can have. At the moment it is highly bureaucratised, very prescriptive, and a constant complaint from principals, particularly the more capable principals, is their hands are tied into what staff they can put into their school. As a very simple point example: I come from my children's high school with a significant number of students and the number could crossover in the near future and the school could be entitled to another deputy principal.

The principal has said to me that if they get to that point she does not want a deputy principal; she has got enough of them already. She wants to be able to use the funding to do other things. There are other staff which she needs more. At the moment she does not have the flexibility to do that. At the moment the staffing entitlement is very rigid in the way it allocates staff; it does not provide the right flexibility. It also allocates staff as opposed

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to allocating funding, for example, and lending the school leadership team with potentially some guidance and some constraints, work out how to apply that funding to different teachers at different levels.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But you are critical of the way the funding is allocated through Local Schools, Local Decisions. So giving more of that responsibility to principals seems to be conflicting with that earlier evidence.

Mr GARDINER: I take your point. Part of the issue for me is the ability of principals to run their schools. Historically they are the most able teachers and ambitious who have been promoted up through the ranks with very little training in how to run a school. They are just super-teachers historically in terms of their background as opposed to people who have been trained to run a school. The department has been trying to work on this and I think the UK—not that I have looked at it in detail—has long had a much better process of training people who are potentially going to become principals.

Some time ago, as part of the staffing review or perhaps just at the same time, the then head of HR in the department was working very heavily on improving the pipeline of people able to become principals, in terms of making sure they have got the right experience and the right skills. That is where the lack is. It is not that we should not devolve more responsibilities and decision-making power to principals and the associated leadership teams, it is making sure that when we do that we have actually got them with the right skill and ability.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is a system-wide issue here as well. Maybe one of the key things in that is ensuring there are enough deputy principals who are getting those skills. The very example you give about the local needs of your school, not wanting another deputy principal, might push against the system-wide need to train enough people to take over the job of being principals. If you devolve it all down to the principals you might get a systemic problem.

Mr GARDINER: Yes. It is not that you would give complete freedom to the principals; they need to work within guidelines. Again I come back to my own professional experience, when I was running a project team I could staff it any way I wanted except I had to make sure that I delivered that team and I had to make sure that I was developing staff to fill our pipeline needs. So that is a model that I am familiar with that I know works well, but it requires people to have the right knowledge and experience and culture to be able to implement it continuously. We could talk more about the point; there is a lot to talk about there.

The CHAIR: I thank Mr Gardiner and Mr Doumani for their contribution. I look forward to working with you in the future on other matters. Thank you very much.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

CORRECTED

JAMES LADWIG, Associate Professor, School of Education, University of Newcastle, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for your submission and also your participation at the hearing today. Did you want to make a short statement at the beginning?

Associate Professor LADWIG: I hope in the submission I have given you a sense that I can provide a wide-ranging background on the issues of concern now. I am happy to move straight on to it, but on the general question of trying to design systems of funding that take into account performance as well as inputs, just a little story. Just a little bit of a warning: it is a personal recount of an event at a school that has a lot of meaning to me, so I may tear up as I go into it. One of my daughters, my youngest daughter, went to a performing arts high school that had a practice that you do not see very often, and that is, every term in the first couple of years at the high school where the kids first just got in, whatever they auditioned for—you had arts, you had dance people, you had people doing various kinds of singing et cetera—at the beginning of every term all the kids were encouraged to prepare a performance by the end of term on something they have never done before.

The idea was to get them early on in their career to have a wide range of experiences in the performing arts across multiple disciplines, et cetera. It was conducted largely by the kids. The kids were asked to name what they were going to do. If they need resources from the year 8 adviser they organised it—it could be practise spaces, learning how to do different kinds of notations, finding a guitar, whatever. My daughter and three of her friends decided to write a composition. Two of them were violin players, including my daughter, two were singers one of whom played piano, et cetera. One was just a singer. The girl who was just a singer had lost her father to cancer two years prior and I had gotten to know her quite a bit over the first years of the secondary school. That is the hard bit in the background, by the way.

I had known this girl since she was 12. She was a very shy girl. My daughter at that point had got in at the school playing saxophone but was playing violin for this particular piece. The girl whose father had passed away had written lyrics based on her losing her father and coming to terms with that. Over the course of them practising in my living room, two weeks before my daughter comes up and says "Dad, we need the cello". This is when she learned how to play cello—because they wanted a different kind of rounding out of the sound, was the argument. Anyway on the day the deputy principal of the school was a former student of mine. I asked if I could come and participate because these are usually closed, they are not open to parents. He invited me along. So I come to watch and on the day and I was sitting there with half a dozen other people, other students. The year adviser said "Let's get started" this was early in the morning. From there on everything was run by the students.

These are 12-, 13- or 14-year-old students and they were all doing different performances. They had an emcee, a schedule and the whole thing going. It was fascinating because I knew many of the kids and they were performing on things they had never done. They had a group of ballet dancers do contemporary dance that they had never done and it was orchestrated et cetera. After every performance all of the kids gave copious congratulations, compliments and support to each other. It turned out that my daughter's group was listed last and by the time we got to that I am sitting there nervously wondering if she is going to play in tune. The song begins and it becomes clear to the audience that it is about this girl's dad—I am sorry.

The CHAIR: That is all right, tearing up about schooling, I have done it many times.

Associate Professor LADWIG: This is one that gets me. They go through this whole performance—the kids are now in university so I know what has happened since. But this young girl who was incredibly shy is singing about losing her father and now wanting to remember it. At the end of the performance the audience just exploded in standing ovation. It had as much to do with the musical kind of quality of the work—it was good work—as it did to the meaning. There were two things about that experience that are rare in schools. It is rare in schools to see a chance for children to try something new for the sake of trying something new. To get as wide an experience as possible is rare. It is even rarer to find situations where the students support each other in that way.

If we are talking about outcomes let us think about what outcomes do we mean. If we want to talk about measuring different kinds of outcomes let us think about the consequences of measuring different kinds of outcomes and how that goes and think about it in terms of the larger system we want to create where we can sit back and say "Our children have had the opportunities to explore multiple avenues of life where they could find meaning and success." I would like to be able to say that. I am not sure we do. I will start there.

The CHAIR: They are incredibly valuable points. I can share one of my reflections on school. One of the best moments in our family was a boy who was on the spectrum at our small school. He befriended my younger son and the mother on a weekend said it was the first play day that the boy had ever had. It makes you appreciate

CORRECTED

that not everything in a school can be measured, should be measured. A lot of these dimensions are social and of a bonding form, an inspirational form that go well beyond anything to do with academia. This is one of the important things about a school. What this Committee is trying in outcomes measurement performance evidence is to ensure that you cover all the bases—the inspirational, the social bonding, the friendships that are made that are vastly important—as well ensuring through academic attainment kids can get a job and be good citizens and no more about the world than their parents and grandparents knew.

The Committee has evolved a little bit in that the government submission on Tuesday was talking about outcome based budgeting, not necessarily funding, although there is a recognition that our rigorous measurement performance outcome assessment there might be extra money for struggling students. How do we use that and get the better results is something that the Committee is very interested in as well. If I could come to your submission and the assessment of where New South Wales schools are at, you talk about schools' results in perhaps a more optimistic assessment of where we are at than what the department or the government submission made. Have you had a chance to look at it?

In terms of where New South Wales is at, they point to a collapse in the Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] attainment from the three domain average proficiency standard from 68 per cent of students in 2006 to a 10 per cent drop to 2015. Your assessment is that New South Wales schools are at the top of NAPLAN type rankings, and have been for an extended period of time. We have dropped in a couple of significant areas: year 7 numeracy to be third ranking in the Commonwealth and other areas and in spelling where we normally do a lot better. If you look at reading and numeracy New South Wales is either second or third in numeracy in all of those domains and fairly consistently behind Victoria which is ranked as the top State, the Australian Capital Territory which is ranked as the top Territory and in some of these areas Western Australia has taken over from New South Wales where that was not the case five or 10 years ago. Have you had a chance to look at the government submission? Do you detect this worrying concern that New South Wales is dropping?

Associate Professor LADWIG: No, I do not and the reason has to do with the nature of the tests and how you make judgements about change over time, and the technicalities of statistical modelling, to be honest with you. The change in the drops you are talking about are, if you look at the overall scores, miniscule. They are barely within a margin of nine outside so they are not all that statistically significant. The measures themselves, when you ban them according to proficiency rates, you will find these kind of shifts. That is known as coarsening data and that increases the margins very greatly. It is quite popular but it is actually not a great representation of what the test tells you. There have been shifts down—they have not been huge. I would not be worried about them. You will notice the lowest rank you mentioned was third.

The CHAIR: I should correct myself. I was looking at minimum standards on page six of the government submission. It talks about overall NAPLAN rankings and we are third or fourth in reading and consistently third throughout numeracy. We are the spelling State in the Commonwealth but if you cannot read and write and do numbers perhaps spelling is not as useful as it might otherwise be.

Associate Professor LADWIG: For NAPLAN?

The CHAIR: Yes. But where are the areas where New South Wales has moved ahead or, as you say, over a 30 year period, has been stable? Something must have been measured to point to that for you to reach that conclusion?

Associate Professor LADWIG: That they are stable?

The CHAIR: Yes.

break

Associate Professor LADWIG: There are several years of international comparative data you can take a look at. If you look at the overall rating scales—and you might want to do that when you have a look at the scales and not just look at the little snippet, look at the overall—the shift overall is pretty stable. It has not shifted much at all.

The CHAIR: We relied on the Government submission—

Associate Professor LADWIG: I understand the concern.

The CHAIR: It is their job to put these things in context and we then assess them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: First of all, can you tell us the difference between the TIMSS data and the PISA data?

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Associate Professor LADWIG: Sure. TIMSS is an international data that was based on, essentially—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you know what the acronym is?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Third international maths science—something. It also had literacy in it. It is at Boston University.

The CHAIR: Trends In International Mathematics and Science Study.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Thank you.

The CHAIR: And there is another one called PIRLS, which is Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Right, and the PIRLS is strictly the reading focus area. What does PISA stand for? That is the OECD one every three years.

The CHAIR: PISA is Program for International Student Assessment. I can't be failed as a chairman because I have my cheat notes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is the difference between TIMSS and PISA?

Associate Professor LADWIG: There is a difference between the testing itself but PISA was designed by the OECD to try to do national levels of comparison. The samplings for New South Wales is a little bit different but it is largely national and it is a sample test of 15-year-olds. TIMSS has a similar protocol, slightly different scaling of different kinds of items and a different conception of what they are measuring. The PISA will say that what they are measuring is scientific literacy, TIMSS will be more about "science".

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Which do you think is a more useful measure in terms of educational outcomes? Or you could say neither.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Of those two?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

Associate Professor LADWIG: They are similar. They are not like NAPLAN. They are not population tests. They are sample based and they are simpler. TIMSS would be more tied to what would be called the criterion referenced assessment.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Do you think would be useful for this Committee to ask for not just the relative ranking but the raw scores going back over a decade of both of those?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Sure. I would also, if I were you, ask for the standard errors and/or the confidence interval. You would want the confidence interval on that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think we probably should to get a better understanding.

Associate Professor LADWIG: And same thing with the NAPLAN issue too. The NAPLAN issue, standard errors and confidence intervals are not small and that has to do with the number of items of each domain. The errors are not something to sneeze at.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On PISA, there are different components within PISA. There is the raw scores then there is proficiency levels and then there is rankings, that is right?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Right.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: So we cannot just talk about PISA?

Associate Professor LADWIG: The raw scores are going to be allocated to rankings—proficiency levels.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Standards.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It is very similar to the way that they have done the NAPLAN. They give you the band scores in NAPLAN; you get a raw score in that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It gives you your proficiency.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Let us just be clear that when we are talking about PISA we are talking about proficient? Sorry, I am anticipating Mr Shoebridge's question.

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Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am going to ask you about this data the Chair was asking you about. The table that we got shows the percentage of students who achieved the equivalent of the national proficient standard for Australia on a three domain average from PISA. That showed OECD students between 2006 and 2015. There is four testing points there. We are pretty much stable at 57, 57, 56, 55 per cent, we are meeting the national proficiency standard?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Sounds about right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What it shows for New South Wales schools is that it slipped. I would say a very substantial decrease from 68 per cent in 2006 to 66 per cent in 2009 to 63 per cent in 2012 and then dropping dramatically to 58 per cent in 2015. That seems to go beyond the margin of error.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I do not know, I would have to look at the details. If I can explain was going on there?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I am going to give you a two-folded answer on this. What you do not know from the percentage of students on the proficiency level is where they are on the raw score. You can have a large number of people on the borderline tipping over. That percentage is going to have a margin of error itself. The margin of error of that percentage is going to be larger than the margin of error because it is by bands. That may or may not be a statistically significant move. Would be something that I would be worried about? Yes, it would. I would be worried about it. I would not ignore it. But I would go back to the observation that it has happened since the introduction of a mandatory standardised test on literacy and numeracy with a fairly heavy-handed approach to it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed. The real collapse in those numbers is between 2009 and 2015 and that coincides with NAPLAN being rolled out in 2008.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If I was a proponent of NAPLAN I would look at this and be anxious. I am not, by the way.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I have been known to say things like that in public.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You are not anxious?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am anxious and I am not a proponent.

The CHAIR: It is hard to blame for days of testing in 13 years.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This comes back to the issue about the purpose of testing and standardised testing. Standardised testing, I would have thought, may have some benefit if its primary goal is an educational outcome. And there is ancillary benefit from that that you get some kind of data that you can measure but the idea that we are doing testing in order to measure seems to me to be problematic in an education system. I do not know what your views are.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I can summarise it quickly and if you are interested I have a fair bit about this. On the what you measure issue, about 10 years ago I did a review of the literature on non-academic outcomes to find out what we knew at that point and the answer is: Not a heck of a lot, to be honest. There is lots of different kinds of programs where people argue for outcomes other than academic outcomes. The research that can allow you to tie improvements to particular programs as opposed to others is a bit wanting in almost every area, just about every area outside of basic literacy, numeracy academic testing. That is where almost all our testing data is there are some positive things you can attribute a different kinds of programs that are specialist but it is pretty rare to get a decent body of research around any of these.

On the question of whether or not you want to test non-academic outcomes, you need to start thinking about the subsequent consequences. I will come to NAPLAN fairly quickly. That is, whenever you set up a system where there is some kind of stake being claimed on the basis of some measured outcome, that creates incentive systems. Part of what we saw in the introduction of NAPLAN you would have heard the anecdotal stories yourself, they were in the news, you had schools gaming the system to get better scores, you have got schools taking time out of a regular curriculum to learn how to take a test et cetera. When you get a focus on a testing system like that the consequences are quite predictable and the early advocates who said that there were going to be low stakes, they were simply wrong. I think they were optimistic but they were wrong.

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The CHAIR: Where is your comprehensive evidence for this? It does not support what I have found as a parent but that is anecdotal too.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It supports what I have found as a parent.

The CHAIR: Is there something beyond anecdotes in a newspaper that has surveyed all schools?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Surveyed all schools? Probably not. I do not know but there has been quite a lot of evidence on it.

The CHAIR: Can you point us to that please?

Associate Professor LADWIG: I can take it on notice and send you links.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There was a 2012 study which showed some of this, a fairly comprehensive study, and then there was another one released more recently about data that was gathered in 2017.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It does vary quite extensively from State to State and we keep that in mind. New South Wales is probably the most muted and the most mature about it because they had already built from it. I am not worried about New South Wales in all honesty. But you did have things like in Queensland, principals had KPIs drafted on their performance on NAPLAN—

The CHAIR: We are worried about New South Wales.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Lo and behold, that led to particular behaviours.

The CHAIR: I am not surprised.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This takes us to the point: If there is going to be funding associated with outcomes, that would almost certainly come with those KPIs and things.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Which is why I am raising the issue. Think about how you are going to embed it and what the consequent behaviours are going to be of people who have to live within the system. That is the issue. On the NAPLAN thing, if we open that can of worms, I have written on this, NAPLAN was written and developed for multiple, multiple, multiple purposes and that is the significant problem of NAPLAN. If you want a test that teachers can use diagnostically for children there are ways to do that. It would not be NAPLAN. NAPLAN is far too short, to be blunt; the number of items is very small, the reliability on it for individuals needs to be triangulated with other data et cetera. So there are better ways to do that if that is what you wanted to do.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are any of those addressed by the online NAPLAN, the adaptive?

Associate Professor LADWIG: No, not really because the online NAPLAN still meets the original form of the NAPLAN, which was dictated by the political mandate of the time, not the testing. The initial test it is based on was the Basic Skills Test in New South Wales, which was designed to be able to be aggregated at a school level to identify schools in need of review. That was the main point of the Basic Skills Test and it was working for that purpose. So at a school level you can find extremes. By the way, the standard error between schools and confidence intervals is such that 80 per cent of the schools you basically cannot distinguish.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: To that point on NAPLAN, from Basic Skills to NAPLAN what has gone wrong? What has been the change that has taken a test, in your submission, Basic Skills that was working to NAPLAN which you have concerns with?

Associate Professor LADWIG: It has been put to different persons that it really cannot be served well. The Basic Skills Test was not individually diagnostic. There are now, in an attempt to justify NAPLAN, ways to try to make it individually diagnostic, but it is really not going to be sufficient.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: As parents we all get those reports where your child is, which band your child is in. Are you saying that the nature of NAPLAN means relying upon those bands is problematic as a parent?

Associate Professor LADWIG: It is highly problematic. On any of those kinds of tests—NAPLAN, PISA, TIMSS—they are all based on a form of modelling that is, first of all, they are estimates and you can assess the different kinds of error. The error is two forms, and it depends on what you are talking about; if you are talking about an individual student, that error is going to be a question of measurement error; if you are talking about a cohort it is going to be a question of sampling error, and there is a combination of both. So if you use NAPLAN to talk about a school you do not survey the whole school, you survey part of the school, and that changes every year. We can estimate confidence intervals around a school level because of the sampling.

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The measurement error is much more difficult with other data; the best estimate you are going to get is from Margaret Wu, who was at Melbourne uni, and her estimate was that it is going to be about 10 per cent—so plus or minus 10 per cent on any of those scores. You get plus or minus 10 per cent and you change bands pretty quickly. The bands were created to make it intelligible for a public audience, and this is one of the problems with NAPLAN. NAPLAN can be used by system people and people who know what it means well, but do parents get a confidence interval? Do they get it explained what a confidence interval is? Do they understand the different weightings of the different items?

Maybe I should go into this. The items like a spelling test, for example, the way those tests are designed is they get a number of items that almost everybody gets rights, a number that almost everybody gets wrong, and then an arrangement in between and they are given a difficulty scale that is based on the probability of the number they get right. This is called Rasch modelling, by the way. So what you are going to find is that some of those scores, when they are calculated to the Rasch score that gets reported, will get a weighting based on those probabilities and based on the scaling from year to year to year.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Getting the harder questions right gives you more credit.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It goes both ways. If you got all the questions on a year 5 test wrong, every one of them wrong, you would still get 300 points—it is scaled. The bottom and the top count much more than the rest. So you could get one spelling question right and change your band score three bands because it is worth 150 points.

The CHAIR: Do you think this critique of NAPLAN, matched by life's realities—I visit a lot of schools and no school uses NAPLAN as its front-line assessment technique; they use NAPLAN, they triangulate, they say it is third tier behind—

Associate Professor LADWIG: There are good ways to use NAPLAN.

The CHAIR: And also classroom assessment and NAPLAN is used to validate what they know in other areas and if there is a clash they will take the other areas, which makes sense. As a parent do I think NAPLAN is the be all and end all of where my kids are at? No. What is much more important: Can they read a book? What sort of books? What do they talk to me about the book? What sort of numbers are they doing? Are they progressing through year 10 algebra where I phase out in helping them adequately? What do they know about history? Can we talk about the world? Can we talk about geography?

They are all the things that tell me where the kids are really at, and NAPLAN, again for me and I am sure for many other parents, is a validation device. Okay, it is great to see them up in the triangle, but if I am finding in other areas it is not matched by the reality of what they actually know I go and talk to the teacher. Is there not a real world out there where people who do not like NAPLAN build it up as some high-stakes thing where in real life it is actually validating in low stakes?

Associate Professor LADWIG: If you look at the amount of time dedicated to it and the amount of stress kids face I would not think I would call it low stakes.

The CHAIR: Again, we do not see that. Some kids enjoy a bit of testing because it shows the world how good they are and they rise to that exciting opportunity.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I would be interested to find the evidence on which you are basing that claim.

The CHAIR: I will introduce you to them; I know them well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can I just begin by saying thank you very much; this has been really, really useful certainly for me and I think it is engaging for all of us. I have a couple of really different questions for you. The first thing I wanted to ask you is about the Auditor-General's report into teacher quality. I think that is one thing that is universally acknowledged: we need to get better teachers, we need to get good-quality teachers into classrooms. One of the things that the Auditor-General identified was that there is not a definition there, there is a lack of clarity around what a good teacher is, from the department at least setting a direction. Do you think we can do that?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Many systems around the planet have been trying to assess teacher performance for about 25 years. There are different ways you can do it. There are many systems around the planet that tried to do it in an attempt to link it with performance pay and that kind of thing. I think you will find a number of those are now collapsing because they do not work in many ways. There are two things going on. First of all you have got an institute that has defined standards of teachings that are applied to all the teachers that is already

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in place both nationally and at the State level and it would be very hard to unravel from that, but that is not the department; that is a separate authority.

To say that we do not have a measure of standards is not quite true; we have got that. There are other ways you can get evidence. What those standards do not do, by the way, is give a heck of a lot of evidence about directly what is going on in classrooms in actual teaching; it is kind of much more general. There are measures for what goes on in the classrooms; I authored one of them that is in use—there are not many around the planet. The one in use in New South Wales is called the Quality Teaching Framework—it is used and it is has been around for about 15 years. So the department can use that if it wanted to as a measure of what goes on in the classroom. There are four others on the planet, but all of those are going to be circumscribed. When people talk about what makes a quality teacher, quite often you get the things that are not measured—problem. Does that answer your question?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sort of. That is useful. I understand what you are saying, so yes, I guess it does.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think all of us who are parents and who have had kids at school and reflect on our own schooling experience, you know the good teachers. I reflect back upon my education experience and I can think of five or six teachers who really stand out, who inspire you and you want to carry on. I talk to my kids about their experience and they talk about the teachers that inspire them, the teachers that want them to continue on on a particular course. Is this one of the ways of assessing good teachers? An example might be that if you have Indonesian teachers in the school, you might measure the number of kids who are inspired to continue doing Indonesian. It could be that kind of tool—looking at it more from a student perspective—or is that student perspective inherently flawed?

Associate Professor LADWIG: What I was going to say about the classroom was that if you want to find out about the classroom there are only four ways you can do it. One is to ask the teacher. One is to ask the student. One is to collect some kinds of documents or artefacts. One is to go and watch.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Student opinion seems to me to be not being—

Associate Professor LADWIG: I can be. Obviously there are some things students will not be able to distinguish. You do not go asking lower secondary kids about the depth of their knowledge structure. They are not going to know that. Kids' input would be incredibly valuable along the way—triangulated.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Equally, you do not want it to be a popularity test for the teacher. Some of the best teachers might scare the bejesus out of you.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It is a puzzling issue. When I first came to Australia in 1992 I had this conversation with, I think, the then vice presidents of the federation. They were worried about this issue because the inspectors had just been removed. There were no inspectors and so it was, "How do we evaluate teachers?" There is a huge amount of work on how to evaluate teachers. If you want a teacher-evaluated system that is really big and robust, the response that you are going to get from the current system is, "Well, we have the standards and we do the portfolio standards." I have been a critic of those because there is more that you can do with that than is there," which is why I went back to them. That is going to be the reply you will get.

Personally I think that if you really want to have a system where you can rely on, or be confident in, the judgement about the quality of the teachers, you are going to have to rely on the judgement of the local people. You are going to have to rely on the judgement of the principals and the teachers themselves to be making those judgements. There is really no other way around it, because any of the measures that you develop are going to be very partial. They are going to cover things that seem to be important but not necessarily all the things that seem important. Trying to distinguish what makes a great teacher compared to another teacher—centuries of scholarship has attempted this one. So I do not know why we are thinking we are going to come up with—

The CHAIR: It is an interesting measure, though, isn't it? There are 20 kids at the start of year 11 in modern history and 10 by the end of the year. In university and vocational education completion rates matter. We do not seem to measure those in schools, and they are measurable.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes. I think the loss of kids in mathematics is a big problem. They get turned off pretty early.

The CHAIR: That too.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are there any models of 360 evaluation occurring across the globe that you can point to?

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Associate Professor LADWIG: There are a handful. Most of the documentation is going to come out of the United States. You have probably already talked to Pasi Sahlberg about how they do it in Finland. It is largely a collective. There are many ways to do it, but New South Wales is in the situation where, up until the 1990 reform Act, you had inspectors doing the jobs of looking after instructional leadership. Literally nothing was put in its place when that ended, for years and years, which is why the quality teaching thing became so popular. It was a measurement tool. That is what it was, and it became popular as a professional development language for talking about what quality teaching was. I have taught for 25 years, of course, on instructional leadership, trying to convince principals this is the role they should be taking on. The reality is that most principals do not have the time. So you have to find another structure.

The CHAIR: On notice, Professor, could you point us to some of the material that you have just referenced—Finland and elsewhere?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Finland. Pasi has done it. He lives in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: Sahlberg, you mentioned.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes, Sahlberg. You can ask him. With respect to the other literature on teacher evaluation, the big names in the United Sates come out of the Carnegie Foundation. That is headed up by Tony Bryk. By the way, if you want to know anything about value-added, add Tony.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: He is a value add.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It was his thesis in 1976.

The CHAIR: What was his name?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Anthony Bryk. The whole value-added thing—please take that with a big grain of salt.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You mentioned that.

Associate Professor LADWIG: The Carnegie Foundation has been doing quite a lot on it. The Gates Foundation has funded a huge number of projects on it but for the evaluation of them I would go back to Carnegie and ask which ones are working out well. There are going to be individual districts around the United States that do it in different ways.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Where this is leading in my mind is saying that if you are going to have someone with a valid helicopter view of the quality of teachers it will probably be the leadership team in the school.

Associate Professor LADWIG: It has to be.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Therefore we need to find a way of accessing that information. If you want a systemic response we need to find a way of accessing those opinions and views at a leadership level. That is where we should be looking—accessing those opinions and views and getting some kind of way of having a system-wide evaluation.

Associate Professor LADWIG: To be honest with you one of the things about the Government systems in New South Wales—it is probably true of the independents too—is that there is not a heck of a lot of straight-out innovation kind of work: Let's try something new to get this done. That does not happen a lot. There are a variety of reasons why it does not happen and there are reasons why we need more of it. As I said, I have been teaching about instructional leadership for three decades now, and I have worked with many principals. You are right about this problem. There is not a really good, sustainable, workable model out there that provides time for the leadership team to do the kind of leading of teaching that we are talking about.

There is a lot of work going on around it but it is going on around the edges of timetables. Who can get free to do what, kind of thing? It is not really built into somebody's job full time. One of the schools I have worked with quite extensively for about 15 or 16 years now is in the Far West on the Darling. They had a really good run for a couple of years because they used some of the extra funding they got to employ an instructional leader.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you think that this could be built into developing a career path for teaching—

Associate Professor LADWIG: Absolutely.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: —teachers rather than just putting our best teaching teachers into administrative roles?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Absolutely.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So you could become a senior teaching instructor and leader, which could be a career path separate from becoming a principal/administrator.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Absolutely. You have got the grant and proposal now for this kind of position, and it would be incredibly valuable if you could find a way to do it.

The CHAIR: We promote our best teachers out of the classroom, which is sort of counterintuitive.

Associate Professor LADWIG: But we are still working with teachers and classes. That is going to include—I should flag—a deep knowledge about curriculum and how curriculum can be designed differently. I would point to that as our major holder-back.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And obviously innovation is something in that—not only tolerating innovation but welcoming innovation in that—

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes, absolutely,

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: —instructional leadership.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Absolutely, and a different kind of curriculum and different kinds of curriculum units.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That is what I wanted to come to—innovation. How do we identify it? How do we benchmark it and promote it within the sector amongst schools? Specifically, you mentioned in your submission that there are too few examples, they are not supported over time and they are not rigorously evaluated. I would like you to expand on that and also reflect on an approach which is a little bit different to the current approach where we, perhaps, formalise a body of some description—independent, perhaps, of education—which actually drives this into the department, if you like, as a change agent to really promote this and to promote best possible outcomes, without a budgetary overlay—this is an outcome budget funded situation—as a way of driving better outcomes.

Associate Professor LADWIG: There are many ways to conceive it. The most simple example is, I am now as part of the team that designed and then chaired the valuation of—I was not always true on the design—the new Basics up in Queensland which was exactly that. It was an innovation where 50 schools were set aside for a trial. It had a new curriculum design and new assessment design and schools worked through the new material over the three years and we did 26 separate studies of facts, outcomes and stakeholder reliability and that kind of skilled trial can be done. It can be done around many things. It is a question of how big you want to go.

There are overt systems for designing innovation but you have got to marry with it, if you want to be serious about it, some kind of serious evaluation along the way so you get some fairly reliable data. Some of those innovations you are going to be able to test with a kind of randomised control trial. They can be difficult to negotiate sometimes but there are other ways to do it over time. You can assess causal effects over time. An example that I would think of right off the bat is if you want to promote a role for instructional leader, call for an innovation. Set aside a trial and say "We need 50 schools to try a different model for this." Let us figure out which of these models is going to work best and not cost us an arm and a leg and whatever other criteria you want to have.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would that be best done independently of the existing structures or within the existing departmental structure?

Associate Professor LADWIG: You would certainly need a level—it is going to be an interesting relationship—of independence because the reality is that all the people who are employed by the department are employed by the department and they will follow all the protocols to keep their jobs. They will do what they need to do and they are just like the rest of us.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It potentially disrupts an existing culture that is what I am exploring. If you are going to create perhaps innovation you need to bring in new ideas and new ways to look at things. Sometimes it is difficult to cut across the status quo.

Associate Professor LADWIG: What the system does to this point is it is really good at catching up on fads and so people will get their individual innovation, and not promote it but what they are not good at is

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structuring it systemically and implementing it long enough to have an effect because quite often what will happen is the person behind it gets promoted, they move on, the change stops. That happens a lot. The sustainability issue is a big issue. But yes, setting aside a separate body, I never thought of it at a State level but the Schools Commission used to do that in New South Wales and interstate.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How effective is the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] in doing that role at the moment? Is that supposed to be part of its remit?

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes, it is but it is constrained. It is all part of the department.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If they were a separate organisation would that be helpful?

Associate Professor LADWIG: You would need a whole different set of people.

The CHAIR: That is the frustration. They do a lot of case studies about schools that seemingly, it is almost like a fluke, the school did something different, it worked and they say "Look over here, look at this" and they say "share the information." but without any systems, incentives or implementation mechanism for others to necessarily have the same success. You go to those schools and they will say that on the downside there are teachers in the system, they will go to a conference, the new big idea, the fad is out there and they follow that. It is a dismal failure and they just move onto the next conference here about the next failing idea and implement that. There is no rigour in the system to stop the failed experiments being repeated nor the successful experiments being scaled up. That is the frustration in terms of making better schools out of education policy. Is that a fair comment?

Associate Professor LADWIG: I think that is a very accurate comment. One of the things I point out by the way, they are things you might want to think about, I would not advocate emulating the United States systems—I put an S on the end. Let us keep in mind we are talking about 10,000 school systems. One of the things they have done at the federal level around reforms and doing research around new innovations is they set the timeframe for the national Centres of Research are five years in the United States. That is longer than the time of a lower House member, it is a year shorter than a Senator, and it is a year longer than a President. So the cycles of innovation are outside of the direct control of any particular level of government.

The CHAIR: We have an eight-year term here. That is why we are custodians of good policy.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Surely our job is not to embed an innovation, it is to embed a structure which allows for the embedding of innovation. That is what you can do.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Hence the timing. Think about the timing of that. The immediate impact of government on schools is apparent, as governments come and go. Three months before any election it is a shutdown period, nothing much happens, et cetera.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I come back to principals, moving on, they start at innovation and get promoted, move on and it collapses. I have actually seen that in my own experience with my own children. How do we remedy that given that principals do not get to determine who their successors are. They are not necessarily able to embed deep cultural change in a school that survives their own tenure. Do you have any observations about how you might remedy that?

Associate Professor LADWIG: A couple of things are going on. You were talking about that previously in the kind of job structures of people in the department. As far as I know there is not going to be any easy solution to it. You could potentially create rewards for principals to stay on rather than move. That will go contrary to some of the other movements in the department as things go on.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It seems that rarely deputies step in to the principal's role when the principal leaves. It is not necessarily a foregone conclusion that the deputy will get the job.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Quite the opposite.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It seems quite often that an external person comes in and then they introduce a totally new regime.

Associate Professor LADWIG: I have somebody in my head right now. I know exactly what you are talking about.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It makes the system very volatile.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is almost like a test to the principal is it not? "Hi, I am a new voice. I am going to do everything differently."

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The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I was impressed by the point you made in your submission about the degree to which parents' socio economic background predicts children's subsequent education attainment declined in Australia during the 1980s. You referenced the Disadvantaged Schools Program and the Schools Commission. On notice, will you provide the Committee with a bit more information about those and what worked and what did not work?

Associate Professor LADWIG: I can give you a couple of things to look at right off the bat.

The CHAIR: Will you submit them on notice because we are well over time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It might assist the witness to knock them out now.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Just real quick. The decline of the effect of socio-economic status [SES]— Gary Marks, who is a sociologist who lives in Melbourne, documented that and made a big deal about it. He made an anti-Marxist argument about it. It is the case that the effect of SES was declining until about 1991. Now it has gone back to where it was before. It is about calling sides with the creation of the Schools Commission. One of the things the Schools Commission was able to do—there are many things it could not do—was that it was a motor of innovation and keeping things new. The Australian Schools project was a big chunk of that.

The CHAIR: Gary Marks from Melbourne University?

Associate Professor LADWIG: He is the sociologist who did that modelling. The Disadvantaged Schools Program is going to be well known in New South Wales.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The small reading I have done about that, one of the benefits of the commission was it continued on past principals. It had the capacity to insist upon carry through of projects.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Employ the innovations that have brought people on.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you just rely upon local leadership that does not happen.

Associate Professor LADWIG: Yes. It can be done.

The CHAIR: We will have to wrap up. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

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MICHAEL CARR, Deputy Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools NSW, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I congratulate you on the work you do. I say that as a member of Parliament and also a parent. It is a wonderful system that does tremendous work around New South Wales. Thank you for the very good submission and for your time today in participating in our hearing. Just to give you a bit of context, we had a hearing on Tuesday and heard from Government representatives that they are very much talking about in this process—which is still very much a work in progress—outcome-based budgeting. But it is clear that there will be some possible ramifications for funding of schools, disadvantaged schools, and how the Government goes about that.

What recommendations we make is very much part of our inquiry, but what at the bottom line we are hoping for as these terms of reference have evolved is that performance measurement, outcome assessment in New South Wales schools, particularly struggling, failing schools, would be a catalyst for improvement systems that scale up the sort of success that a small fraction of those underperforming schools actually achieve. So it is a wider remit than just the question of outcome-based budgeting and the notion—still a fairly vague notion—at government level of outcome-based funding. Mr Carr, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr CARR: I would. Just half a dozen brief points, if you do not mind. Firstly, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. Our sector strongly believes that not just the government but taxpayers are absolutely entitled to transparency and accountability regarding the use of public funds—there is no question about that—and, further, they need to have confidence that this funding is delivering the intended educational outcomes. So in that sense we are in tune with outcomes dictating funding.

A little bit about the independent sector in New South Wales. It is a very diverse group of in excess of 500 schools and campuses. It caters for a range of cultural, religious and socio-economic communities. Those schools educate in excess of 204,000 children, which is one in six in New South Wales. I go back to 1985, we constituted 4 per cent of the total enrolments and that is now 17. So it has been a massive growth that has taken place in the last 30 years. There are a number of misnomers regarding the independent sector and I would like to address a couple of those upfront.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Provided they are relevant to the terms of reference.

The CHAIR: Mr Carr has only just started. He is giving his time here today; I think he has got some latitude to make a statement of clarification for sure.

Mr CARR: The vast majority of independent schools serve low to medium socio-economic status communities and charge low fees. Indeed, some choose not to charge fees at all. The median fee paid by parents in New South Wales independent schools is $5,169. Yes, there are high-fee schools that many associate with the independent sector; that constitutes approximately 10 per cent of the independent school sector in New South Wales. That percentage continues to shrink annually. Why? Because all of the growth of enrolments is at the other end of the sector. Pretty much that growth occurs in the Sydney or the larger Sydney metropolitan area and in those growth sectors of west and south-west Sydney, but there is significant growth in the Hunter, in the Far North Coast at Tweed and, to a lesser extent, in Albury and Wagga.

In fact, it might be interesting to the inquiry that we have more special schools than we do high-fee schools. We have got 76 either special schools or special assistance schools. Special schools, by definition, are responsible for teaching children with disabilities; special assistance schools, by and large, deal with children who have effectively been expelled from all of the three sectors. In my view, those schools do a remarkable job keeping these kids engaged and hopefully giving them an opportunity for the future. We also have a number of specific setting schools, schools that have rehabilitation facilities, and we have a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools.

As I said earlier, we absolutely support transparency and accountability and I am sure that the Committee is aware that every independent school reports annually to the Federal Government in terms of fully audited accounts on an annual basis. We also report to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC], that is those schools that are companies limited by a guarantee. There are some that are under the State jurisdiction but very few, and they are not required to report to ASIC. They all report to the Australian Charities and Not-for Profits Commission [ACNC]. We report to the NSW Education Standards Authority. The accountability is quite high. It would be good if there was some sort of synchronisation between all the agencies to avoid the repetition, but I understand that discussion is ongoing.

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When it comes to funding, the quantum of funding of course is important, but I would say that it is how the money is spent more so than the quantum. I base that on the fact that I have spent 40 years in schools, including 17 of those years as principal of three high schools in western Sydney and those schools catered for largely lower to mid socio-economic communities. In effect, the parents of those children see education as a pathway to an opportunity that they did not have; so they see education as being really important to them. They are, if you like, those aspirational parents. Enrolments in New South Wales independent schools have been growing every year, as I said earlier. It is the fastest-growing school sector in percentage terms and it is a strong sign that parents believe that independent schools are delivering strong outcomes.

All parents, taxpayers and government must have confidence that the money that they provide to our children is achieving its purpose, but my word of caution is we need to be careful how we define that purpose and measure its achievement. We need to be careful about how we define success and the metrics used to measure that success. So, somewhat rhetorically I pose the question: What is success in the school context? It is very hard to define. There are some metrics out there on academic measures; they are largely poor, particularly the way they are used in our community. For me, when I look at success I look at lots of other things outside the academic grounds—and I know that has been part of the submissions of the other two sectors and I support their input there in terms of how do we measure a child's development, the development of friendships, developing a social justice mindset about being a good citizen? All those things are very, very important, that whole wellbeing focus. I will stop there.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Carr, for your statement and also the submission. I will just start the questioning by taking you to page four of the submission, which makes mention of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW [AISNSW] School Improvement Service. Is this a service that applies right across the entire number of schools in the sector or does it just apply to schools—you have given an example of impressive results at a large metropolitan school where performance had stagnated but then bumped up significantly in NAPLAN, and also a regional school which had a culture of low expectations? Does it need to be a school that is struggling to qualify in your School Improvement Service? Could you give some more detail about what it means for the interventions to strengthen teacher capacity and enhanced results, wellbeing and student life outcomes?

Mr CARR: Yes, I am happy to do that. It is true to say that when the school improvement team were put together initially it was to assist those schools that were really struggling; struggling educationally in the main, but we quickly realised that we had to offer that service more broadly to the whole sector. It is fair to say at the moment we would have schools from virtually every demographic involved in our school improvement offerings. It is designed so that schools can, if you like, come in at any stage and if they have already reached—without over complicating it—a level of competency then they enter at that level. The whole focus is trying to ensure value-add. By and large that is the most important aspect of it.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How is value-add measured?

Mr CARR: The measures that are often used go back to NAPLAN results, looking at the improvement that has occurred in them. Also looking at things like attendance in those schools where the attendance was poor trying to ensure that the children attend. I think you have heard in earlier submission how important that is particularly in the more remote schools. We look at engagement, particularly engagement of parents. So part of this process would be to involve parents in satisfaction surveys to get their views on how the school is meeting the needs of their children, so that sort of engagement.

To go back to first principles, when it comes to improving outcomes for kids the evidence is very clear: the most important factor is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. You do not have to be Einstein to realise that. That is straightforward. The second is the quality of the leadership. The third area is one which I think we overlook, that is, the role that parents play as the prime educators of their children in supporting the education of their children. I think over time, it is fair to say, that we in schools have almost taken that away from parents, and I think that is a great shame. They are the sorts of things to try to engage parents in the education of their children.

The CHAIR: What in practice happens with the interventions—the school improvement services, professional development assistance, instructional leaders coming into the classroom? Is it outside consultants? What happens inside the school to get these improvements?

Mr CARR: We have a team of approximately 70 educational consultants as part of our staff. Their job is to go into those schools. Often times they will model the sorts of teaching and learning experiences that are required. They will mentor staff. They will coach staff so it is a lot of one-on-one. That does not happen straight away. Of course, there is a lot of negotiation with the leaders of the school to make sure they are comfortable with

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that approach. But it is very much a hands on approach. On most occasions this school improvement process will go for up to three years in a school, so there is no magic wand, it is a lot of hard work getting in there trying to change practices to ensure that the modelling is such that the teachers can then adapt or adopt those techniques.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How is it paid for?

The CHAIR: You have 70 education consultants for 500 schools which is a good ratio for experts coming in to help a struggling school or one that has plateaued in its results after a period of improvement. Do you find this level of expertise and the quantum of consultants basically gives the whole sector a chance to keep moving forward?

Mr CARR: Yes, I mean our schools are very diverse and with 500 campuses around the State our education consultants are on the road constantly. Our expectation is they would be in schools for four of the five days per week, is what we plan on. They develop a relationship with a school so often times they are there for a whole range of different innovations. Yes, they know the school quite intimately.

The CHAIR: Is there an element of equity too because your higher fee paying schools are helping to fund a universal service that is quite substantial to help those schools that would be in poorer working class areas, Indigenous and the like?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The witness has not identified the funding.

The CHAIR: Where does the money from?

Mr CARR: We have got three sources of income. We have got subscriptions, so we charge a subscription on a per capita basis. You are quite correct in saying that the bigger schools would, in many ways, subsidise smaller schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But that is just a head count, it is not an equity thing?

Mr CARR: Yes, that is correct.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is what he said by a bigger school.

Mr CARR: Yes, a bigger school. That is what I said.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Because that is where there would be more students.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Not necessarily, based on fee paying.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But the definition of "bigger school."

The CHAIR: We will allow the witness to finish his answer.

Mr CARR: It is a per capita amount so my point is that bigger schools would be paying more for that because they have more children. Our second source of income is we have a user-pay service. A lot of our professional learning requires the attendees to pay a fee for that purpose. The third source of funding typically comes from government programs where we are responsible for assisting government in the introduction of particular programs. The best example of the New South Wales one is the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan which has probably been one of the most successful programs that I have come across in my time at the AIS.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not about equity?

The CHAIR: The tax system is progressive. If it is government funding and bigger schools tend to be the more popular and successful schools.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: To the extent that they have any agency, it is not about equity.

The CHAIR: Okay.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In terms of accessing that school development or improvement system, does a school come to you? Is there a red flag in the system that sends you to the school? How does it work?

Mr CARR: There are two ways. Yes, we do contact the schools and invite them to participate. We are a member service so we do not have any authority over the school. We invite them to do that. My experience is the overwhelming majority of those schools invited will take that up. But at the same time you will find those schools that are not part of that invitation who wish to have, if you like an outside end view of how they are performing will want to participate in those programs.

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The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I want to ask you about your relationship with the New South Wales Education Standards Authority. Do you have much interaction with NESA on a regular basis on things like not only curriculum but also best practice?

Mr CARR: To be honest, not much in terms of best practice. Most of our dealing with NESA is more in a regulatory compliance relationship. We have a lot to do with them in terms of teacher accreditation. We are a teacher accreditation authority for a number of independent schools and so we work with them there. Clearly we work very closely with them when it comes to the whole notion of registration accreditation.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: It is more of a compliance-type relationship?

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Are you aware that under the values and operating principles of NESA that they are, if you like, responsible for quality and effectiveness, research evaluation and innovation and also best practice as part of that in terms of developing the curriculum? I would have thought it would have been a two-way street there obviously there is best practice that is occurring in other parts of the sector, is that not passed on in terms of the development of that sort of relationship between you and NESA?

Mr CARR: Our chief executive is on the board of NESA and so therefore has insights into the sorts of work that the NESA team is engaged with. By and large most of what we would do with NESA would be at the regulatory compliance level.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: There is no real cross fertilisation in that context?

Mr CARR: Not much at all, no.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In terms of data sharing, Catholic Schools NSW suggested to the Committee that it would be useful if there were a data sharing agreement between NESA and Catholic Schools NSW. Do you have the same opinion with the independent sector?

Mr CARR: Absolutely. The problem that we have with a lot of data is because we are not a sector, we simply do not have access to that data. For example, we do not get the aggregated NAPLAN data that the other two sectors get. We have got to go onto My School and take that off on an individual basis.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Would you be in favour of more cross-collaboration with NESA, particularly on issues of best practice so that your understanding of what is happening in the government sector, perhaps in the catholic sector, you can pass on your best examples of things that work?

Mr CARR: The collaboration between the three sectors has never been better in my 40 years—in the last five years even more so. There is a lot of exchange between the three sectors. There are a number of programs that we offer where we have got government schools and catholic schools involved in those programs and, similarly, some of the independent schools engage in other sectors' programs. I think that is fantastic and that is how it should be. If we were able to get cross-sectoral data, and I understand the confidentiality and privacy details, but if we were able to get NAPLAN data broken down into the four quartiles for each sector and we were able to observe that and say "Well, gee, the government sector is doing really well in the top quartile; what are they doing in order to extend their better children?" we think that would be fantastic.

Similarly, if we are doing something wonderful with the bottom quartile children, what are we doing in terms of trying to improve the outcomes for those children? I am sure that all sectors would jump at that sort of opportunity. As I said, the cooperation has never ever been better.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I am trying to get to understand—and your evidence is a little bit inconsistent—in terms of understanding what is happening at best practice in relation to, for example, a set of schools in, say, the public system, how do you understand where that is going? How do you understand a successful amount comes out of being driven in a part of the sector that you do not have any association with directly? How is it passed to you?

Mr CARR: We rely on the various sectoral meetings that we have. All of my colleagues would attend all of those meetings. You rely on those sorts of initiatives where particular projects have been proven to be successful in the field and their sharing of that. One of the examples we gave in our submission was an app that we have developed called ESTA-L about phonics. This is quite remarkable. It is relatively new; I think it is only in its second year. This is designed to improve the phonics of children in kinder 1 and 2, those very important years, and I think we gave some of the data in the submission, but you have got increases in children being able

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to recognise words in kindergarten—18 per cent at the beginning of the year, 92 at the end. This is remarkable work.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: You pass that onto who?

Mr CARR: We have got two catholic system schools currently using it and we have got a government school using it at the moment.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: These are informal networks are they?

Mr CARR: No, that is not informal. They are piloting to see how that would operate. We would be delighted if it went to every primary school, that would be fantastic.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How many independent schools have taken it on?

Mr CARR: We would have about 73.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Out of more than 500 that are your members?

Mr CARR: Yes, but this is a brand-new thing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not criticising you. It is a significant number of schools.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: How many of your 500 schools are primary schools?

Mr CARR: Very few. Nearly all of our schools, I think it is 62 per cent of our schools are K-12 schools and that number is a bit forced because if you took out the 70-odd special schools you would see that 62 per cent would rise to close to 80 per cent. Most of the schools involved in fact are K-12 schools, yes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think the point that Mr Shoebridge was raising was how many of your independent schools are utilising this app. But if you only have a low proportion of primary schools, that would actually be quite a high take-up.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But more interesting, which you may be able to give us on notice, is the proportion of your primary schools that have got access to it.

Mr CARR: We could do that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And also what structures you have in place to actually roll it out, because, as I understand it, it is a very loose association; you do not have any compulsion or compliance powers, it is all voluntary take-up.

Mr CARR: That is correct, it is; it is voluntary take-up.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You made a comment about the role of parents in supporting educational outcomes and made particular reference to the School Improvement Service. Could you give us a bit more detail about the strategies that are deployed to improve parent engagement?

Mr CARR: I think the main thing we have to go back to is parents are the prime educators of their children. We in schools are there to assist parents. I have to be careful, I do not want to sound patronising to parents because that is the last thing I want to do, but I will give you an example of a case study. A school in western Sydney, very low literacy levels, the principal in trying to improve those literacy levels wanted to engage the parents when they dropped the children off in the morning for half an hour, 45 minutes, to do reading. Most of those parents could not read or their English was very poor, their literacy was very poor. So what the school then did was begin a program to improve the literacy of the parents. It was a remarkable success. I will not mention any schools' names today, but that school had a couple of years ago the highest improvement in literacy results in NAPLAN in the country. So that sort of intervention of getting parents to understand how they can assist their children with their learning is so important.

Parents are so important when it comes to teaching that love of reading, that love of inquiry. All those things are so important and I think there are many, many parents who have either missed that for no fault of their own but do not understand how important that is in those early years. By the time they are in the upper primary it is almost too late; you have really got to get in at that early stage. So that is what that is about. Some of those programs as well, because many of our schools have a preschool component to the school, affect outcomes for kids in preschool, and we all know how important that is for children to be engaged in preschool.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: One of the things we are struggling with in this inquiry is how you embed good practice. We could probably go through 500 schools and have 500 individual, very good programs, like the

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one you just described, which have been supported and driven by an engaged principal or an engaged deputy or a team of engaged teachers; they move on; that program then withers on the vine and there is no way of collecting it or passing it on to other schools or even to embed it in that existing school. What systems, if any, do you have to ensure that programs like you have just described end up getting embedded and the collective memory is passed on?

Mr CARR: It is a good question. There is no magic wand either because, again, we provide these opportunities—we cannot force them. The best way to embed good practice and good outcomes is to invest in quality teaching, there is no doubt about that. I say to schools all the time, any of their surpluses that they might generate need to be put into professional development of their staff. That is by far the most important thing to do. If you have got that culture of continual learning within your school, of continual best practice—and it is a culture that if you go to those schools where they are producing excellent results, it does not matter what sector, you will recognise that there is a culture there of best practice, there is a culture where there is team teaching, there is a culture where there is coaching, mentoring—they are the ways in which you are going to have an impact on outcomes for children.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am not in any way contesting the argument that positive culture, perhaps driven by positive leadership, is essential for schools to be high performing. Perhaps I did not articulate my question well. You gave an example of a program that you thought had terrific NAPLAN results in terms of improving particularly reading outcomes, as I understood it, where the parents were brought in and upskilled as much as the students. How do you embed that or how do you say to other schools that have got similarly challenging demographics in the school population, "Here's a great program. It worked really well here. Why don't you take it on?" and then double-check whether or not six months later they have taken it on and then ask why they did not and what the barriers were? That seems to be missing.

Mr CARR: No, in actual fact a lot of that happens. We have a system where we have school-based research grants and that is exactly how that happens. These in-school research grants are really action research. The grant goes for a period of two years and it goes up to $100,000. It is not insignificant amounts of money. Those schools are then required to report back at a symposia as to the effects that this has had so that other schools can learn from that. Our evidence of that is many schools, as you have just pointed out, have picked up on that saying, "This is for us as well" and they then get involved in those programs.

We are a very different sector because we are small and because we are not a system as such we are a bit more nimble and able to try these things and embed them in many schools. Teachers learn from teachers, it is a very unusual profession. They will come to the staffroom and they will swap with each other practices that have worked for them. You try and take that culture to other industries and it just does not work. That is our job at the AIS. Our notion then is to put the successful research projects up to say to schools: You might like to participate in that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I do not doubt that there is more diversity in your school population than you will find in public schools or Catholic systemic schools because of the nature of your members—they are much more diverse. What I am failing to understand is how you capture the best of that and then any systemic processes for sharing it amongst not just your school members but other parts of the education system whether it is the Catholic systemic system or the public system. That is what I am missing and it may be that I am not hearing your answers.

Mr CARR: Maybe we could do a better job at spreading the word to the other sectors and look at more formalised ways in which that could be done but I can assure you that the communication of the successful projects happens regularly. We have a communication stream which I think goes out fortnightly which reports on all this to all of our schools; they all have that opportunity.

The CHAIR: Can I just follow up with two points? You have the discipline of parents voting with their feet or threatening to, have you not? That if schools do not adopt best practice that you are paying a fair bit through the pocket, you will find out where best practice lies and move the kids there in some cases? And the second point, do CESE and NESA and government officials come to the symposia where the reporting on the in-school research is conducted?

Mr CARR: We make all of the findings, whether it is the ESTA-L, whether it is the research grants, whether it is school improvement, we make those findings available to NESA and all the three sectors.

The CHAIR: But also the discipline of parents shopping around and finding out the best school if you are paying for it?

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Mr CARR: It is a fact. We think parents approach education now as a commodity and if they are not getting value for their money, they will look elsewhere. There is no doubt about that and that happens to a certain extent. Our problem at the moment is just massive numbers of children. We demonstrate it in the submission there is an extra 4000 children a year in our sector. That might not sound like a lot but on a base of about 200,000 children, 4 per cent growth year on year is difficult to cater for.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Just picking up on that 4 per cent growth, you can pick and choose effectively whether you cater for that growth or not? Schools do have waiting lists, schools have set numbers. Even though that demand is increasing you do not necessarily have to take on a growth whereas the government sector has to.

Mr CARR: There is some truth in that but we made a commitment to the State Government that we would maintain our market share and we have been working very collaboratively, previously with Minister Stokes and now Minister Mitchell, to ensure we do our best to maintain those numbers. We are grateful for the additional capital funding that will flow over the next couple of years to build those additional schools.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: We have heard this from the Catholic sector as well, this commitment around market share. Is it a formal agreement with the State Government?

Mr CARR: No it is not a formal agreement.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How has that position been communicated or established?

Mr CARR: We have had countless meetings with senior Department of Education personnel and also the government officials where, I think it is fair to say, they recognise that the financial burden on government would be enormous if the other sectors did not maintain their market share.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It is an informal policy that is applying.

Mr CARR: It is.

The CHAIR: It sounds like it is being realised by those enrolment increases.

Mr CARR: It is informal. There is no written agreement or undertaking but—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: It seems very clear though that the message has got through very clearly from the State Government; that is the position.

Mr CARR: The only downside particularly in Sydney itself is there are these arbitrary enrolment caps on schools which do not allow schools who willingly would take additional children. That only applies to us and the Catholic sector. It does not apply to government schools.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: This is interesting. That is a State Government or Federal Government enrolment cap?

Mr CARR: Local government.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: You are talking about in terms of the planning principles. You are authorised to have 1,800 students at a school, for instance, under—I will choose my old council—Strathfield Council's policy. I know from my time in council that this was an issue with a couple of schools and you would have to go to council to vary your development consent to be able to seek to have more students in place.

Mr CARR: That is correct and invariably that does not get past first base. There is incredible pressure on enrolments as you pointed out but in many cases schools cannot accept those. Independent schools and, dare I say, Catholic schools in some areas cannot take those enrolments because of these caps that are in place. It is almost counterintuitive because you pick any area where clearly there is a growth of enrolments ,and you have got to see where you have got medium density housing, clearly there is going to be more children involved.

The most striking example was Green Square. I forget the thousands of units that have been built there—not one school. The premise that was based on, "This is only going to be childless couples who are going to live here". For God's sake. That was what was said to us. For us to be able to maintain our market share something has got to be done about enrolment caps.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Interesting point. Just to pick up on a couple of other things. I will give you this one for notice: If we can get a breakdown in terms of your enrolments because you talk about the sector-wide enrolments but on a secondary basis, a primary basis and you also mentioned a preschool basis. We have had some commentary this week and I would be interested in your perspective because I imagine some of

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your schools would handle this differently than the structures that are in place for the Catholic and government schools.

With respect to a class of the teaching profession and how effectively in a government school the only way of progression is by being promoted into principal, sometimes you have got these wonderful classroom teachers who are not great administrators. How does your sector deal with that? Is there an alternative? Is there recognition of senior teachers or specialist teachers as opposed to just having people go up into principal or deputy principal class?

Mr CARR: Some years ago—I think it was 2006—we introduced a new industrial agreement to that effect where there was a process the teachers needed to go through in order to achieve what we loosely called a band three teacher, which recognises seniority and additional salary. We then introduced another step because, as you rightly point out, for the teaching profession they actually start on reasonable money and they go up fairly quickly, then plateau. By the time they are 30 they plateau so we introduced another incentive. If a teacher wanted to earn additional money, yes, they had to take on a position of responsibility.

We wanted to retain our best teachers in the classroom. We did not want them doing administration so we introduced this level. It pays around $10,000 extra and that has been one way in which we attempt to keep our best teachers in the classroom. It is a bit of a misnomer that just because you are good teacher makes you a good administrator. It is important that we keep our best people.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: One last question from me. You have mentioned NAPLAN quite a lot in terms of referring to results. Your submission talks about improvement in NAPLAN results. We have heard some criticism of NAPLAN through this inquiry. How do you find NAPLAN as a barometer of success in your schools?

Mr CARR: It is how it is reported that is the problem. NAPLAN, as a diagnostic tool to assist teachers in determining what interventions they need to put in place to improve the performance of their children, is sound. I have no issue with that, and our sector has no issue with that. The issue is when schools are compared based on NAPLAN results. It is mindless nonsense.

Similarly, I can tell you what the story will be on 17 December this year. It will be a barometer test on how good schools are based on HSC results. It is not based on HSC results—it is based just on band sixes. That is less than 9 per cent of the population. It is just madness. The only way to really make a call on improvement is to look at the value-add. That is really it. There are processes in place where you can do that. You can look at a child and look at their NAPLAN results in year 3 and look at the value-add to year 5. If there has been value-add that is success. If they have plateaued that it is not success. That is the way it should be used—not as this means by which you compare the performance of one school or the other.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: A league table sort of approach.

Mr CARR: It does not take into account a whole range of factors, not least of which, is the performance levels of children at different stages of their lives. You have to look at that value-add. I fall into that trap as a principal. I would love to have all my kids receiving the top grades. That would be fantastic, but that is not going to happen. You have to look at where they were and where they have come to. That is the most important thing that will determine success, in my view.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you think that a national student tracker or a national student ID that would allow tracking—possibly even post secondary school—would be useful?

Mr CARR: It could be. That notion of being able to track kids through their school years on that basis could be useful in terms of looking at the value-add for those children. For all of these sorts of things it is how it is used, the confidentiality around it, and the way the media will distort those sorts of figures. We all remember that gruesome photo of Doonside High School some years ago. It was just ridiculous. Those poor kids. I was a principal of a school just down the road from there and many of those families I knew. That was devastating. Those sorts of problems will continue to exist in trying to sensationalise failure. They are not interested in success; they are only interesting in publishing about failure.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I guess sometimes you are interested in the success and you are interested in the failure but the reality is that we need to be doing a lot more for in-betweens.

Mr CARR: But do not punish kids as a result of that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Absolutely. I totally agree with that. On the band 3 teacher idea that you were speaking about, they can be paid $10,000 extra. Has that been capped or does that go up?

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Mr CARR: It is capped. Just so that you understand, we took the view that, year on year, teachers would move up a step and get salary. Are they any better? We took the view that we would put a performance measure in there. That performance measure went in, and it is a very rigorous process. I have got our office full, at the moment, of moderators from all of the schools, even though it is school holidays, doing assessments of the teachers' performance on that basis. The motivation for doing it is $10,000. I must admit that that is a motivation but our view is that by going through the process—it is not just the $10,000—it makes you a better teacher.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are your education consultants recruited from your existing teacher population or are they recruited from—

Mr CARR: They come across from all sectors. We, like any organisation, try to ensure that we pick the best of the best. We have excellent people. Some of them have been with us for a long time. Others use it as a bit of a stepping stone. They come for a few years and use what they learn to take back into the school setting.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I presume they have a diversity of skills and educational attainment—that they are not all of one type?

Mr CARR: No; we have a team of almost 20 special educators. Their job is to go out into schools and help integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools. They do a fabulous job. We have subject-specific specialists who do that, and then we have the school improvement team, who have a particular appreciation, I suppose—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Organisational?

Mr CARR: Yes. Some of those are ex-principals who are part of that team. We have some good quality people with experience.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I am more familiar with the public sector, but one of the issues that is constantly confronted is principals being overworked with administrative duties, financial obligations and reporting obligations, and being too time poor to take that kind of educational leader and mentoring role. Are there any schools in the independent network that have a dual track for administration—one is running the school and the other is being the lead educator? That would be almost like a CEO and a principal.

Mr CARR: It is not quite as clear-cut as that but I think I understand your point. I think there is a good number of our heads who would consider themselves to be the educational leaders of the school. Virtually all of our schools have business managers. They are not so much the CEO but the chief operations officer of the company. So they take responsibility of that side of the business, if you like.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And that frees up the principal to be more the educational leader.

Mr CARR: Yes. Many of the schools—not just the high SES schools—have a model whereby they have a director of studies or a director of teaching-learning or a dean of studies—those sorts of titles. Their responsibility is very much teaching and learning. Theirs is a more operational role, whereas the principal would be more strategic.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Values and strategies.

Mr CARR: Yes.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I wanted to ask you about your relationship with the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Are you familiar with what is referred to as CESE?

Mr CARR: I am familiar, but it is not an area in which I work directly. Anything on this I would have to take on notice.

The CHAIR: They do not do much for you—is that what you are saying? Do you read their case studies but they are not in direct contact with you?

Mr CARR: As I said, it is not in my particular line of work. I would have to confer with my colleagues.

The CHAIR: You can take it on notice. That is available to you.

Mr CARR: Yes, I will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: We are interested in their role and how useful they are to schools outside the government sector—if you follow their case studies, if they have direct contact with you, if they help you or serve as consultants in any shape or form.

CORRECTED

Mr CARR: My understanding is that we have one or two staff who attend meetings but I do not believe that we have much beyond that.

The CHAIR: Could I just ask further, on the question of defining best practice in the classroom, what do you normally follow? John Hattie's research, for example, seems fairly comprehensive and definitive and popular. We talk about the Gonski report in terms of funding but it also had certain directions in terms of pedagogy. Is any of that useful to you—growth mindset, creative thinking, twenty-first century skills, progression points and all the other Hare Krishna stuff?

Mr CARR: All of the above, Chair.

The CHAIR: It is a leading question, I know.

Mr CARR: We have had John Hattie attend a number of our conferences. He is one of the foremost thinkers in terms of improving outcomes for kids. So we would be silly not to use people like John. We have used the research, over in the States of—I am sorry, I have forgotten the name.

The CHAIR: Take that on notice too. You can give us the main influences and some of the methodology in defining best practice and perhaps some of the content, phonics, direct instruction, if there is any role there for inquiry-based learning.

Mr CARR: We are obviously a fan of phonics otherwise we would not have invested so much into the ESTA-L app.

The CHAIR: If you can take on notice that set of parameters that would be useful for us to know, very useful indeed.,

Mr CARR: We will get a brief paper back to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Carr, for your contribution, we really appreciated it today, it has been very handy indeed. Keep up the great work.

(The witness withdrew.)

CORRECTED

LYN KIRKBY, Acting Executive Director, Quality Teaching, NSW Education Standards Authority, affirmed and examined

SOFIA KESIDOU, Executive Director, Assessment Standards, NSW Education Standards Authority, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you for coming. Would you like to make a short statement to kick-off proceedings, especially in lieu of the fact that the NSW Education Standards Authority was not able to make a submission to the inquiry?

Ms KESIDOU: If we can give you a brief overview of NESA—most of you probably know what we do—and then tell you briefly about what our area of responsibility is, Lyn's and myself, and then we can proceed with your questions. NESA, as you probably know, is a comparatively young organisation; it was formed in January 2017, building on the former Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards NSW [BOSTES]. It has brought under one umbrella of a single education authority four education pillars: curriculum, assessment, school standards and teacher quality. At a high level these four pillars can be viewed as key drivers for improving our student outcomes, and that happens in partnership with schools, school sectors, teachers, parents and other key stakeholders in the community.

NESA is an independent statutory authority within the education cluster and is a portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Broadly speaking, our areas of responsibility are the K-12 curriculum, the HSC, the school registration and accreditation, the accreditation of teachers and the approval of relevant initial teacher education courses and programs. We are here on behalf of our acting CEO, Mr Paul Martin. My area of responsibility is assessment standards. We have a leading responsibility in NESA for oversight of examinations and credentialing. That includes the development and delivery of the HSC examinations and the award of the HSC credential, and the award of the Record of School Achievement [RoSA] credential to eligible students who leave school before they have completed their HSC. It includes the implementation and administration of NAPLAN in New South Wales including the transition to online, and also includes the administering of the Australian Music Examinations Board [AMEB] examinations.

Ms KIRKBY: I am the Acting Executive Director of Quality Teaching at NESA. The Quality Teaching division of NESA leads NESA's responsibilities for implementing and overseeing the teacher accreditation processes against whole-of-career Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, accrediting teachers across New South Wales in schools and early childhood services against those standards, ensuring the quality of initial teacher education programs that are offered by our providers against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and supporting professional learning based on those rigorous professional standards. We thank you for the opportunity to give evidence today.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. If I could start up with a question about the teaching standards that Ms Kirkby just mentioned. I have heard from government and non-government schools that seem to be getting good results some concern about the content that new teachers are being taught in the university sector—it is not necessarily evidence-based, it is not necessarily best practice—and there is an argument that pretty quickly for those new teachers coming into the schools, the school itself has got to grab hold of in-class professional development and bring the new teachers in line with the evidence base that the school is using. Is this a concern to NESA and how do we address it? The second part of my question is: Is there an argument for some sort of certification of teachers two or three years in that they are in tune with what the authority and the government authorities would define as best practice in the classroom?

Ms KIRKBY: Thank you for your questions. In terms of initial teacher education, this is an area that was identified in New South Wales through Great Teaching, Inspired Learning back in 2013. Across a number of years quite a few initiatives were introduced and those have really taken effect in New South Wales across 2016 through 2018. So we are really yet to see the impact of those. They included a number of things: in the first instance, looking at intake of students into teacher education courses—the notion of teachers needing three band fives including one in English came into effect from 2016, or something equivalent where people going into those courses did not have an HSC accurately completed recently.

Then the courses themselves now through both New South Wales and national processes are accredited, so each teacher education course in New South Wales needs to be accredited by NESA and only teachers who have completed an accredited course in New South Wales or one assessed as equivalent in terms of our assessments there is able to be accredited as a teacher in New South Wales. Those courses are assessed against a

CORRECTED

range of criteria and there are assessment panels that look at those courses and approve those courses, and again, that is relatively recent.

In addition to that and more recently, we have added the Teacher Performance Assessment [TPA]. That is a capstone assessment for all teachers who are graduating from a teacher education course, and those TPAs are currently going through processes of being reviewed through a national committee that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] coordinates to make sure that those TPAs produce graduates that are able to demonstrate teaching practice that is at an acceptable level for our schools to meet minimum standards. Then, of course, in addition to that there is the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students [LANTITE].

Over the last few years a significant number of new initiatives have come in to strengthen our initial teacher education programs for students who come in, the work they do whilst they are studying those courses, and their capability when they are leaving. Their courses and those leaving credentials are assessed against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and LANTITE, as you would know, approximates the top 30 per cent of adult literacy and numeracy. That is the initial teacher education piece. It needs to be said that we are really not in a position yet to evaluate the effectiveness of those initiatives; they are quite new in the scheme of things. We are yet to see students graduating who would have completed the full suite of those particular initiatives.

The CHAIR: In New South Wales are there any university teaching degrees or courses that are not accredited, where you basically have to say, "No, we won't take people from that"?

Ms KIRKBY: That's right.

The CHAIR: They are all accredited?

Ms KIRKBY: That is right.

The CHAIR: How do you then explain what seems to me to be a significant sentiment in high-performing schools that the products of those universities are not all that flash? They are all accredited, so they are all in the loop. There must be some that are not producing the right sort of content. According to the evidence base it is said, for example, in literacy a lot of these university courses are whole language when clearly the evidence shows that synthetic phonics is the high effect that you need in the classroom.

Ms KIRKBY: Our standards require, for primary, that teachers are prepared with phonics and phonemic awareness. So those requirements are already in our subject requirements.

The CHAIR: So a university that is teaching whole language in its teaching course will not get accredited.

Ms KIRKBY: It may be but it they would have—

The CHAIR: It may be?

Ms KIRKBY: They would have to have phonics and phonemic awareness as well.

The CHAIR: As part of it?

Ms KIRKBY: Yes, that is right.

The CHAIR: So, basically if you teach everything under the sun you will get accredited at university level in some aspect.

Ms KIRKBY: If you meet our requirements then yes.

The CHAIR: Okay. What about interstate?

Ms KIRKBY: There are a range of requirements that are common across jurisdictions. New South Wales has some additional. New South Wales, for example, already has phonics requirements, whereas not all jurisdictions would.

The CHAIR: Right. But if someone comes form Monash University or a Queensland university what do you do?

Ms KIRKBY: New South Wales has mutual recognition. Across the country we are governed by the Mutual Recognition Act. So if a teacher has been accredited in another jurisdiction they can be accredited in New South Wales.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: Okay, the same system interstate.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: To pick up on that, they would not necessarily have the same requirements in their courses as we do in New South Wales.

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So there is mutual recognition but without the same standards that apply in New South Wales.

Ms KIRKBY: There are national standards, but each jurisdiction has its own, so there would be some variation.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I just wanted to reflect. I was having a look earlier at your charter, which is interesting reading. I just want to take you to paragraph 4 about the values and operating principles. The third dot point, on quality and effectiveness, states:

> Implement best practice to provide high-quality, efficient services that are effective, relevant to the interests of and respond to the needs of the New South Wales community.

Can you explain to me how you go about identifying best practice and then ensuring that that best practice is shared appropriately with all the sectors in New South Wales?

Ms KESIDOU: As we said before, it depends on the four pillars at NESA—that is, the school standards, the curriculum, assessment and teacher quality. Depending on the line of work there will be different processes in place for identifying best practice. For example, when the curriculum or assessment gets developed we draw on some of our best teachers in the State to help us support the development of examinations, the development of syllabus and supporting materials. Then, when we are in the process of implementation, we work very closely with these teachers and additional teachers from the sectors to bring this best practice that they are acquire through their work with us, back into the schools.

In terms of identifying best practice from the research, we are running, at the moment, two thematic reviews at NESA. One is the thematic review of writing and the other is the thematic review of assessment. We are looking, quite broadly, at the research literature, about what we know are the issues, the problems that teachers face when they try to teach writing, or the issues that teachers face when they try to implement standards based assessment in their work. One of the other lines of inquiry that we are going to follow is indeed looking at schools in collaboration with the sectors to identify best practice and make it available and disseminate it.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: How do you do that? For example, we have a program—Bump it Up—which has been piloted and successful, or, for example, the app that was mentioned by the gentleman that preceded you from the independent schools. How are you made aware of that best practice and its success, and then what do you do to transmit that through the whole sector?

Ms KESIDOU: This happens through several mediums. One is that our board committees—again, they relate to each of the pillars—have broad representation from the sectors. That is a forum where these practices are shared and discussed. Then there are different committees that are set up. For example, the steering group for literacy and numeracy that has representation from NESA and the sectors, where we regularly meet and discuss best practice initiatives and opportunities for different sectors to adopt and adapt some of the practice.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: And you have found that to be successful? Can you point to some examples, and where that has been successful in percolating through best practice?

Ms KESIDOU: Bump it Up is one initiative that has been widely shared. The forum for this is to create awareness. From there on individual sectors have to go back and see whether these initiatives actually are fit for purpose in their own context, or not. Then the assessments that have been developed recently by the Department of Education for year 1 and year 7 have been extensively discussed. The work of the department, again, the initiatives on learning progressions, has also extensively been discussed with the sectors. There is work that NESA is doing in the context of writing—again, it is early days, but the development of an app to support professional learning in the teaching of writing. These are several examples that I can point to that have been shared. But to what extent they have been taken up and implemented depends on each sector's—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you do assessments of that at a school level or a sector level?

Ms KESIDOU: What do you mean by assessment?

CORRECTED

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: If you have a great idea—let's call it Bump it Up—and you have transmitted that idea to other sectors, do you have a look at whether they have picked it up or reasons why they may or may not have?

Ms KESIDOU: Typically not, unless there is a program that we have a special focus on.

The CHAIR: How much collaboration do you have with CESE in defining best practice, because they are doing it as well, aren't they?

Ms KESIDOU: We talk to CESE regularly, and CESE is represented in these forums that I talked to you about—for example, the steering committee for literacy and numeracy. Our closest collaboration with CESE is in the area of NAPLAN, where we collaborate in the analysis of the data and the reporting back to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. We are very fond of research that they do—the papers that they write. They have done some really good work recently in the context of cognitive science and general capabilities. The other work is work that is not being done in Australia very often is the research work—

The CHAIR: So you had a fair bit of input to that report on general capabilities?

Ms KESIDOU: Not explicitly in terms of providing feedback but, yes, through professional conversations with CESE staff.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I want ask about the role of NESA in the standards-based remuneration system, particularly around what role you play on the accreditation of highly accomplished teachers. Do you have a role in the process?

Ms KIRKBY: We do. We have no role with regard to remuneration it has to be said. Our role is limited to processes to identify teachers to be accredited as highly accomplished or lead. What then happens with those teachers in terms of remuneration or in terms of the way that sectors might engage with those teachers is up to schools and systems, but we are deeply engaged in the processes of identifying teachers at those higher levels.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Do you certify someone as highly accomplished?

Ms KIRKBY: No, we do not. New South Wales has a teacher accreditation authority system whereby teacher accreditation authorities make the accreditation decision at proficient, highly accomplished and lead. Those authorities are linked generally to employers although not always. For example the AIS is a teacher accreditation authority for a large number of schools. Even though they do not employ teachers there, those teachers have asked the AIS to do that for them. The Department of Education is a teacher accreditation authority and they make accreditation decisions for their own teachers. In the case of highly accomplished and lead, NESA moderates those decisions.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What does that mean?

Ms KIRKBY: What that means is that the teacher accreditation authority will make a recommendation that they think a teacher's practice, through the evidence that they have provided, meets the standards at a higher level. Then that application with a recommendation comes to NESA to what is called our Moderating and Consistency Committee, the MCC, which is a cross-sectoral committee that looks at all of the applications for higher levels and makes judgements about whether the committee thinks that that application is at the level and meets all the requirements. They then provide that moderation of the recommendation back to the Teacher Accreditation Authority [TAA], who makes the decision.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Has there been any circumstances where you have not agreed with the accreditation authority?

Ms KIRKBY: Yes. Yes there have.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How many of those?

Ms KIRKBY: I could not tell you exactly. I could take that on notice. We do not always agree.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is there an inverse? NESA has no role in terms of a teacher who believes they are highly accomplished but where the accreditation authority disagrees?

Ms KIRKBY: If we look at the application and the Moderating and Consistency Committee believes that a teacher has met the standards, they will tell the teacher accreditation authority that that is the case but then ultimately the TAA has the decision power.

CORRECTED

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Does the application come from the teacher or does it come from the accreditation authority when it comes to NESA?

Ms KIRKBY: It comes to NESA from the teacher accreditation authority. The teachers submits it for assessment.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are they required to pass that on? If the teacher accreditation authority receives an application for an approval as a highly accomplished teacher and they do not believe the person meets the standard, are they required to seek NESA's advice on that?

Ms KIRKBY: No they are not.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: There is no appeals mechanism for teachers?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: There is no appeals mechanism on this?

Ms KIRKBY: There are appeals mechanisms.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Where do they lie?

Ms KIRKBY: The appeal lies with the accreditation authority who has made the decision.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I see. NESA has no formal role in the appeal process.

Ms KIRKBY: No.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We have heard some criticism in terms of NAPLAN that we are seeing schools teaching to the test. Is that something NESA has any evidence of or has looked into at all?

Ms KESIDOU: There is a NAPLAN review that has been initiated in collaboration with the three eastern States. We are looking to what that will tell us about this issue. We are hearing anecdotal evidence. I personally am not aware of any more widespread evidence that this is the case. The review is going to look into that I am sure.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Something like that, and allegations, it is not something that would necessarily come to NESA, is it? Would they be referred to NESA, those sorts of complaints or allegations?

Ms KESIDOU: No, it would not. Occasionally we see letters that come to us for response but we get letters to respond to on many different issues. That is one of them and is not a very common one either.

The CHAIR: I find it a curious notion that teaching kids to pass a basic skills test is somehow a bad thing in the system. What are schools therefore if not to teach kids to pass tests? In part, as a foundation of learning? You are not teaching them to fail, are you? We are all tested in life about our ability.

Ms KESIDOU: We are not here to give personal opinions. I think the problem comes if that is the main thing they do.

The CHAIR: They do other things but in itself it is not a bad thing, is it?

Ms KESIDOU: That is exactly right, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But we do not create education systems to have tests.

The CHAIR: No, we test skills through tests.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: A test is a truly secondary order issue. It may have some benefit for an education system but they are hardly the purpose of an education system.

Ms KESIDOU: It depends what you mean with a test. If you mean test really literally, as something that has a bunch of multiple-choice questions and some short and long responses, I think they are necessary in order to ascertain where the achievement is, in order to move on further in the system.

The CHAIR: Is NESA worried about the decline in testing culture in our schools? Open book tests, self-assessment, schools that do not believe in any form of testing, kids who get to the HSC and it is the first test they have done in high school English?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is there any evidence?

The CHAIR: Yes there is evidence. My word there is. I have moved schools because of the evidence. Do not tell me about the evidence, boy oh boy.

CORRECTED

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it in any submission?

The CHAIR: I am asking about the importance of testing. I am the submission. I am asking is there any evidence of a decline? NESA's reaction to worry about a decline in teaching culture in practices where the Parramatta diocese of Catholic schools have declared they are anti test. There is a major school there. He put it up on ABC—

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is not the evidence before the Committee.

The CHAIR: I am asking a question about things that are out there in the system.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Point of order: If we are going to ask questions has got to be bounded and the witness need the capacity to answer it. There is a whole lot of assumptions in there about that.

The CHAIR: Is NESA happy or unhappy with recent developments in testing culture in New South Wales?

Ms KESIDOU: Right now NESA does not have a view on that. However, I said that there is a thematic review of assessment that has just been launched which will be looking at different schools and school systems and seeing how they approach assessment. One thing that we know from the literature is that teachers worldwide and in Australia do not feel necessarily confident in the domain of assessment.

The CHAIR: Can you say that last statement again?

Ms KESIDOU: They did not feel necessarily confident in their domain of assessment. For example, what makes a good assessment task that aligns with standards, how to understand and interpret students responses with respect to standards and then how to give feedback back to the students and utilise that feedback to plan their next instructional moves. It is not only here in Australia. Literature tells us this is a worldwide issue for teachers where they will need more support.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that largely around the teacher's own professional development or is that more around the tools that they have to conduct that assessment?

Ms KESIDOU: I think it would be a combination because in order to do this work in a valid way you need to have appropriate knowledge and skills developed not only through your initial teacher education but then through your professional ongoing learning. Not everybody has the time to reinvent the wheel so supporting tools would be of great help to teachers, but for the tools to be useful the need to have the background knowledge and the skills to utilise them properly.

The CHAIR: When is the NESA due for completion?

Ms KESIDOU: The thematic review of assessment? In 2020.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: And what about the writing one?

Ms KESIDOU: The writing one has gone a long way and has been submitted to the Minister.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Does that mean the Minister then announces that at some point? It does not come back to you again?

Ms KESIDOU: No.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When was it submitted to the Minister and which Minister?

Ms KESIDOU: I have to take that on notice unless Ms Kirkby knows.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The current Minister or the previous Minister is what I am asking?

Ms KESIDOU: I will have to take that on notice. I do not know when it was submitted. It is not within my domain—the thematic review of writing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can I just go back to the lead teacher, highly accomplished teacher issue. Do you just register them? Is that job?

Ms KIRKBY: NESA is responsible for the policy and for implementing processes and for moderating decisions and, yes, we record those decisions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What does "moderating decisions" mean?

CORRECTED

Ms KIRKBY: It means that when a Teacher Accreditation Authority has made a judgement about whether a teacher meets the standards, that decision is moderated so that this cross sectoral committee look at that application to see whether they think that the teacher has met the requirements.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is that an approval basis? Is it a different term to approval?

Ms KIRKBY: No, because what they then do is to give advice back to the Teacher Accreditation Authority. Under current processes teacher accreditation authorities make accreditation decisions.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is a referral for you for advice?

Ms KIRKBY: That is right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is what moderation means basically—a referral for advice?

Ms KIRKBY: That is right.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is it a requirement that the accreditation authority has an appeal mechanism?

Ms KIRKBY: Yes, it is.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: That is something that NESA would oversee and ensure that that is in place an functioning?

Ms KIRKBY: It is part of our policy that every teacher accreditation authority needs to have an appeals process.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: And they have to report on that to NESA about the number of appeals? Is the data provided to NESA in terms of the appeal process or the accreditation process operating?

Ms KIRKBY: They do inform us when a teacher has appealed. They need to do that because we record decisions so we are kept aware of that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is the difference between the basic accreditation—

Ms KIRKBY: Proficient, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is proficient, highly accomplished and lead. Is it a hierarchy?

Ms KIRKBY: Broadly, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What does a highly accomplished teacher have that a proficient teacher does not necessarily have?

Ms KIRKBY: There are standards, of course, that underpin each of the career stages. So the simple answer is that they need a different set of standards. So the standards are written differently for highly accomplished teacher level, and again for lead teacher level.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is the basic difference?

Ms KIRKBY: The fundamental difference is around impact. At the higher levels of accreditation teachers are required to demonstrate impact, not only on the learning of their own students but also on their colleagues and at lead level on their school communities.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This has been a significant program for a number of years. I think it started in 2010 or 2012. Is that right?

Ms KIRKBY: In 2012, yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Although I think highly accomplished teachers go back to 2010—at least that is what is on your website, but it might be wrong.

Ms KIRKBY: The first ones were, yes, that is correct. I think the first teachers were accredited in 2012.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is a list of accredited teachers from 2010 on your website.

Ms KIRKBY: Those teachers were accredited through an earlier process and were then deemed to meet the requirements.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Grandfathered?

CORRECTED

Ms KIRKBY: That is right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: When I look for the different years, the number of teachers that are getting this accreditation at least in so far as they are published on your website is like four or five a year in each of the different categories. In some years there might be a dozen but it is like four or five. Are there hundreds of other teachers missing?

Ms KIRKBY: No, there are not and this is of great concern to us and also to employers. We are working with the sectors and have been for some time on improvements to the system and ways to increase the number of teachers. There are around 1,000 teachers in the system, current applicants, and the sectors, as well as NESA, are working with groups of teachers to support them through the process. We are currently reviewing policy and looking at the processes and requirements for teachers as well as the assessment processes in order to significantly increase the number of teachers.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It is not a question of significantly increase the number. You could fit all of the currently highly accomplished teachers on a bus. If this is a major program, it is fundamentally failing. Do you agree with that? In terms of numbers it is a fundamental fail.

Ms KIRKBY: Currently that is true.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The same is for lead teachers as well. In fact, the number of lead teachers is even less than the number of highly accomplished teachers. They could be fit in a large taxi.

Ms KIRKBY: Altogether it is around 200 teachers in New South Wales. It is true, Mr David Shoebridge, that we are deeply concerned about the numbers and we are working together with the department and the other sectors.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is driving it?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Or not?

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What is the choke point? What is slowing it down? Is it the accreditation authorities are deliberating slowing down this process because it has budgetary implications? Is that possible?

Ms KIRKBY: I do not have any evidence for that. I could not answer that question.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Does NESA have any theory about what is causing it?

The CHAIR: What is driving it?

Ms KIRKBY: There is a range of complex issues. Teachers perceive that it is more difficult than it is, would be one view that I think we have a job to do in communicating more clearly to teachers about the requirements so that they feel confident to apply. I think that there has not been clear enough information coming from a range of sources for teachers to assist them in understanding how to put together an application and we are working, as I said, very hard at the moment in designing a new application process to support those teachers. Further to that, there has been a lot of complexity across the system with perceptions of duplication between employers and NESA and we are working as well to simplify and streamline the system.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I will be quite frank Ms Kirkby. I was trying to understand from you what it means to be highly accomplished teacher and I still do not understand it. In fact, I am not even much closer towards understanding than I was when I first asked you the question. I will again give you another opportunity to try to explain what a highly accomplished teacher has that a proficient teacher does not have?

Ms KIRKBY: A highly accomplished teacher, first of all is, an outstanding teacher within themselves. They produce excellent results for their students, they are able to provide evidence of impact on their students so they can provide evidence that their students succeed on a range of levels.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Is that like they have to pull together a portfolio?

Ms KIRKBY: Yes, it includes documentary evidence that teachers provide. They are also required to undertake a site visit where a trained external assessor comes and watches them teach and looks at their practice. They are also required to provide referees and referees provide statements that describe their practice in terms of the extent to which they meet the different standard descriptors.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That does make it a little clearer. Do you have a target for the number of highly accomplished or lead teachers that you want to see accredited over the next 12 or 24 months?

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Ms KIRKBY: We do not have a specific target.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In terms of your budget or the NSW Treasury have they engaged with you to ask you about numbers?

Ms KIRKBY: It is a question for the Department of Education because it does not have an impact on NESA because we do not pay the salaries.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Has NSW Treasury as part of its budgeting process asked you how many you are anticipating?

Ms KIRKBY: I would have to take that on notice, I do not know.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is the purpose of this accreditation? It feels nice. It looks good. You are in a very select club.

Ms KIRKBY: The accreditation in New South Wales is part of a national system of certification. There are around 600 teachers nationally certified. The increase in numbers has been slow not only in New South Wales but also nationally, so we are not alone there.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is the purpose? Once you get an accreditation what do they do with them?

Ms KIRKBY: The purpose, yes, it is recognition. In some systems and sectors there is remuneration but, as I said, that is separate to our mission because we do not employ teachers.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: On that point, the independent schools told us about their accreditation project for band 3 teachers. Is that separate from this process—

Ms KIRKBY: Yes it is.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: —or part of that process? So it is separate; not part of the process.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Just the Government.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: No, accredited across the board.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Band 3 is part of the system, isn't it?

Ms KIRKBY: Band 3 is in independent schools only.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But the highly accredited teachers can be—

Ms KIRKBY: High accomplished and lead teachers in any system or sector.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We are trying to explain the purpose of them. Just to let you know where this is going, I am asking these questions in light of the Auditor General's report, which seemed to say that it was a program without a mission. So I am asking you what the purpose is.

Ms KIRKBY: Understood. From our perspective it is part of our quality teaching mission, where our view is that, because highly accomplished and lead teachers are required to demonstrate impact not only on their own teaching but also on the teaching of their colleagues, that this is a way of improving collegiality in schools and improving the quality of teachers beyond the individual classroom. So it is designed to identify our best teachers and then, through implementation of their accreditation and through their maintenance of that accreditation that those teachers then work with colleagues to improve their practice.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is there a policy or a guideline or a set of KPIs—anything specific—that says what a school or the system is meant to get from a highly accomplished teacher or a lead teacher?

Ms KIRKBY: No, it is up to—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Don't you think if you want to encourage people to fill these roles, explaining to them the utility of the role would be kind of useful?

Ms KIRKBY: The way the teachers are used by employers is a matter for the employer. Our role is to write policy to support the identification and accreditation of teachers at that level but the way that systems, schools, sectors choose to use those teachers is a matter for them.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would have thought that a key thing for working out what the accreditation is for something is knowing what the purpose of it is and what it is going to be used for. It seems to

CORRECTED

me that that is entirely missing. I cannot work out how you work out what the necessary qualifications are if you do not know what the purpose is. I cannot work out how you do that.

Ms KIRKBY: The qualification is to demonstrate practice against the standards. The standards are nationally agreed.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I have to say that that sounds super circular to me.

The CHAIR: Can I ask what NESA's reaction was to the Auditor's report, particularly in the government sector, where, out of 80,000 teachers there are only 53 in New South Wales who were underperforming?

Ms KIRKBY: NESA welcomed the Auditor General's report. We worked closely with the agency on developing and contributed an enormous amount of information to the report. We were pleased to receive the recommendations and we are working our way towards achieving them. We will be working closely with the department, given that the review was about the quality of teaching in public schools in New South Wales.

The CHAIR: With all due respect I am trying to drill into this at an institutional level. Is there some sort of surreal softness in the system, whereby these programs that Mr Shoebridge has talked about never really get implemented, where 53 out of 80,000 teachers are under performing—completely counter-intuitive to what you think about any institution of that size—and government school results that are going backwards or, at least, are very disappointing? Is there a cultural thing here, where no-one is willing to have a hard-edge assessment of what is going on and call a spade a spade?

Ms KIRKBY: NESA works with employers to assist them in identifying teaching practice at the proficient teacher level. By definition, that means identifying practice that is not at the level. If an employer refers a teacher to us who does not meet the standards then we have the authority to suspend that teacher's accreditation, but we rely upon employers to give us that information.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many suspensions have you implemented?

Ms KIRKBY: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you give us how many suspensions you did this year, how many suspensions you did last year, and the year before that—whether it is financial years or whatever.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I suppose with the discussion about the accomplished and lead teachers we could probably also put in the proficiency accreditation. It seems to me that NESA's role, because it does not extend into any oversight of the teachers in practice, is always going to be quite limited. Do you find that there are any limitations in your current authority that are limiting your capacity to properly oversight the accreditation process? You said that you are dependent upon what the schools or the employers give you.

Ms KIRKBY: That is right.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Are there any limitations that we should be aware of?

Ms KIRKBY: All teachers in New South Wales are either working towards or maintaining a level of accreditation. It is really at the school level that judgements are made about whether or not a teacher is meeting a particular benchmark or maintaining a particular benchmark. We do certain things to monitor what is going on. For example, if teachers do not meet their maintenance requirements by the time they are due to meet them then we follow up with those teachers, and ultimately those teachers will be suspended for not maintaining.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is because the inputs have not been coming into you.

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: What are the maintenance requirements?

Ms KIRKBY: The maintenance requirements are, broadly, that the teacher continues to meet the proficient teacher standards and that they complete their mandatory professional learning requirements.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it more the latter—that they complete their mandatory professional learning requirements? Is that the data that leads you to make the other inquiries?

Ms KIRKBY: Certainly if a teacher has not met their professional development requirements they will not be able to maintain.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What about the first element that you said—the maintenance of their proficiency? How do you satisfy yourself of that fact?

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Ms KIRKBY: Again, we can only act when we get reports that a teacher's practice does not meet the standards.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: So it is not that teachers have to—I am not suggesting they should—proactively prove that element, it is when you get a report that a teacher is not meeting that element that it becomes—

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How many of those reports—again we could go back over the last few years—

Ms KIRKBY: I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Where an employer undertakes performance improvement with a teacher, that ultimately leads to dismissal, does that have any implications for the accreditation of the affected teacher?

Ms KIRKBY: It may. If a teacher is dismissed for failing to meet the standards the employer is required to tell NESA. The teacher then, based on our review of that particular case, may also lose their accreditation.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We asked a couple of questions about data. Can you break it down by sector—or "employers" as you like to describe them—when you give us the data?

Ms KIRKBY: We can do that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can we ask how many teachers have lost their accreditation?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If we did not already.

Ms KIRKBY: There will be a number of reasons. Teachers lose accreditation for failing to provide a working with children check clearance, for example—for failing to update it. They lose their accreditation for failing to maintain and we can—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you can just break it down it would be really helpful.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Can I ask about the loss or maintenance of accreditation? Obviously many teachers have career breaks. They may go on maternity leave or take an extended period of time. What impact does that absence have in terms of their capacity to maintain their accreditation?

Ms KIRKBY: In New South Wales a teacher can take a leave of absence from their accreditation for up to five years—effectively putting their accreditation on hold.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: And after five years they lose their accreditation, is that right?

Ms KIRKBY: After five years they can apply to be re-accredited. Under certain circumstances they can be re-accredited at the level they left but that would require the accreditation authority to make that judgement.

The CHAIR: One of the things this Committee has heard is this paradox that high-performing teachers are taken out of the classroom, where obviously they are needed most, and become school leaders, principals and so forth. There is an argument that perhaps the school principal role does not necessarily need to be a teaching role. It is someone who has excellent managerial skills. Would NESA feel confident in accrediting people for those roles on that criteria?

Ms KIRKBY: NESA's current accreditation process is based on the teaching standards, so we are accrediting people against standards for teachers.

The CHAIR: Right, but what about school managers and leaders?

Ms KIRKBY: It is not part of our remit.

The CHAIR: But could you do it if it was a separate category? You would have to develop those skills to do that; okay.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I just wondered whether the Catholic Schools NSW or the independent sector had approached you under an MOU to set up a data-sharing arrangement? Have you had any approaches to do that so that you could share information about system improvements, student performance outcomes data and those sorts of things?

Ms KIRKBY: I think we would have to take that on notice.

CORRECTED

Ms KESIDOU: There are discussions about MOUs with all the sectors at the moment about data sharing.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: About data sharing?

Ms KESIDOU: Yes. The discussions are bilateral and multilateral as well.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Excellent. Is that well advanced? When do you expect to reach a conclusion on that?

Ms KESIDOU: I think there is a number of discussions that are going on and on different sets of data. For example, the most recent one that I am aware of relates to the sharing of data related to the minimum standards for literacy and numeracy. These are about to conclude or they have concluded but the broader discussions, broader arrangements about more general data sharing—

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In principle, de-identified data, you would not have an in-principle problem with that being shared?

Ms KESIDOU: In principle, no, but when you look at the specific sets of data that are in question there are always some complications but I think there is very good will there on all parties.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Great. I am glad to hear that. Perhaps you can just take that on notice and give us some timings.

Ms KESIDOU: Sure, I will. I will give you more information.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Has the Department of Education or Treasury contacted NESA about outcomes in the context of developing an outcome budget model for the Department of Education?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Or even NESA's?

The CHAIR: Or your own internal role?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Or your own internal role?

Ms KESIDOU: My understanding is that this is planned for the forward budgeting process for 2021. We will be commencing discussions on that but it has not happened.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I would have thought in a number of school systems the accreditation authority would have inspectors who would actually go in and observe teaching and, having observed teaching, would form a view about the quality of the teaching. That is not part of your system?

Ms KIRKBY: It is not part of our current role, no.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It was historically the system in New South Wales, was it not? There were school inspectors who went in and observed teaching? You are not aware of that?

Ms KESIDOU: I am not—

Ms KIRKBY: Not aware.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Take it from me, it was.

The CHAIR: It definitely was. We were there.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is it unusual to have an accreditation and standards authority, in terms of a global perspective? In your own understanding of globally, is it unusual to have one which does not have inspectors?

Ms KESIDOU: I do not know if it is unusual or not but it depends on the remit of the organisation. NESA's remit at the moment is compliance with minimum standards—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Or certification. You certify that teachers meet certain standards but you never watch them teaching. That just seems odd.

Ms KIRKBY: We do to the extent that NESA sends an external assessor as part of the certification process. The accreditation of teachers is a different process than the accreditation of schools.

Ms KESIDOU: Yes, sorry. I was responding to the accreditation of schools.

Ms KIRKBY: Registration of schools.

CORRECTED

Ms KESIDOU: Yes.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of accreditation of teachers, do you send an inspector out to accredit each level? First of all proficient, then highly accomplished and then lead?

Ms KIRKBY: At proficient, no, because every teacher in New South Wales is required to demonstrate practice at the proficient level. We provide training to supervisors and training to principals to make judgements at the school level. No, we do not send an assessor out. We do send an external assessor for teachers applying for highly accomplished and lead.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That is a tiny part of your accreditation. The overwhelming work of your authority is to accredit teachers as proficient and you do not have any inspectors related to that work?

Ms KIRKBY: No, we do not.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I just find it strange. It is a very strange system that accredits teachers when the accreditation authority has never actually observed their teaching. I am just wondering how that compares with other jurisdictions across the country. Do you know?

The CHAIR: Maybe you can take that on notice?

Ms KIRKBY: We can provide you with that information.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How is that process moderated? You have a moderation system for the highly accomplished and, whatever the middle one is or the upper one, whichever one it is, but you do not have any moderation for the proficient level? We have had some evidence about the concern over poor teachers being in the system and there being an incapacity to weed them out but the accreditation authority is left to its own devices effectively to determine whether someone is at the bottom of the standard or not?

Ms KIRKBY: Prior to the BOSTES review, the BOSTES and formerly the Institute of Teachers did review every single application that came in; that was not a perfect system. I can say without a doubt that there were issues with that system. The loudest complaints, the concerns that were expressed were that even though we reviewed those applications, people did not get good feedback. We take that on the chin but ultimately the BOSTES review recommended that we ceased doing that. In 2016 we stopped reviewing all of the applications at proficient teacher.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Didn't that just take a whole quality control level out? What replaced it?

Ms KIRKBY: Yes, it did. The intention was and remains to replace it with an auditing process. We had intended and begun work to implement that process in 2017 and unfortunately we had a problem with our online system, our eTAMS that you may be familiar with, and applications then moved offline. So during the whole of 2017 and 2018 and to this point we have not been able to accept proficient teacher applications online. What that meant was that we have been doing a lot of compliance checks rather than quality checks. We are about to resume the quality checks now that the system will be moving back online shortly so we will then be looking back over that period. Given that we are reviewing decisions that were already made anyway, we will now be doing some review of the decisions that have been taken in the interim.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: On a random audit basis?

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct. That is what the BOSTES review told us to do.

The CHAIR: Three years after you stopped reviewing the applications there is still no audit in place. If the audit was to restart what proportion of teachers would be audited?

Ms KIRKBY: That is yet to be determined.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: What would that audit look like? Would you actually go into schools and see or is it just a desktop research exercise?

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct. It will be on the basis on the evidence provided.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: How many are we talking about in terms of proficient teachers being accredited per year? What kind of numbers?

Ms KIRKBY: I could only give you an estimate but it is around 7,000 to 8,000 a year.

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Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is 21,000 to 24,000 teachers who have been accredited as proficient by their employers without any external reference check over the last three years. That seems to me like a comprehensive stuff up. I will be honest, Ms Kirkby. I am happy for you to correct me.

Ms KIRKBY: I can only give you the explanation that I have given you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And going forward, rather than actually checking the proficiency of each teacher with some external accreditation agency, there is going to be a randomised audit process?

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This is in the middle of the State Government coming in and saying they have got a focus on improving teacher standards, smack in the middle of that they removed the external check on the accreditation of teachers. How do those two things fit together on a policy basis?

The CHAIR: We have to ask the Minister on that. They do not make policy at NESA.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Are there any corruption controls?

The CHAIR: Can I just drill into what sort of audit you would implement if it did start up? Not how many people would be audited but what does it involve? Do you randomly turn up to a school unannounced? Do you give them three months' notice and go out and check the kids' books or something or computer work?

Ms KIRKBY: It will be looking at the applications that the teachers have submitted.

The CHAIR: There is no going out? You will still never see what these teachers are actually do in the classroom. You will just look at some of the results that the school submits.

Ms KIRKBY: That is correct.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: There is never going out.

The CHAIR: They are never going out.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Other than on highly accomplished and lead there is never going in and attending schools.

Ms KIRKBY: That is not the intention.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Are we not talking about the new teachers coming out of the university system here predominantly? You would be relying on the university system in terms of the quality of the teachers. That is the essence of what you are relying on, is it not?

Ms KIRKBY: What we are relying on is the judgement of the senior teachers in the school who have been given responsibility for supervising and making judgements about the teacher's practice.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: A lot of teachers enter the system of casuals and moved from school to school. How does that accreditation work if the person who is signing them off might actually not have any sustained overview of their teaching practice?

Ms KIRKBY: Casual teachers are expected to meet the standards. We give them extra time. Full-time teachers have three years to meet the requirements; casual teachers have five and that takes in to account their employment pattern.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: They might be in the system for five years before they actually get certified as proficient.

Ms KIRKBY: It is possible although the average across all teachers is closer to three years. Our policy then requires teachers to undertake a block of teaching in a school. That that will allow a principal to get a sense of whether or not that teacher meets the standards before they would make a decision about them.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: If they do not get the block then what happens? They cannot get accredited?

Ms KIRKBY: It will be more difficult. We do hear sometimes from teachers that it is more difficult but most teachers at some point, even as casual teachers, do get a block of teaching or a number of shorter blocks where they are able to demonstrate that practice to school leaders and principals.

CORRECTED

The CHAIR: We will have to wind up at that point because we have gone over time. I thank you very much for your participation and involvement. Are you happy to take supplementary question is given we have run out of time?

Ms KIRKBY: Of course. Yes.

The CHAIR: A moderate number of extra questions that Committee members might choose to submit.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

CORRECTED

Ms DIANNE BUTLAND, Honorary Treasurer, Aboriginal Education Council NSW, affirmed and examined

Ms BEVERLY BAKER, Executive Officer, Aboriginal Education Council NSW, affirmed and examined

Ms CLAIRE BUTLER, President, Isolated Children's and Parent's Association of New South Wales Inc, before the Committee via teleconference, affirmed and examined

Ms ANNABEL STRACHAN, Rural Schools Portfolio Leader, Isolated Children's Parent's Association of New South Wales Inc, before the Committee via teleconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I thank Bev Baker and Dianne Butland for their attendance in person. Also, on the teleconference, Claire Butler from the Isolated Children's and Parents Association and Annabel Strachan. Thank you for your participation and also thanks for the submission that you lodged. Bev and Dianne, would you like to make an opening statement given that there was not a submission to the Committee?

Ms CRONIN: We would like to very much thank you for the invitation to give evidence to this Committee today. The Aboriginal Education Council [AEC] was established in 1963, well before the 1967 referendum. Since then it has built a proud history of delivering educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal students. The AEC continues to fund projects and programmes which demonstrate best practice and offers Aboriginal students of all ages scholarships and support to change their lives through education. The AEC receives no current government funding and solely relies on the generosity of donors to be able to continue its support of Aboriginal students.

Today in Australia 83 per cent of Aboriginal students are educated in the public education system. The AEC believes that education is a basic human right and agrees with the quote attributed to Socrates: There is only one good, knowledge, and only one evil, ignorance. Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling a vessel. The New South Wales curriculum is, as it should be, filled with opportunities for students from all backgrounds to learn and question and form their own opinions. We know that the ideas of an inclusive curriculum valuing all students is confronting to certain rigid authoritarian individual's worldviews but it is not a job of schools to appease these individuals, it is their job to ensure students can sort fact from fiction, read critically, understand research and apply scientific principles.

Since Aboriginal perspectives was made compulsory in New South Wales schools, the performance of Aboriginal students has been rising: retention rates, HSC completion rates, suspension data are all improving. Slowly, but nonetheless, they are improving. The recognition by all students that Aboriginal people, their culture, their religious practices, their custodianship predated colonialism and they are offered respect and the acknowledgement within the educational setting of the massive injustice suffered since 1788 has raised self-esteem and is empowering to Aboriginal students. Schools are not a museum of bygone eras. They are dynamic, diverse and intensely human organisations where students not only learn together, they learn to live together. They are more like families than business and provide centres for cultural support and motivation.

In spite of the hysterical claims about left-wing curriculum, the last 20 years of education have been characterised by only two major developments, in our view: The competitive marketisation of providing, including massive subsidies to private schools and the consequent downgrading of the provision for public schools and the implementation of mass testing of students and competitive ranking of schools. Both of these ideologically driven changes have been accompanied by rapid decline in the average student performance relative donations who have not gone down that path. An examination of the figures showed that money that is thrown at the most advantaged schools produce no increase in outcomes but the failure to provide funds for the needs of the least advantaged has resulted in their performance slipping even further.

It is no coincidence that our declining international performance runs exactly parallel with the application of so-called market principles to education. There has been no failure in measurement. On the contrary, massively increased time and effort on testing and ranking of students in schools has distracted from student-centred learning. It has created failures for competent students and induced stress and a feeling of hopelessness for those who are not performing as well. It has derailed the real educational outcomes as described to you in the NSW Business Chamber's submission and that is of taking a holistic view of student outcomes and the development of a core set of transferable outcomes like communication skills, teamwork and problem-solving.

Australia's advantaged students in all systems have always performed to world standards and above and still do but they do no better than they did before the massive amounts of funding that have been thrown at them, the providing of funding to private schools. Australia's disadvantaged students have never been provided with the assistance necessary to create a level playing field and are now even worse off. The best way, in 2002 as much as

CORRECTED

today, to increase the national average performance is to devote more resources to alleviating disadvantage. Vastly increased social and economic inequality, the punishment of poverty and the inability for those not born wealthy to acquire assets as a central role in wealth creation are all serious disincentives to work hard in schools for a hope for a better life.

Needs-based funding has not failed as a funding model. It is a successful funding model that has been deliberately derailed for political ends by ineffective and inappropriate market ideology. Vast resources that could have made serious difference to educational outcomes have been squandered on tax cuts, corporate handouts, middle-class welfare and including luxury add-ons to privileged schools, thus increasing the wealth of the already wealthy instead of addressing the disadvantage of those with the most to gain. I will leave that there.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Butler and Ms Strachan, do either of you have opening statements to make?

Ms BUTLER: Yes. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Annabel and I are here representing the rural and remote families at a grassroots level. We hope to give you a lived experience on behalf of our members. I am speaking to you from halfway between Balranald and Ivanhoe in far south-west New South Wales and Annabel is speaking to you from Louth in far west New South Wales. ICPA represents families who are facing challenges with their child's education and we hope that we can answer any questions you have. We have been advocating for solutions that will enhance education in remote areas which in turn would drive favourable outcomes. These are access to early education—many children start school in remote areas without having attended preschool.

The majority have not achieved the recommended 600 hours of preschool. Our members believe that the School Drive Subsidy should be extended to preschoolers to assist with affordability of driving them to preschool. Some families are more than 200 kilometres from their nearest preschool. Mobile early childhood education and care services need long-term funding guarantees so that they can continue to provide an early education to remote children. Vick Oldes from the Broken Hill Outback Mobile Children's Service, who covers a 222,000 square kilometre, says, "I feel like we are the square peg being forced into the round hole. I just hope that our most isolated children who no longer receive an early education program do not end up being the square pegs in life as they grow up without the benefits of an early education."

Remote schools can also be utilised as preschools. When parents are already travelling there it makes sense to use those remote schools. Excuse me, I am getting a little bit emotional. For many isolated children the diagnosis of autism or learning difficulties does not occur until well after the child commences school. Furthermore, the access to specialist health services and intervention is impacted by distance. We have connectivity and communication issues. We are keen to see better internet delivered into remote schools because currently the download speed in the satellite schools is making online lessons remotely, such as music or an online tutorial, impossible. The mobile footprint needs expanding so that we are not living in black spots the size of Sydney and the Blue Mountains combined.

For our School of the Air and distance education families the teacher teaches the parents to teach the child. We need to ensure that children in a distance education family have access to one computer each and they are not sharing one. Satellite lessons can be slow; this needs improving. Teaching principals in small remote schools face huge challenges. They teach multistage ages from K-6 in one classroom, they perform the duties in the office, they find casual teachers to replace them whilst they are on compulsory training in the city or dealing with the hazards of driving on inadequate unsealed roads. It all takes its toll on the profession. For example, if a teacher has to purchase an $80,000 four-wheel drive, that is a disincentive to come out to these areas. Teachers are hard to get. Many schools go half a year without a teaching principal appointed.

Better incentives are needed. For example, the rural incentives program is only open for permanent teachers. There are many, many casual teachers in metro areas who have been teaching for 10 to 20 years and they are still classified as casual. To open up the rural incentive program to them will encourage them to apply to these remote schools. These are just some of the issues that our members are facing that we think are solution-based. We believe that this would create better outcomes for rural and remote children. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Very well said. Thank you for your contribution. My question is to Ms Baker and Ms Butland. Nationally, in the area of Aboriginal education, the highest profile advocate and case study that has advanced is Noel Pearson at Hope Vale with his model of Direct Instruction teaching and the things that flow from that. Is that something that the AEC embraces?

Ms BAKER: It is a failure.

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The CHAIR: It is a failure?

Ms BAKER: It is a complete and utter furphy and failure and it was from the start. In fact, if you want to quote somebody in that space, Chris Sarra is the man to look at in terms of Aboriginal education and empowerment. The Hope Vale experience was a bolted-on thing that came from America. They talked about buffalo, for goodness sake. What do Aboriginal children know about buffalo and where are they going to find one? It was an absolute disgrace from the start. It was seen as a quick fix. It was back to a notion of rote learning, drill and skill, "Do this, do this, do this." Fail. Fail for us when we were there, fail for the next generation and it will fail the next one after that if we continue down that path.

It is failing in Singapore, where it is all drill and skill and rote learning. We are seeing the teenage suicide rates from failure going through the roof. Not the place for us, I am sorry. Noel Pearson, it is a disaster. It is a disaster in those areas where the schools have been closed.

The CHAIR: That is a fairly comprehensive answer. The direct instruction received a very direct answer.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: It was not rote.

The CHAIR: It was not rote. On that subject, do you give no credence to the role of rote or repetitive learning in that it gives kids confidence that they are getting things right and they build up from there? I know it might be thought of as an old-fashioned point of view but I have spoken to teachers in disadvantaged areas, at least in Sydney, I know that they are not comparable, but they do say that direct instruction—and you have described it as rote—still has some role at least in building up student confidence. They can get answers right and then they are encouraged to get more answers right instead of dropping their bundle.

Ms BUTLAND: Only incidentally. Education is a much richer experience than rote learning. Yes, kids have to experience success but they can experience success through a whole range of relevant and meaningful experiences. Many of those experiences are totally meaningless.

The CHAIR: In terms of teaching style and classroom programs, if not the Pearson model, what does work? What does the evidence show about getting the best results in Indigenous learning?

Ms BAKER: I think engaging the kids. It is absolutely engaging the kids in what is going on. Talking about why we are doing this, what is going to be the outcome when we have done this, where are we going. If you look at adult education, if you want to learn to read because you missed out, you go to a class with six adults in that class and you do intensive language. You know what you are there for, you know why you are there. Suddenly we are bringing these little kids at five and six into a school with 26 to 30 kids in a classroom all doing stuff and suddenly they are told, "Here you go, learn to read." Why? They have come from homes where books are not part of the culture. They sit down, there is nothing there to give them a handle.

Yet when an adult, who knows what they have missed out on and who knows its power, its benefit and wants to get it, they get a teacher with a one to six ratio. A kindergarten kid who has no idea gets a one to 26 ratio.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In the last few months I have twice had the benefit of seeing this documentary, *In My Blood It Runs*, which is about Dujuan Hoosan, a 12-year-old Aboriginal boy from Alice Springs. One of a number of takeaways I took from that was that culturally engaged learning, a far greater degree of Aboriginal self-determination and empowerment in education seems to me to be critical if we want to engage particularly young Aboriginal kids in the education system, rather than just plonking them down with the externally referenced, Western-based education system. What do you say to that?

Ms BAKER: I absolutely agree. We said in our submission that what has made a difference that we can see and then tie it back was the inclusion of an Aboriginal perspective across the curriculum in New South Wales schools, which gave Aboriginal people a place, a respect and a knowledge that their history and culture came before. But as we say to all of our folk, and we say it across the world, education is education. There is no black education or white education. There are different cultures but education is the same for all of us. It does not matter whether you are in England, India, China or Japan, education is education. It is about a core of knowledge, about being able to access that knowledge and share that knowledge. Without that knowledge you are never going to be able to take your rightful place as the oldest surviving culture in a globalised world.

Then working with people as to how they see that, how they access that, how they retain their cultural specialities, how they retain their pride in their history and their background. The things that schools working with large and even small populations of Aboriginal children must focus on—I do not believe that we can get into the argument that says there is a black education and there is a white education. There is education that has a

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perspective that helps, supports and nurtures Aboriginal students, students of English as a second language, isolated students, students who live in poverty or middle-class white kids who have everything open for them.

They are perspectives. It is not a type of education. It is looking at the needs of the student, targeting those needs, starting where the kid is at and then moving the kid forward, rather than imposing it on top and hoping the kid can grab it.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: If you are going to start where the child is, surely if a child comes from an Aboriginal community with a strong sense of traditional knowledge, respect for Elders, traditional learning or maybe even an incipient knowledge of that, surely you have to start there. You will have a different engagement process for a child who comes with that history than you would for a child who comes from a middle-class white family in Sydney.

Ms BAKER: I was talking about the core of knowledge that we expect all folk to have. If you are in a community-based school as a teacher then you would really need to go back to the Elders of that community to find out where the cultural background is for that community and where those children sit. If you are in a school in Alexandria Park you have kids from a raft of different backgrounds. But every good teacher goes to find out where the kid is, what they know, what they need to know and how they can support them to make the transition from home into school and build that as part of the process.

What Alexandria Park Public School has done is look at its large Aboriginal community and has assisted across the board with Aboriginal cultural perspectives, Aboriginal language within the school, looking at ways in which Aboriginal people can feel that they belong in that school. It is a school that respects and honours their long history and tradition, including teaching singing the national anthem in the Wiradjuri language.

The CHAIR: Could I just suggest that it would be very helpful for the Committee if the AEC was able to submit case studies of what has worked in Indigenous education in practice, evidence-based case studies, because that is really what we are on about here. We have looked at them outside Aboriginal education but in your important work it would be useful to see them in the research of the AEC. If that is possible to submit them for our benefit it would be great. If I could just turn to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and Ms Butler and Ms Strachan. I acknowledge in our Committee's interest in terms of measurement that when we are talking about very small, remote schools and certainly distance education we do not have the critical institutional mass to have measurement of any meaningful kind. The sample size is just way too small.

I suppose we regard the education that you are dealing with as a case apart. In all of the things you mentioned it was a very legitimate list of things that need to be done to improve educational opportunities, but can I just ask where does the interface with TAFE and vocational education fit in? Is it in any way possible to ensure in this important area, when kids get to 13, 14 or 15 in school and they are more interested in vocational education than the strict academic areas, what actually happens in remote and isolated education at the moment?

Ms BUTLER: In terms of TAFE and vocational training it is really difficult obviously due to the isolation. There are a number of factors. In the really remote areas once a child gets to high school they generally go away to boarding school. That might be going away to one of the agricultural government boarding schools such as Yanco, Farrer, Hurlstone or others. Quite often those schools are where the child gets to have that enrichment and those choices of TAFE or doing those school-based apprenticeships, which might then lead to when they finish school they might be then able to stay on in that area and finish their diesel apprenticeship or whatever apprenticeship they have taken up. There are those options for those children that do go away and the majority of the really remote children do go away to boarding school. We are finding, with the drought especially, that families cannot send all of their children at the same time away to boarding school.

We are getting feedback through our families that some children are away. They might have one child away in Year 10 or 11, they will wait for that child to finish before the next child goes. So that child is doing distance education into the high school spectrum at home on the farm. Or the family is moving, the mum is moving into town into a second home and educating them at the nearest town which could still be a couple of hundred kilometres away. So children have access to TAFE that way. So they are finishing school and a lot of the time they have those choices because they have gone away to boarding school or gone into town. Does Ms Strachan want to add anything?

Ms STRACHAN: In our area—particularly in the Wanaaring area—children cannot access comprehensive high schooling in many instances. So they do not get support from the Department of Education and no vocational education is available.

The CHAIR: So other than boarding school there is basically nothing?

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Ms STRACHAN: No. There is distance education but unless the parents, and once again computers and so forth, are available, it is hard for some of the low socio-economic students to have any support in their later school—

The CHAIR: Practical, hands-on training.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: In relation to the school travel subsidy, you mentioned it is not available for child care. Is it available for TAFE?

Ms BUTLER: There is a travel allowance for TAFE, I believe. I will take that on notice and I can get some more information for you. But there is no travel allowance for university. That is something we are advocating for in our current issues papers. But I can get more information on that for you. When you mentioned is there travel for child care, we are asking for the School Drive Subsidy—which is currently available for primary right through to secondary—we are asking for that for preschool children.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That is 60¢ a kilometre?

Ms BUTLER: We are asking for that to be extended to them.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: As I understand it, that is 60¢ a kilometre one way?

Ms BUTLER: It is 60¢ a kilometre one way. So if the pre-school is 50 kilometres away the parents would take the child to the preschool and bring the child home. It is 60¢ for the 50 kilometres they have driven—just the distance from home to the school.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Just one way.

Ms BUTLER: If it is 100 kilometres from home to the school, it will be 60¢—so $60.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: So if you drive your child to child care and it is 50 kilometres, you come back home, then you have to pick the child up, it is actually 60¢ divided by four in terms of the kilometres, is it not? It would really be 15¢ a kilometre.

Ms BUTLER: Yes. It works out to be about $30 for the day. Would that be right?

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Do you think that is sufficient in terms of the cost of vehicle, petrol and all those things?

Ms BUTLER: No. It would not cover it. It is a subsidy. It is a step in the right direction. If you were to access a preschool in, for example, the area I live in, the top end of the Balranald Shire is 200 kilometres from the bottom end. So if a family was to take their child into Balranald to preschool that is a 200-kilometre trip. Mum or dad would not necessarily drive back home. They would be in town and would not be able to go back home and work on the farm. I guess they would be able to work in other appointments and things like that. Obviously there are preschools that are not located in a town, they are just located in a locality. We are just thinking of ways that we can get these children accessing the 600 hours of preschool. We believe, and the research shows, children who do preschool have better outcomes in the classroom. Lots of children in small, remote schools start their kindy year without any formal preschool.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I asked the Minister a question in the House six weeks ago about the locations and towns that did not have an early childhood centre but have a local primary school. She said that Wanaaring, White Cliffs, Mara Creek, Tibooburra and Ivanhoe were the five that had a local primary school but do not have an early childhood facility. Do you have a specific idea about what we could be doing to provide that support? I am mindful of what you are saying about the 600 hours and that is difficult to get when you are travelling such long distances. If you are lucky a kid might get one day a week if they can make that happen. That is not going to get them to 600 hours before school. Are you aware of any programs at the moment or do you have any specific suggestions for what we could do, particularly in those five locations?

Ms STRACHAN: At present, Louth—which we have been waiting 12 months for—have been trying to set up a preschool at our local school. Unfortunately last year we had five students that could have been at the preschool but it has taken 12 months and we have not actually got it yet. Wanaaring is also on that list and they have not started there as yet. There are quite a few others. There is Mara, there is about eight places that could have a preschool at the school. But at the current rate, it is going to take a long time for these preschools to be provided. They certainly need to hurry up the process.

Ms BUTLER: Further to what Ms Strachan was saying, we acknowledge and thank the New South Wales Government for extending preschool funding to three-year-olds. So potentially a child can start preschool

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as a three-year-old and potentially do one day a week so they have done 600 hours by the time they start school. That is something we advocated for to ensure they were getting the same access as their metropolitan counterparts who can access their 600 hours more easily. I just wanted to clarify that 600 hours can be extended to three-year-olds if preschool funding is available to them.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of Gonski funding arrangements, how do they work with distance education and school of the area? Are you familiar with that at all?

Ms BUTLER: I will have to take that on notice. I am not overly familiar with it. Ms Strachan?

Ms STRACHAN: I am the same.

Ms BUTLER: Sorry.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It might be a question better directed to education, anyway.

Ms BUTLER: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: That is fine. I am also interested in—we have spent a lot of time talking about teacher standards and the like. You have got the problem, largely, where you just need teachers. Looking at best practice, are you familiar with any programs that enable teachers in isolated areas to be able to connect up to mentors elsewhere, which I imagine is done online or remotely or the like? Is there a mentor program that you are familiar with at all? Does one exist?

Ms STRACHAN: In our area, which is Louth area, we have probably five or six small schools. New teachers do get a mentor from another school and they can ring in and support at any time.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The first question I have is in relation to distance education. How comprehensive is the coverage of the Sydney Distance Education High School, which I think can have about 1,300 students enrolled from across the State? What is your experience with the Sydney Distance Education High School?

Ms BUTLER: I have not really had any experience with the Sydney Distance Education High School. The distance education schools that we deal with are out of Bathurst and through School of the Air. I would have to take that question on notice, I am sorry. I have not had any experience with the—so that is the Sydney Distance Education High School?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Yes, but its remit is for students from areas north—west of the Blue Mountains is one of its areas for remit. It says, "north of Wollongong, south of Newcastle and west to the Blue"—so you do not have any dealings with that because I think that just might be distance education within the Sydney region.

Ms BUTLER: Yes, I think so. We are more to assist geographically isolated children, so we have not really had any association with the Sydney one.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Is there one hub that provides the School of the Air, a hub that provides that high school distance education for the rest of the State?

Ms STRACHAN: I know all the students who do high school are through the Dubbo distance education centre in our area.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What are the resources like there? Is there a waiting list? Are there adequate resources for that?

Ms STRACHAN: No, I am not sure on that. We are not familiar with the high school. We could take that on notice and find more information for you.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That would be really useful. I may have misheard you but I thought you said often in regional New South Wales, particularly distant parts of regional New South Wales, people are choosing to go to private education and often it is on the basis of leaving home and heading off to school. I was wondering about the adequacies of those distance education models for high school.

Ms BUTLER: We do hear some feedback from our members that distance education in high school, in an isolated environment at home—we are in very isolated areas—can be quite a difficult learning experience and requires a lot of self-motivation from a high schooler's perspective. We do receive feedback that it is not without its challenges, certainly. It is certainly not not achievable—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Well, I am certain of that.

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Ms BUTLER: There are certainly families that I know of that have completed their entire education through distance education and gone on to study and get their university degree. It is not that it is not achievable; it is just very, very challenging in that remote, isolated environment to learn high school, especially if you are going into a really specialised subject. In a lot of the local central schools, the local high schools, students are doing education through Aurora College. I am not sure if you are familiar with Aurora College but it offers specialised—for example, if you go to high school—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: For those subjects that you otherwise would not get.

Ms BUTLER: Sorry?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Particularly for those subjects you otherwise would not get in your high school.

Ms BUTLER: That is right. You can do that through—it is a virtual high school. You are virtually connected through your local school. There are those options as well. We know of many children in our membership that are doing that, studying that way as well.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My next set of questions is really about the Aboriginal Education Council. One of your mission statements is to fund projects and programs which demonstrate best practice in education. Can you give examples of those programs that you have funded and that you would hope had been taken on by the broader education establishment but have not been? Or is it all just a wonderful experience, that the things you fund that work just get 100 per cent adopted?

Ms BAKER: Unfortunately, no. We have got a long history of funding programs. We were the first organisation to fund a breakfast program for Aboriginal kids—that has been taken over. We did mentoring programs—that is now taken over by the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience [AIME]. What we do is that we do the seed work and then someone else comes in and we think, fine, we will move on and do the next. Unfortunately over the last 10, 15 years we have a corpus of funds—thank you for my fight with Patrick White, we got a fair bit of his estate. But we have invested that and we live off the interest, so we manage ourselves within that interest and anything else. We have been casting around for a project to seriously look at.

The one that we are focusing on at the moment is on using humour. We all know that Aboriginal kids, globalised, can be very naughty. With that naughtiness are hilarious—I have two daughters who are teachers. Do not ask me what I did wrong to do that. They are both teachers, one high school and one primary. They come home in hysterics at something one of the Aboriginal kids has done, has said. But the kid is punished because the kid is outside the normal rounds of what you should be able to do. We are looking at working with Alexandria Park on finding the kids who are using humour to protect themselves, get themselves away from having to do what they are being asked to do and seeing if there is a way we can build on integrating that humour into their learning experience. Instead of a kid who was being funny and using humour to get themselves out of school, they can have that humour used to integrate themselves back into the school, using that as an empowerment tool rather than a punishment tool.

We are working on that project. Alexandria Park had its school knocked down and it is now built somewhere else. There were all sorts of things that were going on. Working on these action research projects proves very difficult but we always keep our eyes out. Each year we fund a number of innovative programs using our Norman Catts Innovative Grants program. Some of the ones that have had the most success is that a school asked for us to give them some money to fund using the local Aboriginal language to name items around the school. That absolutely took off. Everybody and their dog wanted the money to do that. It is a simple thing, but it actually engages together. We got to the stage where we said, "No more bush tucker gardens. We are sick of bush tucker gardens. Let's do something else".

It is about looking at the ways in which you can engage kids by using their culture as a window to go forward. We currently run a writing competition thanks to Patrick White and his generosity called the Patrick White Writing Competition, which is designed to engage Aboriginal kids to get back to the yarning background, their oral background.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Not to write Patrick White, I hope.

Ms BAKER: Oh, no. Well, it just depends which one of his novels you particularly like or do not like. But we encourage them each year. We offer prizes from kindergarten right through to year 12. For kindergarten kids, anybody who enters gets a prize—we are pretty soft on that. It is an encouragement to get people to start using their storytelling skills and see it as a way of improving their own outcomes by engaging. For junior school we have a group writing competition, which means that if you have only got one Aboriginal child in your class

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that Aboriginal child will be the leader and you can put in a group writing skill using all of the kids in your class to put in a piece of writing that is working there. So we are looking at ways in which you can always engage Aboriginal people in the learning process and offer them opportunities to succeed and shine.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: How many staff does the Aboriginal Education Council have?

Ms BAKER: That would be me.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: In terms of Aboriginal control and direction, how do you ensure that there is self-determination on the Aboriginal Education Council? How do you ensure that it is Aboriginal controlled, Aboriginal directed? I would have thought it would be essential for the Aboriginal Education Council.

Ms BAKER: As I said, the Aboriginal Education Council is a small charity. It was established in 1963. We are, and always were, a black-and-white organisation. Half our membership currently is Aboriginal. No?

Ms BUTLAND: No. More than half.

Ms BAKER: More than half is Aboriginal. It is based on the old settlement model; the Working Together. It was established by a man by the name of Alan Duncan out of the University of Sydney who looked at the impact of the changing nature and the referendum and what was going to happen, and brought people together to offer support for Aboriginal people engaging in education. We have not changed in terms of our attitude to what we try to do. The mix moves as to whoever comes forward, nominates and says they want to be there. Our current chair is an Aboriginal woman. Our deputy chair is an Aboriginal woman. They are both currently travelling at the moment.

We have Terry Denzil. I do not know whether you have ever heard of Terry. He is an amazing Aboriginal folk man. He is quite ill at the moment. Cathie Burgess, who is a lecturer at the University of Sydney, is an Aboriginal woman. I think the other three of us are or are not and do not or do disclose.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Are there any other questions from Committee members? If not, I very much thank Ms Butler and Ms Strachan for joining us on the teleconference. I also thank Ms Baker and Ms Butland for their helpful contribution. That brings to a close our two days of hearings. I thank the Hansard staff for their diligence and help in all the work that they do as well as our wonderful committee staff. We are well serviced here in the Parliament by Hansard and the secretariat. I thank the Committee members for their involvement. The Committee has collected a mountain of information over two days and has a lot of work to do. I think that is probably the best summary of where we are at. Thank you, everyone. I declare the hearing closed.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 16:42.